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A table of contents for the *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* can be found here:

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Israel's Relation to the Church

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It has previously been shown¹ that in relation to God Israel is rejected. Because of her self-righteousness, unbelief, and rejection of the Messiah, Israel has been removed by God from His position of favor. Although this rejection is not permanent, it does exist throughout the entire church age.

Two groups were identified within Israel—spiritual and national Israel. Spiritual Israel bears a spiritual relation to God and bases its existence on God's grace. It is a group within national Israel, existing not as an end in itself. National Israel, on the other hand, bears a national relationship with God, being hardened in the present age. Still national Israel has a future in God's dealings.

This article will deal with Israel's relation to the church in the church age. As previously implied, Israel and the church are distinct, yet both occupy a position of God's favor, though Israel only through the spiritual remnant (Rom 11:7). The purpose is not only to point out the distinctions between Israel and the church, but also to show the similarities that do exist between them.

Israel and the Church Distinguished

Possible Solutions

The relationship between Israel and the church has received a wide range of diverse explanations, many of which are confusing, and most of which are unscriptural. Basically, the explanations fall into two categories. The first, usually associated with covenant theology, is that the church has supplanted Israel. Israel has been set aside nationally and the church is now in Israel's position of favor and is, in fact, experiencing her blessings and promises in a spiritual sense. This is the predominant view at the present time. The second is the dispensational view which recognizes Israel and the church as two separate entities in God's dealings. Israel is God's chosen people and the center of His program throughout

the ages except during the church age, at which time she has been set aside, and the church placed into a position of favor by God,² Most other explanations that are expounded are variations of these two views.

The Covenant View. According to this view the church is spiritually the fulfillment of Israel in the most extensive sense of the word. As spiritual Israel it has taken the place of literal Israel and all of the Old Testament promises to Israel must be interpreted in terms of the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the church.³

The Dispensational View. According to this view the church and Israel as a nation form two distinct groups in God's program. God, prior to the church age, dealt primarily with the nation Israel; in the church age He deals primarily with the church; and following the church age He will deal primarily with the nation Israel once more. Israel as a nation and the church are not to be confused or mingled.⁴

Scriptural Solution

A survey of the Scripture, will reveal that Israel and the church are distinguished as separate groups. Chafer lists twenty-four features that distinguish Israel from the church.⁵ However, by considering four aspects in regard to each a clear distinction will be shown. Israel and the church seem clearly distinct in Scripture by terminology, by chronology, by purpose, and by character.

Distinguished by Terminology. The Word of God, being verbally and plenarily inspired, uses precise words in precise circumstances for precise meanings. This is just as true of names as it is true of theologically significant words.

In the New Testament, two proper nouns are used to refer to the descendants of Abraham. These two nouns are *Ioudaios*, commonly translated "Jew" and *Israel*, commonly translated "Israel."

The noun *Ioudaios* occurs a total of 198 times in the Greek New Testament. Of these occurrences, 170 are in the historical books, twenty-six are in the epistles and two are in the Revelation. Every occurrence of this term in the KJV is translated "Jew" or "Jewess" except for three which refer to the land of Judea (Mark 1:5; John 3:22; Acts 2:14).⁶ According to Arndt and Gingrich this term refers to the Jewish people in regard "to birth, race, or religion."⁷

The noun *Israel* occurs a total of seventy times in the Greek New Testament. Of these seventy occurrences, forty-six are in the historical books, twenty-one are in the epistles, and three are in Revelation. Every occurrence of this term, without exception, is

translated in the KJV by the word "Israel."⁸ However, according to Arndt and Gingrich, this term bears three distinct meanings. First, it may refer to the patriarch Jacob as in Matthew 10:6; Acts 2:36; or Romans 9:6. Second, it may refer to the nation of Israel as in Acts 2:22; Romans 11:1; or Philippians 3:5. Third, they propose that it may be used in a figurative sense referring to Christians as the true nation of Israel as in Galatians 6:16 and Romans 9:6.⁹ This third meaning will be dealt with later in this section.

In the New Testament one noun is commonly used to refer to believers of the church age. That noun is *ekklesia* which is regularly translated "church." The noun *ekklesia* occurs a total of 115 times in the Greek New Testament. Of these 115 occurrences, it is used twenty-seven times in the historical books, sixty-eight times in the epistles, and twenty times in Revelation. In the KJV every occurrence is translated "church" except three occurrences which are translated "assembly" (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).¹⁰

According to Arndt and Gingrich, this term bears four distinct meanings. First, it may refer to any regularly summoned political body as in Acts 19:39. Second, it may refer to any gathering, meeting or assembly as in Acts 19:32, 40. Third, it may refer to the congregation of Israel as in Acts 7:38 and Hebrews 2:12. And fourth, it may refer to the Christian church as in Matthew 18:17; Acts 5:11; and Philippians 4:15.¹¹ The first three meanings do not have a bearing on this study. Although the assemblage in Acts 7:38 is composed of Israelites, the word is obviously not to be equated with Israel.

A comparison of these three terms reveals that with the increase of revelation in the church age there is a corresponding decrease in the usage of *Ioudaios* and *Israel*; while, on the other hand, there is a corresponding increase in the usage of *ekklesia*. This fact is also evidenced earlier¹² where the term "church" was compared to the terms "temple" and "synagogue" which constituted Israel's places of worship. In fact, a survey of all the occurrences of these three terms reveals that the terms *Ioudaios* and *Israel* are never substituted for the term *ekklesia*; because the terms *Ioudaios* and *Israel* always bear an ethnic or racial distinction. These facts are unchallenged in the historical or prophetic books of the New Testament; however, in the epistles it is necessary to take a closer look at three passages.

Romans 9:6b. The first verse that is supposed to show that the term "Israel" refers to the church is Romans 9:6b, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." A review of the general context surrounding this verse reveals that Paul is dealing primarily with the nation of Israel as indicated by Israel's election

in chapter nine, Israel's rejection in chapter ten, and Israel's restoration in chapter eleven. Within the context of Israel's election, Paul in 9:1-5 cites the problem, in verses 6-13 the explanation, in verses 14-24 the answers to objections, in verses 25-29 the proofs, and in verses 30-33 the conclusion.¹³ In verse 3, Paul clearly states that he is writing about national Israel, calling them "my kinsmen according to the flesh." In verses 4 and 5 he lays aside any doubts concerning whom he is writing about when he lists the Old Testament privileges and blessings that were given to Israel nationally. In verse 7, which in fact is the completion of the sentence begun in verse 6, Paul again clearly indicates that he is writing about national Israel, calling them "Abraham's descendants."

A more literal rendering of the verse "For not all the ones out of Israel, these (are) Israel" shows that two groups are being discussed. There is the group composed of "Israel" out of which a second group, "these," is taken. The first group must be taken as the physical descendants of Abraham or national Israel, the ones "out of" Abraham. The second group must also be taken as physical descendants of Abraham, the only logical antecedent of "these," but who possess something special that makes them distinct from Israel, the nation. The explanation in verses 7-8 clarifies the nature of the distinction. In verse 7, Paul points out that while all are the seed of Abraham, physically related, all are not children, spiritually related. In verse 8, Paul repeats quite clearly the contrast made in verse 6. All Israelites are children—some are only children of the flesh (national Israel), while others are both children of the flesh and children of the promise (spiritual Israel). Those who are regarded as directly related to God (born again) are the Israel of promise, spiritual Israel.

It must be concluded that the church is nowhere mentioned in Romans 9:6b. The contrast established by Paul is not between Israel nationally and the church, but between physical Israel and spiritual Israel. As Ryrie states:

The passage intimates nothing concerning the relationship of Israel and the church, but it draws sharply the distinction between believing Israelites and unbelieving Israelites as to their present blessings. Both groups still remain genuine Israelites, but the distinction is made with regard to their attitude toward Christ.¹⁴

Galatians 6:16. The second verse that is claimed as support for the view that would make Israel the same as the church is Galatians 6:16, "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." A survey of the context reveals that in this passage (6:11-16) Paul is giving his final

warning in Galatians against the Judaizers, while reminding the believers that their spiritual position was the real issue before God.¹⁵ Paul is obviously referring to the Judaizers in verses 11-13; verse 14 contains Paul's own testimony; verse 15, Paul's exhortation; and verse 16, Paul's decree of peace and mercy for obedience.

The problem in this verse is whether Paul is referring to one group—"those who walk by this rule," that is, the church composed of all believers who are also called "the Israel of God"; that is either (1) to believing Gentiles or (2) to the church and to believing Jews. The problem rests in the usage of *kai* (and), which joins the two phrases. The usage, as Ryrie states:

can be explicative, that is, it can mean "even" in which case "Israel of God" would be a synonym for the new creation and thus would make the Church the Israel of God . . . On the other hand, if the "and" is understood in an emphatic sense, then it has the meaning of "adding a (special important) part to the whole" and is translated "and especially" (cf Mark 16:7; Acts 1:14). The "and" might also be a simple connective which would also distinguish the Israel of God as Jewish Christians but not identify them as the whole church. The connective force would be less emphatic than the "especially" meaning, but both interpretations would distinguish Jewish and Gentile believers.¹⁶

Grammar does not solve the problem since the three possibilities are legitimate usages, therefore the solution must be found in the context. Two sets of contrasts are found in the context preceding verse 16. First, Paul, the believer, contrasts himself with the legalistic, unbelieving Judaizers in verses 11-14. Then in verse 15, in stating the principle of the supremacy of true spirituality over external ritualism, he contrasts believing Jews called "circumcision" and believing Gentiles called "uncircumcision." The point which Paul is making is that these two groups, believing Jews and believing Gentiles, who formerly were distinguished by an external religious mark, are now united as "a new creation" in Christ. The rule having been stated (verse 15), Paul goes on to declare a blessing (peace and mercy) for obedience to the rule. The blessing will rest on "those who will walk by this rule." This phrase can only refer to the church since Paul has already shown in verses 11-13 that the unbelieving Judaizers have utterly forsaken the rule and in verse 15 that both believing Jews and Gentiles compose the "new creation."

For Paul to go on to equate this group with Israel by using *kai* in the explicative sense would be inconsistent since Israel is present in context only in the form of Judaizers who are excluded

by disobedience and in the form of believing Jews who were already included in the ones obeying the rule, that is, in the church. Either the simple connective or the emphatic sense of *kai* may be taken in the passage without doing harm to the context. However, the context seems to support the emphatic sense best. If *kai* is taken as a simple connective, then Paul would be joining two parts to form one whole which is not the case. The logical antecedent of "them" is "those who" which refers back to the "new creation" in verse 15 composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. The emphatic sense, however, suggests special recognition for Jewish Christians as a part of the church. This recognition may be due to the fact that they have learned "that circumcision avails nothing and thus avoid the legalism of the Galatians,"¹⁷ or to the fact that Paul wished to quell any antagonism toward the Jews that might arise from his attack on the Judaizers,¹⁸ or to correct any misunderstanding of his attitude toward the Jew in general.¹⁹

This passage does not teach that the church is spiritual Israel. This verse indicates that two groups will receive blessings for obedience. The first group, designated as the ones walking by the rule, is the church composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. The second group designated as "the Israel of God" is the believing Jews, a part of the church distinguished for special recognition.

I Corinthians 10:32. A third passage which shows a clear distinction of the terminology in the New Testament is I Corinthians 10:32, "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God." A survey of the general context reveals that Paul is dealing with the use and abuse of Christian liberty (10:1-11:1). In the last four verses of this section (10:31-11:1), he sums up his previous teaching. Verse 31 contains an exhortation concerning their conduct in relation to God, while verse 32 contains an exhortation concerning their conduct in relation to their fellow man, and verses 10:33-11:1 contain Paul's example.

In verse 32, Paul gives an exhortation concerning the conduct of believers in relation to their fellow man. The three groups joined by *kai* must represent three distinct groups. The first group is designated Jews (*Ioudaios*) and can only refer to the nation of Israel because of the preceding context. In verses 1-11 and 18 Paul's argument is drawn from Israel's history. He makes his appeal on the basis of her experiences during her national deliverance and wilderness wanderings. In verse 18, he uses her sacrificial system as an illustration.

The second group is designated Greek (*Hellenin*). This proper noun is used in the New Testament to refer to the Greeks, in particular, or of the Gentiles, in general. When it is used in contrast

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with *Ioudaios* it normally is used to refer to the Gentiles. Context bears out this reference to the Gentile world in general. In verses 14-23, Paul is referring to those outside of the nation of Israel, called the Gentiles (*ethne*) in verse 20 and known as idolators, which seems to include all Gentile nations.

The third group, in contrast to the national designations of the previous two groups, bears a spiritual title—"the church of God" (*te ekklesia tou theou*). This group is addressed as "brethren" and "my beloved" by Paul. Paul also indicates that this group is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. In verses 1-13, he uses a background from the Old Testament while making repeated application to believing Jews, of whom Paul was one, as indicated by his use of the first person plural as in verse 1, "our fathers"; in verse 6, "for us"; and in verse 11, "for our instruction." In verses 14-30 he uses the background of Gentile idolators while repeatedly making application to believing Gentiles as indicated by his use of the second person plural in verse 21, "you cannot drink"; in verse 27, "set before you"; and in verse 29, "your own conscience." The first two groups, Jews and Gentiles, must therefore refer to the unsaved who are different from the "church of God." As Robertson states:

There are three separate bodies; the third does not include the other two. Therefore unconverted Jews and unconverted Gentiles are meant . . . it is an Apostolic principle that Christian conduct must be regulated with reference to those outside the church as well as those within.²⁰

As far as terminology is concerned, Israel and the church comprise two distinct, separate groups. The term "Israel" and "Jew" always connote either an ethnic or national distinction. The term "church" always refers to a spiritual relationship. While there may be Jews in the church, the church is never Israel.

Distinguished by Chronology. An examination of Scripture reveals that the church and Israel occupy distinct periods of Bible history and thus are distinguished from one another.

The nation Israel began as a race with God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12. During the period from Abraham to the deliverance from Egypt under Moses, Israel developed into a national unit. From the time of the wilderness wanderings until the present day, Israel has always been a nation, a race, even though at times scattered throughout the other nations of the world. However, Israel has not always been an instrument of God's will. As Romans

11 indicates, Israel in Old Testament times and in the future will occupy a place of favor before God, but in the present she has been set aside as unusable in God's program.

On the other hand, the church did not have its formal existence until after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Eph 1:20-23; I Peter 3:21). In fact, the Holy Spirit reveals through Paul that before New Testament times the church was a mystery, and that only through New Testament revelation has it been revealed (Eph 3:3-10; Col 1:24-29). Further, the church's position as God's primary instrument in His program will end with the rapture (I Thess 4:13-18, 5:1-11). This is not to say that the church will then be set aside or fall from God's favor but that at that time Israel will once again be in a position of favor and service to God (Rom 11:25-26).

Therefore, a survey of Scripture reveals that the church and Israel occupy separate periods in God's program. The church was unknown and unrevealed during Israel's Old Testament history and Israel was and is set aside by God in the church age.

Distinguished by Purpose. Scripture reveals that the purposes or objectives of God for Israel and the church are also distinctly different. God's goals for Israel are primarily earthly, relating to her as a nation (Gen 12:2). Israel is promised a kingdom—a land, a throne, and a kingly line (II Sam 7:12-16). This is not to say that Israel does not possess spiritual purposes, for she does (Jer 31:31-34); however, God's purpose is to make Israel the head of the nations on earth (Isa 61:6; Zech 9:16-17, 10:10-12). On the other hand, God's purposes for the church are primarily spiritual and heavenly. Although the church has an earthly work to do (Matt 28:18-20) in the present age, God's goals for the church are heavenly (Phil 3:20; I Thess 4:17; Col 3:1-4).

Distinguished by Character. Israel experiences a national distinction. Israel is one nation among the nations of the earth (Gen 12:1-4) and membership in Israel comes primarily by birth and occasionally by proselyting. However, the church is made up of individuals of all nations (I Cor 12:13; Col 3:11; Gal 3:28). This union "in Christ" is made possible by a work totally unknown to Old Testament Israel, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As McCune states in his lectures on dispensationalism:

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the positional, nonexperimental placing of a believer in the church which is the body of Christ . . . It is this unique ministry that secures the position of being "in Christ" . . . By this means believers are united to Christ in perfect spiritual union, and to each other.²¹

Summary. Although the relationship of Israel and the church has been dealt with in many ways, an examination of

Scripture supports only the consistent hermeneutical view of dispensationalism. Israel and the church are two separate and distinct groups. New Testament Scripture reveals this distinction by terminology—the church is never Israel and the terms “Israel” and “Jew” always refer to a national distinction; by chronology—Israel and the church occupy separate periods of God’s program; by purpose—God’s purposes for Israel are primarily earthly while the church’s are primarily heavenly; and by character—Israel is a nation among nations but the church is a spiritual union in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Israel and the Church Related

The fact that the church and Israel are distinct and separate groups cannot be denied in the light of Scripture. Nevertheless, the church also bears a relationship to the spiritual remnant of Israel. Paul, in Romans 11, discloses the fact that some Jewish branches were left on the tree (verse 17a) when the nation was set aside and they remained on the tree when the Gentiles were grafted into the tree (verse 17c).

A General Relationship

In a broad sense, the church and the nation of Israel, though radically distinct, have a general relationship, that is, they possess some features in common. As Cawood has stated:

Both are the people of God, both are redeemed by the blood of Christ, both are witnesses to the Word of God, both claim the same shepherd, both are loved with an everlasting love, both are recipients of eternal life and both are called elect.²²

Chafer also lists some similarities between the two groups. He states:

Each, in turn, has its own peculiar relation to God, to righteousness, to sin, to redemption, to salvation, to human responsibility, and to destiny. They are each witnesses to the Word of God; each may claim the same shepherd; they have doctrines in common; the death of Christ avails in its own way for each; they are alike beloved with an everlasting love; and each, as determined by God, will be glorified.²³

The relationship between the church and spiritual Israel then is based in part on the church’s general relationship to Israel.

A Specific Relationship

Spiritual Israel, being a group distant from national Israel in the church age, has a distinct relation to the church. The specific

relationship of Israel and the church may be seen by their association in three New Testament teachings.

The Body of Christ. Believers in the church age enjoy a special privilege unknown to believers of other dispensations in that they are part of "the body of Christ" and are thus "in Christ."

Perhaps the single most extensive passage concerning this teaching is found in I Corinthians 12:12-27. In verse 13 of this passage Paul declares, "By one spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks." By the work of the Holy Spirit, Jews and Greeks are united in the body which is Christ's body (verses 12, 27). This is not to say that in this life racial distinctions are done away with in the church but that racial distinctions which once so utterly separated Jew from Gentile are to be subordinated to a higher Christian unity in the church.

Paul repeats and expands this teaching throughout his epistles. In Galatians 3:28 he writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In the spiritual realm "all believers are equally sons of God . . . all are alike in their spiritual standing."²⁴ In Colossians 3:11 he writes, "There is no distinction between Greek and Jew . . . but Christ is all, and in all." Christ obliterates these relationships and substitutes a new and vital relationship to Himself.

Perhaps the capstone of New Testament teaching in this area is found in the epistle to the Ephesians. In this epistle, Paul's purpose is to teach concerning the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in the church. Although an extensive survey of this epistle would be profitable, it is beyond the scope of this discussion. Therefore, only one verse, which sums up the essence of Paul's teaching in Ephesians, will be examined.

In Ephesians 3:6, Paul, in writing to a predominantly Jewish congregation, says, "The Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." Jewish and Gentile believers are "fellow-heirs," "fellow-members," and "fellow-partakers." Paul uses three terms that are prefixed by *su-*, which denotes accompaniment or association together and may be translated *co-*, *fellow-*, or *joint-*.

So then, Paul reveals believing Jews and Gentiles as equally sharing in "the same inheritance in the heavenly riches of God";²⁵ as equally members in the one body of Christ; and finally, as equally participating in the promises of life and salvation in the

*In this dispensation spiritual Israel
is never apart from the church.*

Messiah. All these things are shared equally by believing Jews and Gentiles; they are common to both because of the work of Christ.

In the body of Christ, spiritual Israel becomes synonymous with the church because of Christ's work of salvation (Rom 10:12; I Cor 1:24). Therefore, it is impossible and incorrect in this dispensation to speak of a spiritual remnant of Israel existing apart from the church; "the Jews' only hope is in the church where there is neither Jew nor Gentile."²⁶ It must be concluded from the Scripture that "the remnant of this age belongs no longer to the commonwealth of Israel, but is one with all believers in Christ Jesus."²⁷ Thus being a part of the church they will share in the future of the church and not in that of national Israel.

The Seed of Abraham. A second New Testament teaching that shows a relationship between spiritual Israel and the church is the teaching concerning Abraham's seed.

The phrase "seed of Abraham" is used four ways in Scripture. First, it may refer to the physical descendants of Abraham as in Isaiah 41:8. Second, it may refer to Jesus Christ as in Galatians 3:16. Third, it may refer to the spiritual remnant within national Israel as in Romans 9:6-8. Fourth, it may refer to a spiritual seed outside of national Israel as in Galatians 3:29.²⁸

It may be concluded from a survey of these uses of this phrase that both the church and spiritual Israel are called the "seed of Abraham." As revealed in Romans 9:6-8, spiritual Israel is designated the "seed" or "children of Abraham" because they are "children of the promise." "While all Israelites can be called Abraham's seed, only those of faith are Abraham's true seed who will inherit the promises."²⁹ On the other hand, the church is also called "Abraham's seed" in Galatians 3:29, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise." Since they are in Christ, they are Abraham's seed.

Thus the phrase "seed of Abraham" as used in the New Testament has two basic significances according to Saucy, who states:

It refers to a spiritual seed which is justified through Christ's work by faith after the pattern of Abraham. It also denotes Abraham's physical posterity through Isaac and Jacob which formed the nation of Israel.³⁰

It must be kept in mind, however, that "only when a believer belongs to the race of Israel can he in any sense be called a spiritual Israelite."³¹ The church by faith may be called the "seed of Abraham" but the designation "Israelite" comes only by birth.

The New Covenant. A third New Testament teaching that shows a relationship between spiritual Israel and the church is the teaching concerning the new covenant. The new covenant as

The church is never Israel, and Israel is never the church.

indicated in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is a Jewish covenant. It was delivered to the nation, it concerned their future restoration and kingdom, and it assured their existence as a nation. However, the church's relationship to the new covenant cannot be denied (Luke 22:20; I Cor 11:25; II Cor 3:6; Heb 9:15). This raises a number of questions such as: To what extent does the new covenant apply to the church? Do both the church and spiritual Israel share all the blessings of the new covenant? Does spiritual Israel supplant national Israel in the fulfillment of the new covenant? Does spiritual Israel in the church age experience more blessings of the new covenant than the church does because of its national origin?

There are basically three answers given to this relationship by those of a dispensational persuasion. First, some believe that the new covenant concerns Israel directly and has no relationship to the church. It is not denied that the church has a covenant, but it is emphasized that this is not specifically a new covenant, but rather the only covenant of the church. Second, others believe as do Ryrie and Chafer that there are two new covenants in which the promises to Israel and the church are distinct although both covenants are based on the one sacrifice of Christ. Third, still others such as Scofield believe that there is one new covenant and that both Israel and the church participate in certain aspects of it.³²

As has already been shown, the first view is without a scriptural basis, for indeed the church is related to the new covenant. A survey of the New Testament references to the "new covenant" will reveal that the two covenant view is more extracted from Scripture than taught by it. There is no New Testament passage that speaks of *a* new covenant exclusively for the church because *the* new covenant is the only covenant that is explained in the New Testament in which the church participates. The church does not have an *old* covenant. The third view of one covenant based on Christ's once for all sacrifice in which in certain aspects both spiritual Israel and the church participate is the only view which corresponds to the teaching of Scripture.

A survey of Scripture supports the view that there is one new covenant based on Christ's death in which both spiritual Israel and the church participate. The fulfillment of this covenant as far as the nation of Israel is concerned is in the millennium (Jer 31:31-34). To say that spiritual Israel is participating in the blessings of the covenant because of their national origins is improper. On the other hand, spiritual Israel is enjoying certain provisions of the

new covenant in the church age such as: regeneration (Jer 31:33), forgiveness of sin (verse 34b), the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (verse 33), and the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry (verse 34). However, the church is also participating in these same provisions. Therefore, it may be concluded that both spiritual Israel and the church share in certain aspects of the new covenant, although not in the full sense of Jeremiah's prophecy.³³

The basis of the experiencing of certain blessings of the new covenant by spiritual Israel and the church in the church age is the sacrifice of Christ. Christ Himself indicated that the church was included in certain aspects of the new covenant on the basis of His sacrifice (Luke 22:20; I Cor 11:25). This present participation is based on Christ's sacrifice as is also national Israel's future literal fulfillment in the millennium.

Summary. The nation of Israel and the church, though distinct, do bear a general relationship to each other. This general relationship is based primarily on God's common way of dealing with sin in providing salvation. Spiritual Israel's relation to the church in the present age is due in part to the general relationship of Israel to the church. However, spiritual Israel and the church do possess a specific, vital relationship revealed in the New Testament in the teachings concerning the body of Christ, the seed of Abraham, and the new covenant. Spiritual Israel and the church are related; the remnant of Israel in the present age exists within the church as the church.

Final Summary

Within the nation of Israel, two groups can be distinguished; they are spiritual and physical Israel. Although many views exist concerning Israel's relation to the church, the scriptural view recognizes:

Israel and the church as distinct phases of God's program; not so distinct as to preclude relationship in the historical plan and purpose of God, but having a distinction which recognizes the calling and election of Israel as a nation among nations.³⁴

On the basis of New Testament terminology, the time periods each occupies in God's chronology, the purposes God has for each, and the distinct character of each, it must be concluded that Israel and the church are two distinct groups. The church is never called Israel and the terms "Israel" and "Jew" always refer to ethnic or racial characteristics and never to the whole church.

On the other hand, in regard to Israel's spiritual remnant, the church does possess a unique relationship. The church and

spiritual Israel are vitally related as indicated by the New Testament teachings concerning the body of Christ, the seed of Abraham, and the new covenant. Therefore, to teach that a truly spiritual Jewish remnant exists in the church age apart from the church is incorrect and "is confusing and mars completely the doctrines of Grace and the revelation of revelations, the church, which is His body."³⁵

Conclusions

Israel's position in the church age—what is the scriptural teaching on this subject? Is she really the "people of the second chance" and the "people of the unfulfilled task," or has God forsaken her completely in preference of the church? In two articles three conclusions have been reached.

The first conclusion that has been reached is that in the church age Israel is rejected by God. This is an undeniable fact. God has removed her from a position of favor before Him in the present age because of her self-righteousness, unbelief, and her rejection of the Messiah. However, this rejection by God is neither total nor permanent, but it is only partial in regard to number and it is temporary, ending after the church has been raptured. It is not compounded but is to the same extent as that of unbelieving Gentile nations. Furthermore, Israel's rejection results in judgment for sin, inability to discern Scripture truth and salvation for the Gentiles to a degree never before experienced by them.

A second conclusion that has been reached is that Israel, in the present age, is composed of two elements—one unbelieving and one faithful. Unbelieving Israel is composed of Abraham's physical descendants who do not exercise faith in God's promises and is known as national Israel. Faithful Israel is composed of Abraham's physical descendants who believe in God's promises and is known as spiritual Israel or the spiritual remnant. National Israel is characterized by unbelief and has been rejected by God in the present age even though she has a certain future in God's program. On the other hand, spiritual Israel is small, comprising only a portion of the nation of Israel, yet it is the object of God's grace in the present age; however the remnant is not an end in itself because Israel's future is in the nation.

A third conclusion that has been reached is that Israel and the church are distinct yet related. National Israel and the church are clearly two separate groups. A survey of New Testament terminology, of the time periods occupied by each group in God's plan, of God's purposes for each group, and of the distinct

*Jewish believers are of Israel by birth
and part of the church by faith.*

character of each reveals that the church is never Israel, and Israel is never the church. The term "Israel" refers to a national relationship while the term "church" refers to a spiritual union. However, spiritual Israel and the church are related. Both are united in the body of Christ, both are the seed of Abraham by faith, and both participate in certain aspects of the new covenant because of Christ's sacrifice. Therefore, to speak of the existence of a spiritual remnant of Israel outside of the church is incorrect and unscriptural.

In the church age, national Israel occupies a passive, inactive position before God. She has been removed by God from His favor and in the present age has been replaced by the church as God's instrument for service. Until she repents and turns from her unbelief, she will only experience God's judgment and spiritual blindness. However, Israel as a nation does possess a glorious future in God's plan. The church is not to forsake Israel because she has been hardened, or to forget her, leaving her to the future, because within national Israel is a remnant of grace. Israel's spiritual remnant is composed of Jewish believers who are of Israel by birth and part of the church by faith. Spiritual Israel occupies an active position before God. Spiritual Israel functions within the church as a part of the church because in the present age spiritual Israel's existence is impossible apart from the church.

Notes

¹ Charles E McLain, "Israel During the Church Age" *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal*, Vol 2 No 1, Spring 1986, 39-55

² George E Ladd, "Israel and the Church" *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol XXXVI, #4, edited by F F Bruce (Great Britain: The Pasternoster Press, Oct-Dec 1964) 206-207

³ *Ibid*

⁴ Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965) pp 137-40

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) IV, 47-53

⁶ Jacob B Smith, *Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA, 1955) p 180

⁷ Arndt and Gingrich, p 380

⁸ Smith, *op cit*, p 182

⁹ Arndt and Gingrich, p 383

¹⁰ Smith, p 116

¹¹ Arndt and Gingrich, p 240

¹² McLain, *op cit*, 41-2

¹³ McClain, *The Epistle to the Romans*, pp 175-6

¹⁴ Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p 68

¹⁵ Robert G Gromacki, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974) pp 239-40

¹⁶ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p 139

¹⁷ Rolland D McCune, "Dispensationalism, Covenants, Law and Grace" (unpublished classroom notes, Central Seminary, 1975) p 37

¹⁸ Robert L Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972) p 73

¹⁹ Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p 68

²⁰ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1911, 1929) p 224

²¹ McCune, "Dispensationalism" class notes, p 35

²² Cawood, "A Definitive Study of Dispensational Interpretation" p 166

²³ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, IV, 53

²⁴ Lenski, *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, Vol XIII, p 190

²⁵ Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians* (Vol X of Tyndale New Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ Co, 1963) p 94

²⁶ Cawood, op cit, p 160

²⁷ Feinberg, "The Mystery of Israel's Blindness" p 67

²⁸ McCune, "Dispensationalism" class notes, p 40

²⁹ Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, p 75

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, p 149

³² Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*, p 107

³³ John F Walvoord, "The New Covenant With Israel" *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol 103, #409 (Dallas Theol Sem, Jan-Mar 1946) p 20

³⁴ Saucy, "The Church in God's Program," p 70

³⁵ Gaebelein, *The Jewish Question*, p 28

Book Reviews

Books are reviewed for the benefit of pastors who often look to professors for evaluations. These reviews are not necessarily to recommend certain books from among the many currently available. Reviews are brief so that many may be included. Neither Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary nor the assigned reviewer proposes to endorse the entire content of any book.

Walvoord, J F and R B Zuck (editors)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty Old Testament

Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985, 1589 pp hard \$27.95; reviewed by Gordon H Lovik

This balanced commentary of the Old Testament by the faculty of Dallas Seminary will find a welcomed audience among dispensationalists. The content is well written, scholarly and current. The introductory remarks, outline and bibliography for each book enhance the conservative commentary. Although there will be moments of disagreement, they will be few. Because this volume deals with problem passages and alleged discrepancies it will no doubt become the favorite one volume commentary of many. It is well worth the price.

Bromiley, G W general editor

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia III K-P

Grand Rapids. William B Eerdmans Publ Co, 1986, 1060 pp hard \$37.50; reviewed by Gordon H Lovik

Those who have found the original **ISBE** a helpful reference work will enjoy this new edition even more. The international team of scholars have rewritten, updated and expanded the subject matter. The extensive use of recent data and the listing of more recent writings has made this work current and very valuable. Only a few articles are retained from the early edition. All names and places mentioned in the Bible are included as well as other pertinent information. The publishers plan to complete the set in four volumes.

Bruce, F F general editor (revised edition)

The International Bible Commentary with the New International Version

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ Co, 1986, 1629 pp hard \$24.95; reviewed by Gordon H Lovik