

Ecclesiology — Church is Not Israel

Six reasons are given by Fruchtenbaum from the Bible supporting the notion that the church is a distinct work in God's household from His people Israel.

1) "The first evidence is the fact that the church was born at Pentecost, whereas Israel had existed for many centuries" (116). This is supported by "the use of the future tense in Matthew 16:18 shows that it did not exist in gospel history" (116). Since the church born at Pentecost is called the "Body of Christ" (Col. 1:18), and entrance into the body is through "Spirit baptism" (1 Cor. 12:13), in which Jew and Gentile are united through the church. It is evident that the church began on the Day of Pentecost since Acts 1:5 views Spirit baptism as future, while Acts 10 links it to the past, specifically to Pentecost.

2) "The second evidence is that certain events in the ministry of the Messiah were essential to the establishment of the church-the church does not come into being until certain events have taken place" (117). These events include the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to become head of the church (Eph. 1:20-23). "The church, with believers as the body and Christ as the head, did not exist until after Christ ascended to become its head. And it could not become a functioning entity until after the Holy Spirit provided the necessary spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:7-11)" (117).

3) "The third evidence is the mystery character of the church (117)." A mystery in the Bible is a hidden truth not revealed until the New Testament (Eph. 3:3-5, 9; Col. 1:26-27). Fruchtenbaum lists "four defining characteristics of the church [that] are described as a mystery. (1) The body concept of Jewish and Gentile believers united into one body is designated as a mystery in Ephesians 3:1-12. (2) The doctrine of Christ indwelling every believer, the Christ-in-you concept, is called a mystery in Colossians 1:24-27 (cf. Col. 2:10-19; 3:4). (3) The church as the Bride of Christ is called a mystery in Ephesians 5:22-32. (4) The Rapture is called a mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. These four mysteries describe qualities that distinguish the church from Israel" (117-18).

4) "The fourth evidence that the church is distinct from Israel is the unique relationship between Jews and the Gentiles, called one new man in Ephesians 2:15" (118). During the current church age God is saving a remnant from the two previous entities (Israel and Gentiles) and combining them into a third new object-the church. This unity of Jews and Gentiles into one new man covers only the church age, from Pentecost until the rapture, after which time God will restore Israel and complete her destiny (Acts 15:14-18). 1 Corinthians 10:32 reflects just such a division when it says, "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God."

5) "The fifth evidence for the distinction between Israel and the church is found in Galatians 6:16" (118). "It appears logical to view 'the Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16) as believing Jews in contrast to unbelieving Jews called 'Israel after the flesh' (1 Cor. 10:18)" (124).² This passage does not support the false claim of replacement theologians who claim that Israel is supplanted by the Church. Instead, the Bible teaches that a remnant of Israel is combined with elect Gentiles during this age to make up a whole new entity the New Testament calls the church (Eph. 2).

Replacement theology tries to teach that because Gentiles believers are described as the "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29) that this is equivalent to saying that they are Israel. This is clearly not the case. Paul's description of Gentile believers in Galatians 3:29 simply means that they participate in the spiritual (i.e., salvation) blessings that come through Israel (Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11, 14). "Those who are the spiritual seed are partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings but are never said to become partakers of the physical, material, or national promises" (126). Therefore, Israel's national promises are left in tact awaiting a yet future fulfillment.

6) "In the book of Acts, both Israel and the church exist simultaneously. The term Israel is used twenty time and ekklesia(church) nineteen times, yet the two groups are always kept distinct" (118).³ Thus, the replacement theologian has no actual biblical basis upon which he bases his theological claim that Israel and the church have become one."

— Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israel and the Church in Wesley Willis, John Master, and Charles Ryrie, ed., Issues in Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 129.

"Of these seventy-three citations, the vast majority of these refer to national, ethnic Israel. A few refer specifically to Jewish believers who still are ethnic Jews."

— Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israel and the Church*, in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 120.

"The church, which is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; see Eph. 2:13 to 3:1-12) was first formed in history

when the Spirit was poured out during the Pentecost event not in past history under the OC. Most holding to CT see the church existing in the OT before Pentecost; NCT does not. Contrary to DT, NCT sees only one redemptive purpose for the one people of God, which is represented in the good olive tree (Rom. 11)."

—— Gary D. Long, *New Covenant Theology: Time for a More Accurate Way*, 14.

"If we forget the distinction between an earthly and a heavenly people, or in other words, if we lose sight of dispensational truth . . . we will be thrown into inextricable confusion in attempting to understand the Scriptures."

—— J.H. Brookes, *Maranatha*, 522-523.

"It follows . . . that if we read those people and those principles into the present Dispensation, we are taking what God spoke by the prophets to the fathers (i.e., Israel), and reading them as though they were spoken to and about ourselves, in this present Dispensation. This procedure can result only in confusion."

—— E. W. Bullinger, *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, 21.

"The NT evidence reveals that outside of a few disputed references...the name of Israel is related to the 'national' covenant people of the OT."

—— Robert Saucy, *Israel and the Church: A Case for Discontinuity, in Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester: Crossway Books), 244-45.

"the one consistent feature of the usage of the word [Israel] in the Gospels—in conformity with its use in the Jewish world generally—is that it retains its dignity. It continues to imply privilege associated with covenant, election and theocratic ideals...Nor do the Gospels deviate from the traditional significance of the term as referring to the descendants of Abraham (through Jacob). Never, for example, is the term used either of the church or of Gentiles."

—— Mark A. Elliott, *Israel*, in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 357.

"The church is not...identified with 'Israel'. They share a similar identity as the people of God enjoying equally the blessings of the promised eschatology salvation. But this commonality does not eliminate all distinctions between them."

—— Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology*, 210.

"THE CRUCIAL distinction between dispensational and non-dispensational interpretations of Scripture centers on the meaning of Israel and the church. As indicated in chapter 1, dispensationalism has undergone considerable modification recently, moving toward greater harmony with non-dispensationalism in some areas. Even on the crucial issue, many dispensationalists see much greater unity than that taught by their forerunners. Instead of asserting a radical dichotomy of purpose and destiny, they see both Israel and the church as belonging to the one people of God and serving one historical purpose. Nevertheless, a clear distinction between dispensationalists and non-dispensationalists remains."

—— Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* - eBook, (Zondervan Academic, 2010), 193.

"It is the lack of national characteristics that distinguishes the church from Israel".

—— Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology*, 210.

"In spite of the many attributes, characteristics, privileges and prerogatives of the latter [Israel] which are applied to the former [Church], the Church is not called Israel in the NT."

—— Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 7.

"The following shows that Church is distinct from Israel:—

A. The use of the word "mystery" to describe many of the major truths of the church. Four verses in particular give us the meaning of the word "Mystery":

1. Romans 16:25: "the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began"

2. Colossians 1:26: "The mystery which hath been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints"

3. Ephesians 3.4,5: "The mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"

4. Ephesians 3.9: "the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God"

Thus we clearly see that a mystery is a truth hidden in the OT but revealed in the NT. Now let us look at some things pertaining to the church which are described as a mystery, and which thus are new revelations in the NT, and not in the OT:—

Eph. 3.1-12. This describes the mystery of the one body, which Paul calls a "new man" in 2.15. Nothing could be clearer: the church has not been incorporated into Israel, nor is it a fulfilment of it, rather it is an entirely new and distinct entity. In v 9 it is stated that it was "hid in God" from "the beginning of the world" and in v 10 it is stated that it has been revealed "now". There could be no clearer statement of the fact that the church is not in the OT.

Col. 1.27. This describes the fact that Christ indwells each believer. "Christ in you" was never the case for individual Israelites, let alone Gentiles. Something never revealed heretofore has been revealed and realised in the church.

Eph. 5.32. This speaks of the relationship between Christ and the church. It is a mystery, never before revealed. The description of God as the husband of Israel was known (Isa. 54.5). The relationship of Christ to the church is distinct.

1 Cor. 15.51,52. This describes the rapture of the church. This was not revealed in the OT.

Thus, so many major truths concerning the church are clearly indicated to have been hidden before and have been revealed in the NT. The church must therefore be seen as distinct from Israel.

B. The Lord Jesus in Matt. 16.18 says, "I will build my church." The tense is future, clearly showing that when the Lord Jesus spoke, the church was not yet in existence.

C. The church's purchase and purification depends on the shed blood of Christ (Acts 20.28 and Eph. 5.25-27). Therefore it could not have existed before the death of Christ.

D. The church is the body of Christ, and this Head and body relationship is consequent upon Christ's resurrection and glorification (Eph. 1.20-23).

E. Entrance into the body of Christ was by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12.13), and this did not take place until Pentecost, so this fixes the beginning of the church at Pentecost.

F. The word "church" is never used of Israel in the NT (or the OT for that matter) in the sense of being the body of Christ. The use of the word "church" in Acts 7.38 and Heb. 2.12 refers to a congregation or assembly of people, and would be better translated as such, as was done elsewhere, e.g. Acts 19.39,41. Acts 7.38 no more proves that the church was in the OT than Acts 19.40,41 proves that the riotous mob at Ephesus was the body of Christ! The Amillennialist's use of Acts 7.38 to try to prove that the church as the body of Christ was in the OT shows just how short of evidence he is.

G. In the NT, there are many references which refer to the church and Israel as being distinct, e.g. 1 Cor. 10.32; Rom. 9.4,5; 11.1-27."

Website Reference:

<http://www.thegloriousgospel.ca/amillennialism-examined-david-mcallister/>

1 Corinthians 10:32 NASB

Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;