

Israel and the Church

Where you stand in regard to the interpretation of Biblical prophecy will be largely influenced by your views on Israel and the Church.

There are basically two major views on the issue:

1. The Church is a continuation or replacement of Israel.
2. The Church is completely separate and different from Israel.

If you believe that the Church is a continuation of Israel, or a replacement for Israel in God's plan of redemption, then you will tend to spiritualize or allegorize most of prophecy as it pertains to the end times.

If, on the other hand, you see the Church and Israel as distinct and separate entities, then you will tend to interpret end times prophecy in a more literal way.

This is very evident in what many consider to be the key to all Bible prophecy, Daniel 9:24-27.

Daniel 9:24 begins the prophecy given by an angel to Daniel.

[Dan 9:24 NKJV] 24 "Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

"70 weeks are determined for YOUR people and YOUR holy city."

If you blur the lines between Israel and the Church then your understanding of the prophecy given in Daniel 9 will be totally different than if you view Israel and the Church to be distinct and separate.

Consequently, your interpretation of the rest of the end times prophecies will be vastly different from someone who views Israel and the Church as distinct separate groups.

We hold the view that Israel and the Church are distinct and separate groups, with different purposes and destinies.

Both have the same ultimate destiny, meaning they will both spend eternity with the Lord, but will take different paths to get there.

Israel is very important to God. 5/6th of the Bible bears directly or indirectly upon the nation. The Jewish people are so distinctive that all other people are opposite to them.

In the Old Testament, there are Jews and Gentiles. Gentiles comprise all other people groups.

In the Church age there are no Jews or Gentiles there is only the believers and non-believers.

[Gal 3:28 NKJV] 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As you study the Bible you will find that the up until the book of Acts, the focus is mainly on the Jewish people. The rest of the New Testament is focused on the Church. In Revelation chapter 6 onward, the focus returns to Israel.

Israel is a people called by God beginning with a pagan man from Ur in Chaldea named Abram.

[Jos 24:2 NKJV] 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, [including] Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.

We find the call and what we know as the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12.

[Gen 12:1-3 NKJV] 1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The Abrahamic Covenant consists of Three promises:

Land
People (Seed)
Blessing

Each of these three are reiterated later in Genesis.

Land - In Genesis 13:14-17 We read that the Land is given to Abraham and his descendants forever.

Which of his descendants?

Abraham had eight sons.

Ishmael, Issac, and 6 others by Keturah (Genesis 25)

Who inherited the Land?

The covenant was reiterated to Isaac (Genesis 26) and Jacob (Genesis 28).

So it is through Isaac and Jacob that the covenant was passed.

People - In Genesis 17:3-8 God reiterates the covenant to Abram and changes his name to Abraham telling him that He will make Abram the father of many nations and that it would be an everlasting covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham.

Blessing - In Genesis 22:17-18 God tells Abraham that those who bless him will be blessed and those that curse him will be cursed and that in his seed (Jesus) all of the nations of the earth will be blessed. The key point being that through Abraham would come the Messiah.

Those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who curse Israel will be cursed. Does this mean that we are to be supportive of all of the governmental policies of the nation today or that Israel always acted and continues to act within the will of God? No... but We can continue to bless the nation and the people without supporting its actions if they are contrary to the Word of God.

We are told in Galatians 3 that the singular word "seed" here refers to Christ.

[Gal 3:13-16 NKJV] 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed [is] everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though [it is] only a man's covenant, yet [if it is] confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

The promises made to Abraham through the covenant are unconditional and eternal!

Not only was it stated by God in each of the verses we read but there was a physical act that took place between God and Abraham, a signing of the covenant if you will, that shows us that it is unconditional.

There are six key passages that deal with the Abrahamic covenant; Gen 12, Gen 13, Gen 15, Gen 17 and Gen 22:15-18.

We have already looked at most of these but in Gen 15 we see the unconditional signing of the covenant by God.

In ancient near-eastern cultures, when two parties were making a covenant, they would cut animal sacrifices in half and lay the parts in parallel rows opposite each other. Then the two parties would walk between the sacrifices reciting the terms of the covenant. If one party did not keep his end of the deal, it released the other party from his obligation.

We see a similar situation taking place in Gen 15:

[Gen 15:8-10 NKJV] 8 And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

After Abram has the sacrifices laid out he waits on the Lord to show up and keeps the vultures away.

Then God causes a deep sleep to fall on Abram and God passes through the pieces of the sacrifices alone reciting the terms of the covenant. This indicates that it is all on the Lord. There is nothing Abram needs to do to fulfill his end of the deal. God is going to unconditionally execute the covenant regardless of Abram's or his seed's obedience.

[Gen 15:13-21 NKJV] 13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land [that is] not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. 14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. 16 "But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites [is] not yet complete." 17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates-- 19 "the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, 20 "the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 "the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Notice the boundaries given to Abram by God for the land that he would inhabit. From the Nile to the Euphrates.

Israel has never inhabited the land to those boundaries. This promise has not been fulfilled yet, but will be fulfilled in the Millennium.

The Covenant God makes with Abraham is an everlasting one and it is unconditional:

[Gen 17:7-8 NKJV] 7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 "Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Because it is everlasting, there must be a future for Israel. No where in the Bible are the promises of the covenant transferred to the Church.

The Church has her own promises and purpose.

Premillennial theology is built upon the unconditional aspect of the Abrahamic covenant, and the covenants that come after it, such as the Palestinian covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the New Covenant.

Charles Ryrie, the former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, puts it this way:

"The unconditional character of the Abrahamic Covenant is the crucial issue in making the Abrahamic covenant a basis for premillennialism. If the covenant is unconditional, then the national aspect of it must yet be fulfilled, and premillennialism is the only system of interpretation which makes a place for a national future for Israel in which she possesses her land."

John Walvoord, One of the foremost scholars in end-times studies, wrote this:

"It is recognized by all serious students of the Bible, that the covenant of God with Abraham is one of the important and determinative revelations of scripture. It furnishes the key to the entire Old Testament, and reaches for its fulfillment into the New.

The issue, in a word, is the question of whether Israel as a nation and as a race has a prophesied future. A literal interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant involves the permanent existence of Israel as a nation and the fulfillment of the promise that the land should be their everlasting possession."

After the Abrahamic covenant God made a covenant with the people in the wilderness. This covenant is known as the Mosaic Covenant.

The Mosaic Covenant is defined in Exodus 19-24 and it is a conditional covenant between God and the nation where God promises blessing on the nation if they keep His commandments. He promises them they will endure great trouble if they do not keep His Word.

We are not going to spend time on the Mosaic Covenant due to time constraints but I encourage you to go and study it for yourself and compare it to the unconditional covenants between God and the nation Israel.

One of the questions that arises however, is this: Did Israel forfeit her right to the land and her position as God's chosen people because of her failure to keep the Mosaic Covenant?

The answer is no, and that is demonstrated in what is known as the Palestinian covenant which is a reiteration of parts of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Palestinian Covenant is also unconditional it is given in Deuteronomy 30:1-10.

Deu 30:1-10"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, 2 "and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3 "that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If any of you are driven out to the farthest [parts] under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. 5 "Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. 7 "Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8 "And you will again obey the voice of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today. 9 "The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the

LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, 10 "if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Dr. Pentecost clarifies the threefold importance of this covenant in His book "Things to Come".

1. It reaffirms to Israel their right to the land and that the land is theirs regardless of their obedience to God.
2. It shows the conditional Mosaic Covenant did not render the Abrahamic Covenant null and void.
3. It elaborates on the Abrahamic Covenant and reaffirms Israel's right to the land even after several acts of disobedience arising out of unbelief. While the enjoyment of the land may be conditioned on obedience, the ownership of the land is not.

Even when Israel is not in the land, it is where she belongs.

The prophetic aspect of the Palestinian Covenant states that Israel will be taken out of the land due to disobedience, but will be returned again to the land when they repent.

Israel was taken out of the land by the Babylonian empire, starting around 608 BC because of their disobedience to God, but He restored them to the land after 70yrs, in 538 BC, just as he told the prophet Jeremiah He would. When they returned to the land in Ezra and Nehemiah their heart was turned to back to the Lord. They had learned their lesson.

They were again scattered from the land after 70 a.d. by the Roman emperor Titus Vespasian. God miraculously returned them to the land almost 1900 years later on May 14, 1948 and they remain to this day.

The Bible tells us that Israel will not be uprooted from the land again:

[Amo 9:14-15 NKJV] 14 I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit [them]; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. 15 I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them," Says the LORD your God.

Eventually there will be a national repentance, at which point the Messiah will return, punish the enemies of Israel and give Israel her millennial blessings.

[Zec 12:10 NKJV] 10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for [his] only [son], and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

"they will look on Me whom they have pierced"

I wonder how the rabbi's reconcile that verse?

When the Messiah returns, He will rule Israel as king in the Millennial kingdom.

Which brings us to the Davidic Covenant.

The Abrahamic covenant focused on the people(seed), the land and the blessing.

The Palestinian Covenant confirmed and enlarged the promises concerning the land.

The Davidic Covenant will confirm and enlarge the seed promises.

In 2 Samuel 7 God gives states the covenant to Nathan, David's servant, for him to give to David.

[2Sa 7:12-16 NKJV] 12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. 15 "But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took [it] from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' ' "

Dr. Pentecost says this about the Davidic Covenant:

"Inherent in the Davidic Covenant are many of the crucial issues facing the student of eschatology. Will there be a literal millennium? What is God's kingdom? What is Christ's kingdom? Will the nation of Israel be regathered and restored under her Messiah? Is the Kingdom present or future?"

A correct interpretation of the Davidic Covenant will lead us to the answers of all of those questions.

The historical background that led to the Davidic covenant is well known. David had built himself a house of cedar and felt it was wrong that he should live in a nice house while the one from whom he derived his power and blessing lived in a tent.

Since David was a man of war God would not allow him to build the temple, but promised that his yet to be born son, who would be a man of peace, would build it.

The provisions of the Davidic Covenant are as follows:

1. David is to have a child who shall succeed him and establish his kingdom.
2. This son shall build the temple instead of David.
3. The throne of his kingdom shall be established forever.
4. The throne will not be taken away from him even though his sins justify it.
5. Davids house, throne, and kingdom shall be established forever.

The essential words from an eschatological stand point are house, throne and kingdom.

Dr. John Walvoord defines them this way:

David's House - His posterity, his physical descendants. They will never be slain in total or replaced by another family. The line of David will always be the royal line.

David's Throne - It is clear that the reference is not made to a material throne, but rather to the dignity and power which was sovereign and supreme in David as king. The right to rule always belongs to David's seed.

David's Kingdom - The political kingdom over Israel. It is promised to him forever signifying that his authority and rule over Israel shall never be taken away from his posterity.

Whatever its changing form, temporary interruptions, or chastisements, the line of David will always have the right to rule over Israel and will, in fact, exercise the privilege.

The Davidic Covenant is confirmed elsewhere in scripture.

[Psa 89:3-4 NKJV] 3 "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 4 'Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations.' "
Selah

[Psa 89:34-36 NKJV] 34 My covenant I will not break, Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. 35 Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: 36 His seed shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me;

Also in Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:8-9; 33:14-17, 20-21; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Daniel 7:13-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11; Zechariah 14:4, 9 .

It is clear from a literal interpretation of the covenant that Jesus, as the seed of David, will rule from David's throne.

Even though the throne of David has not been in place since the Babylonian captivity we know it is in the plan of God to have it established forever.

When the angel appears to Mary in Luke 1:30-33 he establishes this fact.

[Luk 1:30-33 NKJV] 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

This has not happened yet. Jesus is currently sitting at the right hand of His father's throne.

[Mar 16:19 NKJV] 19 So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

I believe Jesus will rule from the throne of David on the earth and that the Davidic Covenant will ultimately be fulfilled in the Millennial reign of Jesus on the earth after His 2nd coming.

This brings us to the final unconditional covenant between God and the nation of Israel, the New Covenant.

[Jer 31:31-34 NKJV] 31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

This covenant has not been fulfilled yet. It too will be fulfilled in the Millennium when the nation is in the land and inhabiting the full boundaries set for it by God and Jesus is reigning as their King from Jerusalem.

The Mosaic Covenant was conditional. The Law was given and if they obeyed it they would be blessed and if they did not obey it they would not be blessed. The New Covenant will be made with them in the Millennial Kingdom and the Law will be written on their hearts and they will know the Lord!

That is what Israel was looking for at Jesus' first coming and that is why they did not recognize Him as Messiah.

It is easier for us to interpret the prophecies and see how Jesus fulfilled them and how there are two distinct times when Jesus comes to the earth. For them looking forward it was confusing because some of the prophecies given about the Messiah had aspects of both comings within it.

They were the chosen people and their Messiah was going to be born in Bethlehem and grow up to reign as king over the earth.

Clarence Larking described this as the mountain peaks of prophecy. (explain) (Show Chart)

We are looking at the mountain range from the side and are able to see both the peaks and valleys.

The Church Age is in the valley between Jesus' first and 2nd coming.

We have covered Israel and her eternal promises and blessings from God, now lets look at the Church.

Most of the confusion when it comes to end-times prophecy stems from a lack of separation in the mind of the student between Israel and the Church.

From man's creation to Abraham was one classification of man, Gentile. From Abraham to Jesus - Jew and Gentile. From Pentecost till today we have Jew, Gentile and the Church this is made up of both Jew and Gentile.

[Mat 16:18 NKJV] 18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

"I will build my Church"

I - Jesus alone. Built by Him!

Will - future, does not exist at the time He is speaking

build - it is a process.

[Eph 2:20 NKJV] 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner[stone],

my - We are His! purchased by His blood!

Church - giving us a distinct name and therefore separating us from every other people!

Church vs. Israel

Aspects in common:

Israel and the Church share in the purpose of the Incarnation of Jesus.

Both are subjects of His ministry.

Both are objects of His death and resurrection.

Beneficiaries of His second coming.

Related to Him in His Kingdom reign.

Distinctions:

Devine purpose: Every covenant, promise, and provision of Israel is earthly; every promise for the Church is a heavenly reality.

Natural birth vs Spiritual birth

Abraham is the head of the Jewish race, Jesus is the head of the Church.

Covenants: All of the covenants we just studied apply strictly to Israel. We are beneficiaries of parts of the Covenants "all nations shall be blessed".

Dr. Missler - ***“This covenant for Israel will be in four parts, but these four features are present blessings of the Church, which is sheltered under a new covenant made in His blood. It is individual in application and everlasting, guaranteeing every divine grace upon those who receive Christ as Savior.”***

Israel has a national identity - The Church does not, we are from every tribe tongue and nation. (Rev 5:9) We are strangers and pilgrims on this earth.

Israel has a physical piece of land promised to Her. The Church does not, our possessions are in heaven.

Israel is appointed to live and serve under a meritorious legal system. The Church lives and serves under grace.

Israel is promised to be eternal in nature. The Church has a definite beginning at Pentecost, and a definite end at the Rapture.

In God's plan, Israel was His mouth piece throughout the first 4000 years of human history. When she rejected her Messiah, He put Israel on hold if you will and began His work on the earth through the Church, reaching out to all peoples and nations.

He is not through with Israel and that point is driven home in Romans 9-11. Once the Church is removed from the earth, Israel will once again become the mouth piece of God in some very dramatic ways which we will study.