

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ Among the Gentiles

All Scripture is given to God's people, the church, today. Most Christians would agree with this statement. However, when we go further and seek to understand just what we ought to do with all of Scripture challenges arise. These studies are concerned with one particular category of Scripture, the promises. And more particularly, what we ought to do with the promises made to Israel that are recorded in our Old Testaments. Are these promises for unbelieving ethnic Jews? believing ethnic Jews? Believing Gentiles in Christ?

Grammatical Historical interpretation is important. Psalm 121 contains wonderful promises. "I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber." (vss. 2-3) As a Gentile believer in Jesus Christ may I consider *myself* as a member of the "your" and "you" of verse 3? What a wonderful thing that would be! However the next verse clearly defines the "your" and the "you". "Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Certainly when this Psalm was written no one would understand that God was making these promises to the Assyrians, Egyptians or the Philistines. What may I, what should I, as a Gentile do with these promises? since they are spoken clearly to "Israel"? Psalm 130 gives hope to those who are convicted of their sinfulness, to those who feel the weight of iniquity in the presence of God and know that if God should mark iniquities no one could stand. Is there hope of ever fully being saved from sin? Verses 7 and 8 give such hope to "Israel". Verse 8 promises that the Lord "shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." May I, the struggling Gentile sinner that I am, look to *this* promise to keep me afloat as I live in this fallen world, waiting for the day when the Lord will complete His salvation of me, from all my iniquities? There are hundreds of such examples in our rich Old Testaments.

As a "just" Gentile who is to "live by faith" (Rom. 1:17, Heb. 10:38) am I to believe that the Lord *today* is speaking to me the promises of these Psalms? As a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ am I warranted to look Gentile Christians in the face and tell them God in Christ is speaking the promises of these, and other, Psalms to them? Is such a practice encouraging true faith or presumption?

There are also many promises regarding a glorious future for Israel. A future brought to pass by the Messiah, Israel's King, as He sits on the throne of David and reigns over His kingdom forever and ever. These promises are the basis of Israel's hope. As a Gentile believer in Israel's king, are these *same* promises a basis for my hope too? Or would such a faith be presumptuous? Shall I participate in the glorious future described in these promises made to Israel and look forward to it as Abraham did?

My conviction is that God is speaking these promises to all His people today and we are to with confidence say, "God says this to you, my brother, my sister." Because of confusion regarding Israel and God's speaking to Israel, a subtle lack of authority pervades our use of such passages when addressing Gentiles. How are these portions of God's word to be profitable for Gentile believers and give them hope (1 Tim. 3:16, Rom. 15: 4)? Other than using such passages for eschatology having to do with Israel, most of this Scripture has little to do with the daily, practical lives of many Gentile Christians. It is a tragedy when the people of God stand off at a distance from His promises because of such confusion; that promises made to Israel, somehow and in some way, are not for me as a Gentile.

Sorting this out requires a *historical* approach. God's intervention in human history through time and His intervention as objectified in the covenants of promise (Eph. 2:12) needs to be carefully considered. The conclusion I've reached is that we ought to understand our Bibles in the following way: The main subject: God's redemption of man and the earth from the effects of sin by His Son. His *historical* approach: God always saves Israel (plan A) *and Gentiles are brought into this salvation*. The Gentiles come to share in the blessings given to Israel as Israel's King is exalted to rule over the *present* world and also the world to come. The 13 definitions or principles below seek to demonstrate that this is a correct understanding of Scripture. We must understand the salvation of Israel first, then understand Gentile salvation as a participating in this *same* salvation in Christ. The 13 definitions build upon each other. The

first three may be mis-read as having only to do with ethnic Israel by those accustomed to dispensationalism.

Since there exists quite a range of ideas among Christians as how these matters ought to be understood, and labels have developed over the years, I will “spill the beans” regarding my understanding up front. In so doing I hope the reader, even if he does not find himself closely aligned with my position, will still consider what follows. This range of understandings can be roughly summarized with the following labels. My agreement or disagreement with these positions is indicated in the “()”.

Classical Dispensationalism (strongly opposed)

Progressive Dispensationalism (moderately opposed)

New Covenant Theology (opposed in some areas, agree in many)

Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology (opposed in some areas, agree in many)

Historic Reformed Paedobaptist Covenant Theology (moderately opposed)

Reformed Hypercovenantalism (strongly opposed)

I have not taken the classic reformed “covenant of grace” approach and believe this approach has placed un-necessary stumbling blocks in front of dispensationalists who may be reconsidering how Israel and the church relate and how we should understand Gentile salvation historically. Nor have I advocated the idea of a “spiritual Israel” versus a “physical Israel” as is sometimes done. This too I think has placed un-necessary stumbling blocks in front of dispensationalists. I realize that the subject of law is not directly addressed. My emphasis has been on the promises. See my companion paper, “The Role and Limits of the Law in the Christian’s Life” for a discussion regarding the law. I hope to put our Bibles back together in our thinking centered around the wonderful revelation of God’s promises to His people. And I hope that this will encourage and ground our hope. Though the focus is not on eschatology, one’s eschatology is significantly affected by these principles.

What follows is a summary outline with greater detail given in the later sections. The material was covered in 22 teaching sessions including question and answer time. An attempt has been made to make this summary as concise as possible. The teaching sessions contain more exegetical material and defense of the conclusions summarized in this paper. They are available from the Sovereign Grace Bible Church media library.

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Outline

- I. Israel should first be thought of as a people, whether or not they are a self governed nation possessing and settled in the land of promise. 1
- II. The covenants should be referred to with precision and references to covenants which are not mentioned in Scripture should be minimized. It needs to be understood that salvation of Jew and Gentile is brought by God into human history by the redemptive covenants He established; the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenants. 1
- III. Using the biblical language; “My people”, “God’s people”, “His people”, “Their God”, “The people of God”, and “The children/sons/daughters of God” to identify the recipients of God’s promises helps understand the continuity between the AC/MC and NC. 1
- IV. Israel (as a people) must be accurately defined before Christ. Israel before Christ is identical to the membership of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, including circumcised Gentile proselytes. 1
- V. Before Christ Israel, the covenant community, consisted of those who had true faith in God and those who did not. Often, the majority of Israel, though the people of God by covenant, did not believe in Him. This persistent tendency of unbelief culminated in the rejection of their Messiah. 2
- VI. In contrast to Israel’s failure as the covenant community of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, the OT prophets describe that in the future God will establish a new, faithful Israel, on the basis of a new covenant which He initiates. 2
- VII. Regarding the promised New Covenant with its new community three questions need to be carefully considered: 2
 - VII. A. When - The Lord established the New Covenant with the house of Israel when He Sent His Son, as the Mediator of the New Covenant, to save [some of] Israel and [some of] the world. 2
 - VII. B. Who - The members of the New Covenant community are those Jews who receive New Covenant circumcision and receive Jesus as their Messiah. This community is the house of Israel from this time forward. Those Jews who reject their Messiah are no longer members of the house of Israel, but those Gentiles who do receive Jesus as their Saviour-Messiah become members of the house of Israel, the New Covenant community. 2
 - VII. C. How - OT prophetic passages refer to how people will become members of the NC by describing God’s actions toward them. God calls his sons and daughters from afar, He gathers His people, He puts His Spirit within them, He writes His law into their hearts. He searches for His sheep and gathers them into His flock. The NT refers to the Father’s effectually calling Jew and Gentile to believe in His Son, the mediator of the NC. 4
- VIII. As a result of establishing the NC and the beginning of the New Covenant community the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were brought to an end. 6
- IX. Gentile evangelism is calling Gentiles to share in the salvation brought to Israel by Israel’s Messiah as He mediates the blessings of the New Covenant to Israel, fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. 7
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Summary and Passages Discussed

I. **Israel should first be thought of as *a people*, whether or not they are a self governed nation possessing and settled in the land of promise.**

Acts 13:16-17, Matthew 2:6 - Note the expressions, “My people Israel” and “This people Israel”.

II. **The covenants should be referred to with precision and references to covenants which are not mentioned in Scripture should be minimized. It needs to be understood that salvation of Jew *and* Gentile is brought by God into human history by the *redemptive covenants* He established; the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New Covenants.**

The language used in the book of Hebrews is: “the first covenant”, 9:15; “the first”, 8:7, 13, 9:1, 9:18; “new covenant”, 8:8, 8:13, 9:15, 12:24; “a better covenant”, 7:22, 8:6; “everlasting covenant”, 13:20.

Abrahamic Covenant (AC) - The covenant established with Abraham and his descendants when God called him intending to make *a people* from him, give his descendants the land of Canaan, with the ultimate goal of bringing blessing to all the world (Gen. 12:1-3, 15:1-21, 17:1-14). Gentile salvation is an outworking of God’s faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant (discussed in detail below).

Mosaic Covenant (MC) - Though the phrase is not used in Scripture it will be used in this study to refer to “the first” or “the first covenant” (language in Hebrews). The covenant God established with Israel at Sinai through Moses (Ex. 19, 20, 21, 24).

Davidic Covenant (DC) - The covenant established with David promising to raise up a line of kings for Israel from David’s descendants culminating in the Messiah as the King who would save and reign over Israel forever (2 Sam. 7:1-24, 2 Chron. 21:7, Psalm 89:3). Gentile salvation is an outworking of God’s faithfulness to the Davidic covenant (Acts 15:15-17, Rom. 15:12, discussed below).

New covenant (NC) - The NC is also referred to as the “better covenant” and “everlasting covenant” (language in Hebrews). The covenant established with Israel *in Christ* at His first coming (Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 9:15, 2 Cor. 3:6, Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25, discussed in detail below).

In this study the phrases “old covenant” and “covenant of grace” will not be used.

III. **Using the biblical language; “My people”, “God’s people”, “His people”, “Their God”, “The people of God”, and “The children/sons/daughters of God” to identify the recipients of God’s promises helps understand the continuity between the AC/MC and NC.**

Gen. 17:8, Ex. 29:44-45, Lev. 26:11-12, 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1, Heb. 8:10, 1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 26:10-13.

Definitions I-III are closely related: We must think of Israel as *a people*, they are a people brought into existence because of *covenants* God initiated with them. These “covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:12, Rom. 9:4) have established a *relationship* between God and these people so that they are “His people” and He is “their God”.

Confusion has been created by referring to people as Christians or non Christians and not giving sufficient attention to the use of the biblical expressions listed in III. When we use the terms Christian/non-Christian *we introduce an artificial discontinuity between the Old and the New testament periods* since these expressions are not used in the OT to refer to God’s people. Nor are they used in OT prophetic Scripture which refers to God’s people from the time of Christ forward and the salvation of the Gentiles.

However, if we use the expressions, “His people” or “God’s people” or the “children of God”, we immediately recognize a continuity since *both* OT and NT freely use these expressions to refer to the people who have received God’s mercy, Jews and Gentiles; to people who are in *covenant relationship* with God.

IV. **Israel (as a people) must be accurately defined before Christ. Israel before Christ is identical to the membership of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, including circumcised Gentile proselytes.**

Gen. 17:4

A Gentile who received circumcision became a fully privileged member of the covenant community. He could be cut off, Lev. 17:8f, 22:17-19, Nu. 15:14-16; he participated fully in Israel’s feasts, Deut. 16:11,

16, 26:11; he assembled with the rest of the people of Yahweh for covenant renewals, Deut. 29:11, Josh. 8:33, 35; he was to be present every seven years when the Torah was read, Deut. 31:12; and was to be treated as a native, including inheriting a portion of the land among the tribe in which he chose to dwell, Eze. 47:22-24.

Being a member of a redemptive covenant means you are one of, “God’s people”. Being one of “God’s people” means *you are a member of a redemptive covenant*, whether Jew or Gentile. “Saved” Gentiles have always been “covenant members”.

The New Covenant community consists of Jews and Gentiles *just as did the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant communities*. Israel (as a people) =’s Covenant community (this definition applies to *both* OT and NT periods). More below. (add a note that a “cut off” Jewish person is no longer part of Israel - see below).

V. Before Christ Israel, the covenant community, consisted of those who had true faith in God and those who did not. Often, the majority of Israel, though the people of God by covenant, did not believe in Him. This persistent tendency of unbelief culminated in the rejection of their Messiah.

Often the majority of the covenant community were unbelievers: Isa. 1:1-4, Isa. 30:1-2, Isa. 65:1-4

The reason the unbelief was not total is because God reserved a remnant: Isa. 1:9, Rom. 10:20-11:5

VI. In contrast to Israel’s failure as the covenant community of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, the OT prophets describe that in the future God will establish a new, *faithful* Israel, on the basis of a new covenant which He initiates.

Jer. 31:31-37, Jer. 32:36-40, Heb. 8:6-13, 10:11-18

The new covenant house of Israel will be radically different from the Mosaic Covenant house of Israel because the Lord will write His Law into *all* of their hearts (instead of on external stone), they will *all* know Him and they will *all* be forgiven. They will be God’s people, and He will be their God. This is a new and *faithful* Israel which will never again turn away from the Lord to idols.

These promises were often given or renewed in various ways during the darkest hours prior to and during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities when it appeared as if the Lord would entirely destroy the people of Israel and they would have no future.

VII. Regarding the promised New Covenant with its new community three questions need to be carefully considered:

When was the New Covenant with the house of Israel established?

Who are the members of this New Covenant community?

How does one become a member of the New Covenant?

VII-A. *When* - The Lord established the New Covenant with the house of Israel when He Sent His Son, as the Mediator of the New Covenant, to save [some of] Israel and [some of] the world.

Heb. 7:22, 8:6-8, 13, 9:15 - Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant. The ending of the first covenant is proof of the beginning of the new covenant. The NC begins when the MC is annulled. There is not a historical gap between MC fading away and NC being established with the house of Israel.

Heb. 12:22-24 - Jewish believers have come to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.

2 Cor. 3:3-11(esp. vs. 6) - Paul understands himself and others as now ministering during the time in history where God has initiated the new covenant and the Mosaic Covenant is fading away.

1 Cor. 11:23-26 - Jesus informs us that He has brought in the New Covenant. See Ex. 24:7-11.

VII-B. *Who* - The members of the New Covenant community are those Jews who receive New Covenant circumcision and receive Jesus as their Messiah. This community is the house of Israel from this time forward. Those Jews who reject their Messiah are no longer members of the house of Israel, but those Gentiles who do receive Jesus as their Saviour-Messiah become members of the house of Israel, the New Covenant community.

Deut 30:6, Rom. 2:28-29 and Col. 2:11-12 - Those having NC circumcision make up the NC house of Israel just as those having physical circumcision made up the AC/MC house of Israel.

Gal. 3:24-29 - Those belonging to Christ, the Messiah, who have faith in Him, Jew and Gentile.

Romans 11:13-26 - Paul, using the illustration of an olive tree, defines the NC community as believing Jews *and* Gentiles together receiving the blessing promised to the patriarchs in the Abrahamic Covenant (the root and fatness of the tree). The two states of the olive tree illustrate the differences in the covenant community before and after Christ's establishing the NC.

Eph. 2:11-22, 3:1-8 - Paul states that believing Gentiles are now *one* body with believing Jews and fellow heirs with the Jews of the inheritance promised in the covenants. This *one new man* is the NC community, the NC house of Israel. Gentiles are now fellow citizens with the saints, the set apart ones. As the Jews had always been set apart for God, so now the believing Gentiles are also set apart. They are members of the one "household of God". So the good news that Paul preached to Israel, that Jesus is the Christ who saves Israel through faith, he also preaches to the Gentiles. The *same* unsearchable riches of Messiah (promises) are preached to the Gentiles without distinction. A believing Gentile receives everything that a believing Jew receives.

John 10:14-17 - What Paul carefully articulated in Ephesians 2-3, as Christ's Apostle to the Gentiles, Jesus had already defined in His good shepherd discourse. Jesus, as the Messiah, gathers together God's sheep, God's flock. The flock that He shepherds is the NC community made up of the Jews who receive Him and the other sheep not of this [Jewish] fold, i.e. those Gentiles who receive Him. They are given the right to become children of God (John 1:11-12).

Rom. 9:22-27, 1 Pet. 2:9 - The believing Gentiles are covenant members. All covenant member titles (see III above), used throughout the OT period, are applied to believing Gentiles, "My people", "beloved", "sons of the living God", "a holy nation", "chosen generation", "His own special people".

For clarity it helps to understand who *is not* a member of the NC community. Jews who reject Christ are not part of the "house of Israel" of the Jer. 31 and 32 passages. Their sins are not forgiven, the law is not written into their hearts, they do not know the Lord, and the Lord has not established the covenantal relationship with them *and the previous covenantal relationship has ended*. The unbelieving branches have been broken off. They no longer can claim the status of "His people".

For example: Eze. 36:23-31 - the resettlement of vss. 24 & 28 is not the 20'th century resettling of *unbelieving* Jews in palestine began in 1948. Eze. 37:11-14, 21-28 describe the new house of Israel. However this new house of Israel is not the 21'st century state we call Israel. Regardless of how these promises will be fulfilled the state created in 1948 does not have a one to one correspondence with the house of Israel of these (and many other) biblical promises, because unbelieving Jews are excluded from the NC community to which these promises refer.

What has been done above regarding the question, "who are members of the NC community?" is; getting the believing Gentiles in and getting the unbelieving Jews out, and keeping the believing Jews in. This is the consistent message of the NT, beginning with John the Baptist (Luke 3:8-9). This change in the make up of the covenant community took place at the coming of Christ (see Mal. 3:1-4, also discussed below).

Thus it is a mistake to take OT texts addressing NC Israel and apply them to the unbelieving segment of Jews living in the land of palestine today. These *unbelieving* Jews are no longer part of the "house of Israel".

The texts which apply to the *unbelieving* Jews living today are the same texts that applied to them during John the Baptist's, Jesus's, and Paul's ministries:

Matt. 3:9 - membership in the covenant will no longer be based on ethnic relation to Abraham.

John 5:45-47 - they do not believe in Moses (the Law) or God.

John 8:31-37 - the unbelieving Jews will not remain in the house forever. They will not remain "His people" or covenant members.

Luke 15:24-32 - the older son represents the condition of the unrepentant Jews to this day.

Matt. 23:37-39 - the unbelieving, ethnic segment of Israel, is now a desolate house. It remains such until they say of Jesus, "Blessed is He [Jesus of Nazareth] who comes in the name of the Lord!".

Rom. 10:16-21, Gal. 4:22-28 - The unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem today are in bondage just as were the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem in Paul's day.

Hosea: 1:9-10 - The NT explains how this was historically accomplished; Israel's rejection and the calling of the Gentiles. Ethnic Israel is no longer "My People", believing Gentiles are now "His people".

When God looks on the world today and continues to keep the NC promise of Jeremiah 31:36, "If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, *Then* the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever." The house of Israel of Jer. 31:31-36 consists of those Jews and Gentiles who believe in their Messiah, Jesus Christ, wherever they may geographically be found in the world. They are the remnant of the seed of Jacob referred to in Jer. 31:37.

What many evangelicals have done is to ignore the NT texts which describe the *unbelieving* segment of ethnic Israel, and instead use OT prophetic texts which describe NC *believing* Israel and apply these texts to *unbelieving ethnic Israel* today. This is a serious mistake and it ignores the progress of redemption and explicit NT revelation on the subject.

Answering two more questions helps clarify who are members of the NC community.

Is there any distinction remaining between *believing* Jew and *believing* Gentile in the NC? No. Gal. 3:28-29, Col. 3:10-12, 1 Cor. 12:13 - see Acts 15:8-9, Rom. 10:12.

A NC Jewish believer *is not* twice blessed and a Gentile singly blessed. This idea has come from saying that *in the NC* there are some promises for *ethnic* Jews of which the Gentiles do not partake. No, the Gentiles are *co-heirs* of the same inheritance, in Christ. The biblical way to think is that God has always saved Israel, and continues to do so during the NC, and the Gentiles partake of the same salvation. The little dogs get to feast on the children's bread (Matt. 15:25-26). And the unbelieving Jews, like the prodigal's older brother, are to be provoked to jealousy (Luke 15:25-32, Rom. 10:19) as they see the Gentiles feasting on *their* bread. The Gentiles are feasting on the *same* set of promises by faith in the Jew's Messiah.

Is there any distinction remaining between *unbelieving* Jew and *unbelieving* Gentile in the NC? Yes, only one, in regard to the proclamation of the Gospel, the principle, "To the Jew first, then also to the Gentile". Matt. 10:5-6, Acts 1:8, 3:26, 13:46, Rom. 1:16, 2:9-10.

VII-C. *How* - OT prophetic passages refer to *how* people will become members of the NC by describing God's actions toward them. God *calls* his sons and daughters from afar, He *gathers* His people, He *puts His Spirit within them*, He *writes His law into their hearts*. He *searches* for His sheep and *gathers them into His flock*. The NT refers to the Father's effectually *calling* Jew and Gentile to believe in His Son, the mediator of the NC.

The pattern we observe of Divine initiative in the AC, MC and DC, is not diminished, but heightened when we come to the NC. In those covenants the Lord initiates the covenantal bond and relationship, and He sets the conditions. Men respond and agree to the conditions, but not in the sense of "I might take it or leave it". But in the sense of, "Yes sir, thank you", and they find themselves in this relationship with God because God initiated to establish it. Abraham, the children of Israel, and David did not have a choice whether or not to enter into the covenant God was initiating. This does not mean they were coerced and unwillingly entered into these covenants with the Lord, but it could not have been any other way.

OT promises set expectations as to *how* the NC community will be created. The Holy Spirit and regeneration promises show God's initiative in calling and gathering His NC people.

Jer. 31:31-34 - The Lord initiates the NC with the house of Israel by putting His Laws in their minds and writing them on their hearts. This initiation of the NC is an intensified renewal of the MC at Sinai when the Lord took His finger and wrote His Law on the tablets of stone, gave them to the people, then they entered the MC. For the NC He does the same thing *but* this time He writes the Law on the hearts of the covenant members and this becomes the everlasting covenant because neither party breaks it.

Eze. 36:26-27, Eze. 37:12-14 - He spiritually resurrects them, puts His Spirit in them and they live. Then they know that He is the Lord.

The promises to re-gather Israel and settle them in the Land teach us *how* people enter the NC. The following “gathering” passages do not describe the resettling of *unbelieving* Jews into the physical land of Palestine that began in 1948. They describe God’s work by His Son (the Messianic Servant) in calling Jews back to faith in Him (and Gentiles too). By this it is not meant that “the land” aspects of these promises will never be physically fulfilled. The land will be re-settled by this *NC Israel* (the Israel defined in VII-B above, consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles). Questions regarding how we should understand the land promise, and when the land will be resettled, are not part of this study.

Isa. 11:1-12:6 - Paul quotes from this passage in Rom. 15:12 as he writes of the Gentiles being incorporated into the people of God. Vs. 12 anticipates the gathering of Jew and Gentile as God’s people. The people gathered are *believers* in the Messiah, not ethnic Jews who reject Jesus as the Christ.

Isa. 43:1-7 - Vss. 6-7 give a concise answer to the question, “*How* does one become a member of the New Covenant Community?” God commands that the ends of the earth give them up, they are called by His name, and He creates them for His glory.

Isa. 56:1-8 - The Lord gathers both Jews and Gentiles and brings them to His holy mountain.

Eze. 11:17-20 - In the NC unbelievers are not part of the “My people”. So when these “gathering” texts use the “My people” language they are not referring to the AC/MC definition of “My people”, they are referring to the NC definition of “My people” (VII-B above). Those who have NC circumcision, the law in their hearts, their sins forgiven, who believe in the Messiah, and have the Spirit of God (vs. 11:19). They become His people when He gathers them, assembles them and gives them one heart and puts a new spirit within them.

Eze. 20:34-44 - Vs. 37 The Lord will bring them into the covenant by making them pass under the rod. Vs. 38 The rebels will not enter this new covenant community. Vs. 28 The repeated phrase, “Then you shall know that I am the Lord” emphasizes that these people will recognize Yahweh as the true God.

Eze. 34:11-31 - Vss. 11-16 When God initiates to gather the sheep they enter the new covenant community. Vs. 30 - 31 - describe the “new and faithful” Israel. Jesus the Christ is the shepherd to which this passage refers and the flock Jesus speaks of in John 10 are those described in verses 30-31. The gathering described began with the first coming of Christ and continues until His second coming, at which time the NC membership will be completed. People become members of the NC when the Lord searches for them and seeks them out.

The promise of the Holy Spirit and the in gathering of the passages above begin to be fulfilled at Christ’s first coming, especially from the day of Pentecost forward. People become members of the NC when the Lord *calls* them to believe in His Son. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that draws the elect to believe in Christ. It is the Divine initiative, as clearly shown in the OT passages, and also shown in the previous covenants, that is the final answer regarding how one becomes part of “God’s people”.

Rom. 9:23-26 - Those who are *called*, Jews and Gentiles, become the NC My people. The vessels of mercy prepared beforehand for glory. These called ones, Jews and Gentiles, are now called the sons of the living God.

1 Pet. 2:9-10 - The covenant community described in this text, becomes such because of “Him who *called* you out of darkness into His marvelous light”

Joel 2:28-32 - The remnant whom the Lord calls is the NC community. The *calling* begins when Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God and pours out the Holy Spirit on His people.

Acts 2:39 - The promise reaches them, their children, the far off Gentiles, but not every individual in any one of those groups, but to as many as the *Lord our God will call* from any one of those groups. The NC people of God are those whom He calls through the preaching of the gospel of His Son, the Messiah.

Acts 15:12-19 - James describes Gentiles believing in Christ as God taking out “a people for His name” (vs. 14). This is the NC community, the believing Gentiles are now the people of God. These Gentiles have been *called* by God’s name.

Summary. It is correct to say that a person becomes a member of the NC by believing in Jesus Christ. But this answer does not show the continuity with the earlier covenants and the fact that *it is always the Divine initiative that establishes the covenantal relationship*. Historically tracing the Divine initiative to have a people makes it clear that the effectual call is the fulfilling of the calling and gathering promises of the OT made to Abraham, Israel and the Gentiles.

What in systematic theology is called the *effectual call*, is biblically and historically God fulfilling the promises to Abraham and Israel that He would gather His people from among their descendants, including Gentiles, based upon the promises made to Abraham in the AC.

This effectual calling of Jew and Gentile into the NC is done as Jesus sends his ambassadors throughout the world, with the blessing of His word and Spirit, to preach the gospel to all the nations (see great commission category of passages). He is calling and gathering His people and one day He will settle them all in a new land and God will dwell with them in Eden like conditions in a new heaven and new earth.

VIII. As a result of establishing the NC and the beginning of the New Covenant community the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were brought to an end.

By this it is not meant that the promises of the AC disappear and don’t continue to receive their fulfillment in the NC. They do and all Gentile salvation is a fulfilling of God’s promise made to Abraham in the AC. But the *conditions* for membership in the AC *no longer define the community of people* called, “My People” and the relationship between God and “His people” is no longer based upon the AC. His relationship to them is now governed by the provisions of the NC he made with the house of Israel.

Gen. 17:14 with; Eph. 2:14-16, Gal. 3:22-25, 5:3, 6, 11-12, 6:14-15, 1 Cor. 7:18-19, Acts 15:22-29, 21:20, Col. 2:9-17. Proof that the AC is ended is that NC Scripture abolishes circumcision in the flesh, the sign of the AC, and that Gentiles [and Jews!] *are not required to be circumcised* to become the people of God (they do receive NC circumcision, see VII-B above). Dispensationalists have failed to understand that *it is covenantal membership that conveys the special status of being “My people”, not ethnicity or physical descent* (this has *always* been the case Old or New covenant periods. An ethnic Jew could be cut off from his people, i.e. he remains Jewish but he is no longer a member of the covenant and has become one of the group, “not my people”).

Regarding Acts 21:20, I’m not sure if Paul actually told the Jews to not circumcise their children. However I am sure that he told them that if they did it would have no effect on their child’s relationship to God, it would profit them nothing. Their boys would not become one of God’s people because they were circumcised according to the requirements of the AC. The fact that the NT abolishes circumcision in the flesh for *ethnic Jews and Gentile proselytes* makes it clear that we cannot treat ethnic Jews today as if the AC has continued unaltered in regard to them. An ethnic Jew today cannot rightfully claim to be one of “God’s people” based upon the AC, and neither should we be telling them that they hold this status before God. If the AC is now fulfilled in the NC with Israel, and it is, then the “My people” status for Jews and Gentiles flows only from the NC. To be outside of the NC, whether Jew or Gentile, leaves one as “not My people”.

Heb. 8:13, 2 Cor. 3:11, John 4:21-23 - The MC with ethnic Israel was also ended with the establishment of the NC. By this it is not meant that all the types and shadows given in the MC law have not found their fulfillment, *and continuation*, in their fulfilled form, in the NC, they have. However, now that the NC has been instituted with the people of God, practice of the MC ordinances is ended for Jew and Gentile. People do not join themselves to the God of Israel, and worship Him, by becoming faithful to the requirements of the MC. This does not mean that the NC community is without law. Obviously from Jer. 31 we know that the law has been written into the hearts of God’s people. But this is not identical with the MC covenant law (i.e. the Pentateuch) but the fulfilled in Christ form of it. It is important to understand that the conditions for being one of “His people” are no longer governed by the AC and MC.

Many evangelicals incorrectly look upon orthodox Jews as if they are doing good as they attempt to live and think as if God continues to be in a relationship with them *on the basis of the MC*. Those who reject the Son of God, the Son of David, do not continue as the people of God under the MC which became obsolete and passed away when the Messiah initiated the NC. This situation is like one party of a divorce (covenant ended) continuing to behave as if they are married, but that relationship has ended.

Gal. 5:2-6, Heb. 10:26 - The *unbelieving* Jew and Gentile now stand in exactly the same position and relationship to God. The unbelieving Jew does not continue as a member of the MC. God does not require of him that he practice passovers, attend pilgrim feasts, sabbaths, be circumcised, and so forth. God does not require him to be faithful to the types and shadows. He requires him to believe in His Son, Jesus, the Christ, the Son of David.

Believing Gentiles should not be thought of as members of the AC. That the blessing of Abraham comes to them does not mean they are *members* of the AC. The blessings of Abraham come to them as they, *through the gospel* (Eph. 3:6), become members of the NC, not through circumcision in the flesh. God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham, by blessing the nations (Rom. 4:16-17), with the establishment of the NC in Christ, the singular seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:15-16).

IX. Gentile evangelism is calling Gentiles to share in the salvation brought to Israel by Israel's Messiah as He mediates the blessings of the New Covenant to Israel, fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

A survey of statements from Paul, Peter, James and John demonstrates how they understood Gentile evangelism as it historically unfolded after Christ's first coming. The clearest statements are from Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who had to justify His mission to the Gentiles in the face of strong Judaizing tendencies in the early church.

Paul: Eph. 3:8 - Gentile evangelism is what Paul described in Eph. 3:8; preaching *among the Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of the Jew's Messiah. Preaching, to the Gentiles, the same set of promises based upon the covenants of promise given to Israel, culminating in the New Covenant. Calling Gentiles to receive these riches by faith in the King of Israel. Calling them to now become the people of God, as Israel had been.

Rom 11:25 - For the Gentiles to *come in* is the grafting of them into the one olive tree along with the believing Jews (verses 17-24 define the *coming in*). They share in the fatness of the single root, the covenants and promises made to the patriarchs, through faith in Christ. They come into the people of God and take up membership in the group called, "His people" along with believing Jews.

2 Cor. 3:6 with 4:1 - As Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles he saw himself as a minister of the New Covenant as he preached Messiah as Lord *to Gentiles*. Gentile evangelism is to share the riches of Israel's Saviour with the Gentiles and together they are members of the household of God, the NC community (to use Paul's language in Eph. 2).

Rom. 11:11 - 11:14 - The idea that the salvation of the Gentiles is to provoke the Jews to jealousy loses its force if God intended two separate sets of promises; one for Jews and one for Gentiles. That Gentile evangelism and salvation is to provoke the unbelieving Jews to jealousy is based upon the fact that the Gentiles, who once were not the people of God, now are. They are inheriting the promises made to the Jewish fathers. The little dogs are eating the children's bread (Matt. 15:26, Mk. 7:27). The unbelieving Jew is to wake up and say, "what in the world is going on here?! Who invited you to sit at this table? Those Gentiles have gone into the feast and celebration that was originally intended for me!"

Peter: Acts 10:36-44 - The gospel is first sent "to the sons Israel". Though verse 36 begins with, "the word sent to the sons of Israel", verse 43 transitions to, "whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins". As Peter spoke these words the Spirit was poured out on these Gentiles who were hearing "the word sent to the sons of Israel". Vss. 11:4-13 - Peter received the lesson that the wall of separation (Eph. 2) must be taken down, "what God has cleansed you must not call common". Vs. 11:14 - The Gentiles will be saved by the *same words God sent to the sons of Israel*, for that is what Peter spoke to them. What the Lord had Peter do in this situation (Acts 10) is what Paul describes in Eph. 3:8; to go to a group of Gentiles and

proclaim to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, “The word which God sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ.” And to make the point clear, while Peter was proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Messiah *to Gentiles*, God saved them and poured out the Holy Spirit on them. Vss. 11:17-18 - Peter understands that God gave them, Gentiles, the same gift as us Jews. Peter had been confronting Jews who appeared to not even believe the gospel should have been preached to Gentiles.

Acts 15:7 - Years later when Peter said that the “Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe” he is referring to “hear the word of the gospel that was originally sent to the sons of Israel” (Acts 10:36). The Gentiles are to hear the same gospel that God sent to Israel, without distinction regarding how one is saved or what blessings one receives when they are saved; the same good message, the same conditions for being saved, the same blessings received for those who believe.

James: Acts 15:13-17 - James refers to Gentile evangelism as God taking “out of them a people for His name”. Verse 16 refers to rebuilding David’s house, i.e. his dynasty and kingdom, as David’s Son (Jesus the Christ) ascends the throne of a new Israel. Jesus is the King and has inaugurated the kingdom. Since James states in verse 14 that Peter’s experience in Acts 10 is the fulfillment of the prophetic word of Amos 9:11-12, the throne of David has been set up, *now* (after the resurrection of Christ), “so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even the Gentiles who are called by God’s name”. Gentile evangelism is calling the Gentiles to trust in the newly installed King of Israel; to receive the King of Israel as a faithful Jew would.

John: John 1:11-13 - The significance of this passage is appreciated when understood in the historic setting of the transition from the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants to the NC. John writes from the perspective of looking back over the previous decades. Vs. 11 - The Messiah came to ethnic Israel, but they did not receive Him as the Son of David, the Son of God. Vs. 12 -The emphasis in this verse is on believing Gentiles. As John looks back over the early decades of the church, the Messiah was rejected by the majority of the Jews, but received by many Gentiles. Those Gentiles who received Him were given the *right* to become children of God. This language would not be used to refer to ethnic Jews; because to them *belonged the adoption as sons* (Rom. 9:4, NASB, ESV), to them belonged the children’s bread (Matt. 15:26); but now those Gentiles who received Him, have been given the *right* to become children of God. They are given the authority, or legal right, to now be children of God; full fledged members of God’s household. Verse 13 is to be understood in light of the above. They are born children of God, *not of blood*; they are not the children of God because they can trace their ethnic descent through a blood line to Abraham. They are born from the will of God and it is no surprise that John includes Jesus’ discussion with Nicodemus regarding the new birth (John 3), in the context of telling Nicodemus that the Son of God came to save the *world*.

John 10:16 - Gentile evangelism is calling the Gentiles to be gathered with the new Israel. Jesus was sent to gather the lost sheep of Israel; the first fold to which He refers (Matt. 15:24, John 10:16). But the other sheep, Gentile sheep, will be gathered with the new Israel and *they will be one flock with one Shepherd*.

The above survey demonstrates that these apostles understood Gentile evangelism as the *bringing of the Gentiles into the people of God*, the Gentiles coming in and sharing in the salvation God has brought to Israel by His Christ.

The basis is now established to understand how many OT promises do relate to the church today.

X. Applying OT Promises to the people of God today

First I will state some principles (based on principles I-IX above), then consider a few NT examples (X-A), and then look at a number of OT passages (X-B).

Since Gentile Evangelism is the calling of the Gentiles to share in the salvation brought to Israel, *as promised to Israel in the OT*, then those OT promises made to the *new Israel* belong to the NT church formed by the Messiah, consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles; His one flock (John 10:16), His assembly, ekklesia (Matt. 16:18), the one new man (Eph. 2:15), the one body (Eph. 2:16), the household of God (Eph. 2:19), a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5), a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people (1 Pet. 2:9).

“New Israel” in the above paragraph means: “The people God has called to be members of the New Covenant mediated by Jesus Christ” (see VII-B,C above).

The following four principles should guide us on how to apply OT promises to the people of God today.

1. NT apostles preach to *believing* Gentiles *as if they are believing Jews* who have inherited the promises made to Israel throughout the OT.
2. OT promises referring to Israel *after* the coming of Christ are for all believers in Christ *without distinction* between Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:28-29, Col. 3:10-12, 1 Cor. 12:13 - see Acts 15:8-9, Rom. 10:12).
3. OT “typological promises” to be fulfilled for a new Israel when Messiah comes are also for all believers in Christ, understanding that “typology” is a type of promise.
4. An OT promise need not have an explicit reference to Gentiles in order to be applicable to NT Gentile believers.

These principles are illustrated in the following NT applications of OT promises.

X-A. NT Examples of applying OT promises to the people of God today

2 Cor. 6:16-7:1 - In 7:1 Paul explicitly tells the Gentile Corinthians that these OT promises belong to them, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved”, and that they should appropriate these promises as a means of “cleansing themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.” The Lord *today* is speaking these ancient promises (referred to by Paul), originally spoken to MC Israel, to the Corinthian church.

The promise of 16b is repeated multiple times from the exodus forward. It is recorded in Ex. 25, Lev. 26, Jer. 32, Eze. 37 and other places also. The contexts of these four references contain no immediate references to Gentile salvation (principle 4 above) but Paul, without reserve speaks of the Gentile Corinthian believers as “having these promises”. He preaches to *believing* Gentiles as *believing* Jews who have inherited the promises made to Israel throughout the OT (principle 1 above). These believing Gentiles are now “God’s people”, His “sons and daughters”, therefore these promises are theirs. They are NC members and He has bound Himself to them to be their God.

The promises of Ex. 25:8 and Lev. 26:11-12 (quoted in vs. 16) in their original setting are applied to ethnic Israel and refer to the literal tabernacle built under Moses, and then God building His temple in the land of Canaan during Solomon’s reign. In these historic fulfillments of this promise, God dwelt among them during these *post* exodus and *pre* Messianic times. However, since Paul applies these same promises to the Corinthian church in his day, this demonstrates that there is more in these promises than the original fulfillments, i.e. the tabernacle and temple in Canaan. What is this “more”? It is that these original *promises and works* have a *typological - eschatological* purpose. Future generations of Israel will enjoy the *typological fulfillment* of these promises, they too will have a tabernacle, a temple and God dwelling among them. And they too will have the responsibility of not defiling it. The believing Jews *and Gentiles* in Corinth in Paul’s day are one of those future generations (principle 3 above).

Verses 17 and 18 are more difficult to interpret regarding their OT context. If verse 17a is a reference to Isaiah 52:11, this is a reference to God gathering Israel from among the nations (Assyria and Babylon) and resettling them in the land. It is likened to a second exodus that God does before all nations (vs. 52:10). The exhortation to separation of 52:11, which Paul may refer to in 2 Co. 6:17, originally referred to the Levites who were to bear the holy vessels. According to Paul, they are encouraged to come out and be separate because the Lord promises to receive them and be a Father to them. Paul’s phrase containing the precious promise, “And I will receive you” (6:17b) and the promises of verse 18 are difficult to locate in the OT. Paul may be summarizing in his own words the general promise of God to MC Israel that He called them from Egypt and they became His children, and the same promise is true regarding God’s calling them after the exiles. Again He calls them back and becomes their Father and they are His children. However, what is not difficult to see is that Paul is not timid to take Yahweh’s promise language of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants spoken to His beloved wife Israel and tell the believing Gentile Corinthians that the Lord is speaking thus to them. Paul preaches to *believing* Gentiles as *believing* Jews who have inherited the

promises made to Israel throughout the OT. He is preaching “the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles”.

Heb. 13:5-6 and Deut. 31:6 - The author of Hebrews makes a *direct* application of God’s promise of protective and delivering presence to Israel (Deut. 31:6), to the people of God in his day. He quotes the Lord, as saying to his readers in his day, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” He is so sure that *God is presently speaking such a promise to them*, he says, “So we may boldly say: the ‘Lord is my helper; I will not fear.’” Notice the covenantal language in Deuteronomy by which the promise is introduced, “the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you.” Deut. 31:6 was originally a promise to MC Israel, and it is also a promise to NC Israel. It is a promise to *whoever can rightfully bear the title*, “His People”. He is their God, they are His people. Gentiles in Christ rightfully bear this title.

It is evident that Hebrews was written with a Jewish readership in view. But unless one is willing to deny the applicability of these promises to believing Gentiles one must conclude that the author has God speaking these promises made to Israel to Jewish and Gentiles believers in Christ. If what has been said above is correct (principles I-IX), then there can be no justification for restricting the promises of this letter to Jewish believers. Furthermore, if MC promises addressed to Israel during the “first covenant” belong to believing Gentiles too, then how much more do *New Covenant* promises (i.e. book of Hebrews) addressed to Israel belong to believing Gentiles.

2 Pet. 3:13 - From First Peter it is clear that His letters address believing Gentiles and Jews. Those addressed in 2 Pet. 3:13 are the people described in 2 Pet. 1:1b, those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. From 2 Pet. 3:1 we see that Peter has the same readership in view that he had in First Peter, which clearly included Gentiles (1 Pet. 2:10). In 2 Pet. 3:13 he has certain promises in mind which he understands as the Lord’s commitment to establish a new heavens and earth filled with righteousness. No specific promise is quoted but a review of the OT reveals a number of promises that give the idea expressed in verse 13. Isaiah 65:17-25 speaks of the Lord creating a new heavens and earth and the former will not be remembered or come to mind. Isaiah 66:22-24 speaks of both the heavens and earth remaining forever, Jerusalem’s descendants remaining forever, and all flesh coming and worshipping before the Lord in a new Jerusalem in the new earth. In 3:13 Peter speaks of his Jewish and Gentile readers, *according to His promise*, as looking for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Believing Jews and Gentiles nourish their hope on the same promise. There is no justification for splitting the singular promise here, i.e. some aspects for Jews (Israel), others for Gentiles (church). Or to split the readership, i.e. verse 13 is addressed only to the Jews, or only to the Gentiles.

Other significant NT passages illustrating these principles are Hose 13:14 with 1 Cor. 15:55 and Isaiah 52:4-12 with Romans 10:15. Isaiah 52:4-12 refers to God’s saving of His people Israel using the figure of a second exodus (vss. 11-12). Paul in Romans 10:15 refers to this passage (vs. 7) regarding salvation going to the Gentiles. I.E. many Gentiles will be saved in this day along with Israel.

X-B. Examples Of Applying OT Promises to the NT Church

Psalms 121 - This psalm is often read with a disregard to properly interpreting who is being addressed. To whom is God making these promises? From verses 3 and 4 it is obvious that the promises are made to Israel. Would anyone dare say that God spoke these promises to the Babylonians? Egyptians? Assyrians? Persians? Indiscriminately to Americans in the 21st century? Of course not.

At the present time in redemptive history these promises apply to NC Israel, the NC community, consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles, the body of Christ, the NT church. Israel *as a people* created and formed by God never goes out of existence. The promises of psalm 121 are timeless and made to her. In Christ you are part of the Israel mentioned in this psalm and God is committed to you as He is committed to Israel, the covenant community. And God always saves Israel.

Just as it is a serious mistake to *not* apply these promises to the NT Jew and Gentile church, it is also a mistake *to* apply these promises to the unbelieving political state we call Israel today. Can those Jews described by Jesus in Luke 12:54-59, to whom Jesus said, “how is it you do not discern this time?”, can they turn to this psalm, and while rejecting the Christ expect the Lord (Yahweh) to save them? No, they cannot. Having failed to discern the time of the Messiah, and having rejected Him, they cannot consider

themselves part of the “Israel” of this text any longer. Unbelieving Jews, by rejecting the mediator and blood of the NC have not entered into the NC community. The definition of Israel, explained above, is that of *covenant membership* and not simply ethnic descendency from Abraham. One can be an ethnic descendent of Abraham, and not be part of Israel, because he has been cut off (see MC law) from the covenant community. This is true for AC, MC and NC periods. Conversely, a non Jewish person who joins himself to Israel becomes part of Israel. This too is true for AC, MC and NC. Israel as a people =’s covenant community.

Neither can non Jewish unbelievers in Christ expect that the promises of psalm 121 apply to them. Using the words of Eph. 2, they are without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. The promises that do apply to *unbelieving Jew and Gentile* are those given in the gospel to be preached first in Jerusalem and then to the ends of the earth.

Psalm 130 - The situation described in this psalm and our need of forgiveness of sin and redemption from iniquity is timeless. God’s commitment is expressed in verse 8, “And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Based upon the above principles every believer in Christ today can *without reserve or qualification* gain hope and be encouraged to persevere in this life on the basis of God’s promise here expressed.

Isa. 25-26 - Isa. 24 speaks of a judgement upon the entire earth (vss. 1,19-23). The only one left standing is the “Lord of Hosts” and He is on Mount Zion in Jerusalem reigning gloriously before His elders. Chapter 25 is a response of praise to this great judgement and the Lord’s reign. Our purpose here is not to attempt an interpretation the many details of these two chapters but to consider some of the wonderful promises they contain to the people of God for their encouragement and comfort. When these promises were first given, those in Israel who feared and trusted God would have found great hope in these words, even though they lived many centuries prior to there fulfillment. The believing Jew and Gentile church today ought also be blessed by these words of our Lord.

These promises are to have their fulfillment *after* the first coming of Christ, therefore the NC house of Israel are the people who inherit these promises. The expression of the NC community in vs. 8, “this is our God” is covenant language. The community’s faith in their God is expressed in the words, “we have waited for Him and He will save us”. This abiding faith in such promises is how the church lives today, as the complete fulfillment of the salvation described in these chapters still awaits every believer in Christ. The “salvation” described in these chapters cannot be reduced to only forgiveness when someone “gets saved”, but the consummation of the kingdom and our participation in it.

“The righteous nation” of 26:1-2 that enters into a new city in the land of Judah is a promise made to Israel, to be fulfilled in the NC. This new Israel of the NC is now a “righteous nation which keeps the truth”. This *righteous* nation is believing Jew and Gentile in Christ. It certainly is not a group of ethnic Jews who continue to reject the Messiah. The expression of confidence in the Lord’s grace in 26:12-13 is for this new Israel and every believing Jew and Gentile may have such confidence. These words of God to His people have not expired.

Exactly how the land promises to Israel will ultimately be fulfilled is the subject of much debate (26:15) but it is NC Israel who will participate in the fulfillment, that is believing Jews and Gentiles, and not unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile. Verses 26:20-21 bring us back to the judgement described in chapter 24 and contain God’s promise that all his people will be kept safe from the final judgement. Every believer in Christ ought to trust in and take comfort from such an invitation and promise.

Isa. 54:1-17 contains many promises addressed to a new Jerusalem or a new Zion. Note the *non individualistic* nature of many of these promises and Jesus use of this passage in John 6:44-45 (54:11-14). This new Jerusalem will be established in righteousness and all her children shall be taught by the Lord (vs. 13). She will defeat all her enemies, and in contrast to God raising up nations to destroy Jerusalem (vs. 15), He will destroy them. Verse 17 describes the new Israel, the NC community, the church consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles. This new community, “the servants of the Lord” (vs. 17) is indestructible. We may struggle to see the exact fulfillment of these wonderful promises given to Israel, but the point of this paper has been; that God always saves Israel, as such passages show, *and* that through the gospel believing Gen-

tiles are brought into this community which He saves and they participate *fully without distinction* in these blessings.

Isa. 35:1-10 - See Matt. 11:1-5 with 35:5-6. What a glorious picture for the church today! We are marching to Zion, the beautiful city of God. God coming with vengeance to save them (vs. 4) began with the *first* coming of Christ (Matt. 11:1-5) and I expect the complete fulfillment to be at His second coming.

The Hymn “How firm a salvation” - Few people realize that classical dispensationalism would consider that this hymn is filled with doctrinal error because it fails to keep Israel and the church separate. And it misapplies numerous promises, belonging only to Israel, to the NT Gentile church. Verse 1 (hymn) beautifully expresses that the foundation of our faith is laid in His word and those promises are for those who believe in Jesus Christ, “to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled”. Verse 2, based on Isa. 41:8-13, reminds us of promises made to Israel, Jacob, the NC community, all believers in Christ. Verses 3-4, based on Isa. 43:1-2, reminds us of promises made to Israel, Jacob, all believers in Christ. Verse 5 refers to Isa. 40:11. From Isa. 40:3 and Matt. 3:3 we know the fulfillment of 40:1-11 began with the first coming of Messiah. The “My people” of vs. 1 is the “Jerusalem” of verse 2, the “Zion” of vs. 9, the “flock” of verse 11. Is there any doubt that verses 10-11 refer to Jesus Christ (John 10:11,14-16)? But there is no direct reference to Gentiles in Isa. 40:1-11? But in Christ it is said, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people” (Rom. 15:10, discussed further below) and “I will call them My people, who were not My people” (Rom. 9:25, 1 Pet. 2:10). As members of the NC promised in the OT, every OT NC promise to “My people” belongs to every Gentile (and Jewish) believer in Jesus Christ. That includes Isa. 40:1-11.

XI. Summary - Thinking Through What “Israel” means in the Bible.

Some would object to the approach used on the Isaiah passages, and perhaps even the Psalms, considered in section X-B. If one uses only a “nationalistic - ethnic” definition of “Israel, Jacob, etc.” then one must exclude believing *Gentiles* when *Israel* is the recipient of a promise because, obviously, a Gentile is not a Jew, he cannot claim he is a physical descendant of Jacob. Then too, “the NT church is not Israel”. Then God *is not* speaking to the church today in Psalm 121 and 130 since those psalms are addressed to Israel. For those using only a “nationalistic - ethnic” definition of “Israel” the converse issue must also be faced: unbelieving Jews ought to be considered as recipients of promises such as those considered above in Psalm 121, 130 and the Isaiah passages. But there is no warrant in the NT to encourage unbelieving Jews to expect anything but judgement unless they receive Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. This “strange” (at least to this author) reversal of *excluding believing Gentiles* and *including unbelieving Jews* regarding many OT promises occurs because of one’s definition of Israel.

The difference in thinking between the two approaches being contrasted above is in *how one defines Israel*. The phrase “NC Israel” in contrast to “AC and MC Israel” has been used repeatedly above to emphasize that Israel after the coming of Christ takes on a new form. However, if we keep in mind two things, this *new form* of Israel is not radically different from the old form. True, the NC is significantly different (sections V-VII) *but the form of “Israel” is not*. Consider:

1) In the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants ethnic descendancy did make one a covenant member and part of Israel, but one could still be *cut off* from these covenants *and no longer be a part of Israel*. Regarding the NC only those who enter and remain in it are part of Israel. Those Jews who reject the Messiah do not enter the NC and are cut off from Israel. Just as those who rejected circumcision, or other provisions of the MC, would be cut off from the AC and MC and no longer part of Israel. *A person can be Jewish and not part of “Israel” when “Israel” is defined as the people of God by covenant*. This was true during OT times and it is true during NT times as well. Romans 9:6 plainly teaches this definition of “Israel” as a people (section I). “But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel [i.e. Jacob] belong to Israel [people of God by Covenant]” (ESV, brackets my interpretation). Some have sought to explain these matters by saying there are two Israels, a spiritual and physical (ethnic) Israel. But such is not Paul’s point. He is saying that all physical descendants of Jacob are not necessarily part of Israel (the people of God).

2) The second matter to keep in mind that helps us see that the *form* of the “new Israel” is not radically different from the “old Israel” is that even in the “old Israel” Gentiles became full fledged citizens of Israel by

leaving their idols, professing faith in Israel's God and being circumcised. That is, they entered the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants even though they were not physical descendants of Jacob. However, upon entering the covenants, they became a part of Israel, without distinction, from that time forward (section IV).

The point: Covenant membership takes priority over blood line in the definition of Israel. This is true during *both* the OT and NT periods of history. Thus the *same definition for Israel* applies for AC, MC, and the NC. However, in the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants members were cut off because they broke these covenants. In the NC no members will be cut off as the Lord who initiates the NC makes provisions which ensure the faithfulness and forgiveness of each member (section VI). But the definition of Israel remains the same, covenant members, regardless of ethnicity, the people of Yahweh (God).

When one insists that "some special promise remains to the ethnic Jew" they are not taking into account that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are ended. The unbelieving ethnic Jew is no longer in a unique relationship with God on the basis of the AC and MC (section VIII). But the believing Gentile, on the basis of the NC in Christ's blood is (section VII-B)! If the Jew does not enter the NC he will become positionally like any unbelieving Gentile; no covenant relationship with Yahweh.

It needs to be understood that *all promises are inside the covenants*. The redemptive covenants make the provision for, and express God's commitment to, provide grace to those who believe in Him. If one is not in covenant relationship with God he has no promises of grace and mercy. If one is not in the NC one has no promises *except* the promise of the gospel to come to Christ the mediator of the NC.

That the promises are only *inside the covenants* is clear from Eph. 2:11-12. To be outside of the covenants is to be without Christ (vs. 11) and have no promises. God gives grace and mercy only in and through Christ. The covenants of promise first and foremost provide Christ to the people of God, to the members of the covenant. The Gentiles receive the promises only by entering into the covenants of promise. This "way" to mercy has not changed between the OT and NT periods. However, those Jews who do not enter the NC because they reject the Messiah, end up *relationally* before God just as the unbelieving Gentiles. The only promise they have is the same promise the gospel brings to the world, they too, may be grafted back in by faith in the Messiah. This too is not radically new, for even as members of the AC and MCs in order for them to receive the *fullness* of what the typology of these covenants promised, they would have to believe in Yahweh and the promise of His messianic Servant who would ultimately save Israel.

The Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants do not run in parallel with the NC (sections VII-B and VIII). But many people refer to unbelieving Jews today as if they still sustain the relationship that Jews in the MC sustained to God. This is wrong thinking. John the Baptist and Jesus sought to warn their generation that unless they repented and were born again, their privileged relationship status to God, would soon end. They could not, would not, enter the kingdom of God being established by the Messiah unless they were born again. This advancement occurred because the days had arrived when God would establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel and Judah (section VII-A). This He did with those who believed in His Son, with those whom He called (section VII-C). They were forgiven and His law was written into their hearts instead of on stone.

The NT does not support either of the following two ideas: 1) Every *unbelieving* Jew has some promise made to him that every unbelieving Gentile does not, or, 2) every believing Jew has some promise made to him that every believing Gentile does not. Instead the NT constantly enforces that now that Messiah has come, "there is now no distinction" between Jew and Gentile, and that *as unbelievers or believers* (section VII-B). This insistence does not take any promises away from Israel but asserts that; 1) Israel receives these promises *only* by faith in Jesus Christ and only inside the NC, and 2) believing Gentiles also receive the full blessing of Abraham promised to Israel, inside the NC. Dispensationalism, instead of removing the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, which is the whole tenor of the NT, attempted to re-erect that wall, on both the believing and unbelieving sides of the matter.

XII. "Literal Interpretation", the Definition of Israel and Grammatical Historical Interpretation

Some would object to a definition of Israel centered on the idea of covenant membership on the grounds that it violates a "literal" interpretation of Scripture. More precisely they would say such a definition vio-

lates “Grammatical Historical Interpretation” (GHI). It has been shown that both testaments do not confine themselves to a use of “Israel” meaning strictly physical descendants of Jacob or including all physical descendants of Jacob. If one practices GHI in a way that ignores the Bible’s use of *typology* one might conclude that such a definition of Israel is a violation of GHI. However, to not properly interpret *God Intended typology* is to fail in GHI because many of the *historical* (“literal, physical”) works God has performed with the nation of Israel (individuals, offices and ordinances) have typological functions. One cannot ignore the typology and understand this history correctly, that is, *as God intended it to be understood*. Nor will we treat prophetic Scripture correctly if we ignore the typology developed by God that the prophetic text uses. This will be illustrated below.

It is granted that many OT promises applicable to NC Israel are not easy to understand as regards precisely what is promised or how it applies today or in the future. What has been emphasized is that these promises belong to the NT people of God, to the NT church from the first coming of Christ forward. We should gaze upon them and hear the voice of our God promising future blessing that at sometime and in some way we will surely experience. We can, as Paul said in Rom. 15:4, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope, without violating GHI of the text.

Regarding literalism, typology and GHI in relation to OT promises, it is recommended that the following principle of interpretation be applied. When a NC promise is being made in OT Scripture and the promise describes the appearance of a MC type in the new covenant era, *what appears is the fulfillment of the MC type*. The following four passages illustrate this principle.

Malachi 3:1-4 - GHI rightly requires us to understand the original context of these verses historically and textually. Major portions of Malachi’s message are a reproof of Israel’s offerings and priesthood in his generation. The priests despise the Lord’s name (1:6b), they offer defiled food on His altar (1:7), they offer the blind and lame for sacrifice (1:8), the Lord desires that someone would just shut the doors to the temple and they would stop making burnt offerings in vain. He has no pleasure in them and he will not accept an offering from Israel any longer (1:10). See also 2:11-12, 13b-14. In chapter 2 the Lord rebukes the priests who should have corrected the people (2:7) for bringing such sacrifices. The rebuke is graphic as God will spread refuse on their faces and the priests will be taken away like refuse (2:3). In 2:4-8 the Lord refers to the original setting apart of the Levities to the task of the priesthood and to the task of ensuring that His worship would be properly conducted and to a time in the past when the Levities were successful in so doing.

Now this disgusting state of affairs will not continue forever (3:1-4)! A messenger will be sent to Israel and then the Lord Himself will come to His temple (3:1). When he comes, “who can endure the day of His coming?” because He is like a refiners fire (3:2). What will He do? He will purify a future generation of Levities so “That they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness” (3:3) compared to the travesty described in chapters 1 and 2. The grand result is given in verse 4, “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, as in former (see 2:5-6) years.” So the Lord comes to His temple and He purifies a new generation of Levitical priests and levities so they may offer to the Lord offerings in righteousness. This new generation of Levities will be faithful in instructing the people and no longer allow them to bring the lame and blind for sacrifice. Thus far we’ve done GHI.

When are these promise fulfilled? Who is the messenger and who is the Lord of verse 1? The messenger is John the Baptist (Matt. 3, Luke 4) and the Lord is Jesus Christ. Who is the levitical priesthood purified by Jesus Christ referred to in 3:1-4, a levitical priesthood purified *after* the first coming of Christ? And what is “the offering of Judah and Jerusalem”, referred to in 3:1-4, that will be pleasant to the LORD *after* the first coming of Christ? Many dispensationalists emphasizing a literalism *without typology* have been led to say that there is a huge historical gap between the fulfillment of verse 1 and the fulfillment of verses 2-4, literally 2000 years and on-going. They have taught that in a future millennium somehow the Jews will determine who amongst them are the literal descendants of Levi and these will be purified by Jesus and begin serving as Levitical priests and Jewish people living in Judah and Jerusalem will avail themselves of this new priesthood and begin to offer acceptable animal sacrifices to the Lord, *as in the days of old*. When the dispensationalist is asked, “are these people believers in Jesus?” Some say “yes”, others say, “no, these are unbelieving Jews”.

Is it reasonable to think that after the Father sends His son to die as the Lamb of God for His people, that unbelieving Jews who reject this sacrifice, and turn to animals instead as a means to approach God, are going to be “pleasant to the Lord” (Malachi 3:4)? Does not Hebrews 10:29 address this? And can such offerings be considered “offerings in righteousness” (3:3)? I don’t believe so. And if one says, “no, believing ethnic Jews will do this.” How can this be when the MC which instituted this whole system has been ended *for Jews* by Jesus the Mediator of the NC? (section VIII).

Is there another approach? Yes, the NT points us in a different direction. Rom. 12:1-2 - Paul exhorts the believing Jews (and Gentiles) to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, *acceptable* to God. No longer does the faithful Israelite present to God a perfect lamb from his flock as an acceptable offering. Instead he presents himself as holy and set apart to God by the way he lives unto God (12:2). Phillip 4:18 - The monetary support the Philippians sent to Paul is “a sweet smelling aroma, an *acceptable* sacrifice, well pleasing to God”. Heb. 13:12-16 - “By Him” we offer the sacrifice of praise. And (vs. 16) God is *well pleased* with the sacrifices of doing good and sharing. These statements are especially significant in the context of Hebrews because of the letter’s emphasis that the MC sacrifices are ended since the “better covenant” has been initiated by God. 1 Pet. 2:4-5 - all of those who “come to Him” (vs. 4a) are members of a “holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual [as opposed to physical] sacrifices *acceptable* to God through Jesus Christ. Every believer through Jesus Christ has now received the privileged status of being a priest, one who draws near to God and offers acceptable sacrifices to Him. In all four of these passages it is pointed out that these sacrifices are *acceptable*, or well pleasing to God. This is what Malachi 3:4 speaks of. Rev. 1:4-6 - All those loved by Christ and washed from their sins in His blood have been made kings *and priests* to His God and Father (see Ex. 9:6 and also Rev. 5:10, 20:6).

Every ethnic Jew who receives the Messiah and is washed in His blood, the blood of the NC (Luke 22:20), obtains a levitical priesthood *status* and through Christ offers acceptable, well pleasing sacrifices to God. These NT believing Jews called to repentance by John, Jesus, Paul, others are the “Judah and Jerusalem” of Mal. 3:4 and there is not a huge historical gap between the fulfillment of 3:1 and 3:2-4. By saving many Jews Jesus did purify them and they began offering sacrifices which were pleasant to the Lord. MC Levities (3:3) *were a type of all the people of God* who can draw near to Him on the basis of the true sacrifice the Father provided, His only Son.

The interpretation just given is an application of the principle stated above: When a NC promise is being made in OT scripture and the promise describes the appearance of a MC type (sons of Levi, MC offerings, Judah and Jerusalem) in the new covenant era, *what appears is the fulfillment of the MC type*.

Malachi 1:10-11 For purposes of this discussion Malachi 1:10-11 is even more significant than 3:1-4. After the Lord speaks of shutting the doors to the MC temple and form of worship, and that he will no longer accept an offering from fallen MC Israel (vs. 10), He states that His name will be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to His name, and a pure offering (vs. 11). What MC Israel has failed to do the Gentiles in every place will accomplish! Notice the contrast between the successful Gentiles of verse 11 and the current condition of Israel, “But you profane it [the altar or God’s name]” of verse 12.

How will this pure worship *from the Gentiles* be accomplished? It is not clear from Malachi, or indeed the entire OT, since *how* the Gentiles would be included in the people of God was a mystery during these times (Rom. 16:25-26, Eph. 3:3-6). But, in Christ and on the basis of the promises of the AC we now know that they are included in the salvation described in Malachi 3:1-4. They are part of the “Judah and Jerusalem” of 3:4 having been grafted in and their offerings in every place described in 1:11 *are not* a distinct and separate thing from 3:4. The Lord Who came to His temple to save the fold of Israel also brought other sheep into His one flock (John 10:16). They along with the purified Levities, will offer up pure offerings in every place (vs. 11). Would anyone dare say that after Christ’s first coming, believing Gentiles in every nation are going to build altars and burn incense to the Lord? and these offerings would be considered “a pure offering” (Mal. 1:11)?

The interpretation given of Mal. 1:11 is an application of the principle; When a NC promise is being made in OT scripture and the promise describes the appearance of a MC type (Gentiles making incense offerings) in the new covenant era, *what appears is the fulfillment of the MC type*.

What do Mal 3:1-4 and 1:10-11 have to do with the definition of Israel? The purified Levities of Malachi 3 make up the new Israel. Furthermore the Gentiles of Mal. 1:10-11 in Christ will participate without distinction in this acceptable worship of the God of Israel through Christ. From the time of Christ forward there are not two worshipping bodies, there are not two bodies of Christ, there are not two covenant memberships or two flocks. Though not clear from the OT but made clear in the NT (Eph. 3:1-8, esp. 5-6), the called - grafted in - Holy Spirit circumcised Gentiles (Rom. 2:29) of Mal. 1:11 *plus* the called Holy Spirit circumcised Jews of Malachi 3:3-4 are New Covenant Israel, offering acceptable worship to God throughout the earth. The alternative approach of reproducing in redemptive history *after* Christ's first coming a community of ethnic Levities and Jews offering MC sacrifices in Jerusalem *and* Gentile communities making burnt offerings on literal altars in every nation appears to be a near denial of the Gospel. These problems are avoided when we realize that the promised MC types appear in their *fulfilled form* after Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation. Christ did not do away with *any* of the Mosaic law, but every bit of it was and is being fulfilled (Matt. 5:17-20) by His works begun at His first coming and continued to the present day as He sits at the right hand of God reigning and building His kingdom.

Isaiah 56:1-8 - Isaiah 56:1 speaks that the Lord's salvation is about to come and His righteousness is to be revealed (Matt. 3:2, 4:17, Rom. 1:17). Verse 6 speaks of the foreigners (Gentiles) who join themselves to the Lord and love His name. Verse 7 promises that these Gentiles will be brought to God's holy mountain, made joyful in His house of prayer and their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on God's altar. This new house of God shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. Verse 8 promises that God will gather the outcasts of Israel and gather others to him (other nations, Gentiles). This passage ought to be interpreted in the same manner as shown above with Malachi 3:1-4. The holy mountain, the house of prayer, the altar and burnt sacrifices, all MC types, will appear in their NC fulfilled forms. And verse 8 explicitly speaks of the Gentiles being gathered together with the outcasts of Israel (John 10:16). Surely all this is accomplished by the Messiah and the salvation God brings by Him referred to in verse 1.

Eze 37:23-27 - In verses 24 and 25 God promises through the prophet Ezekiel that David will rule over this renewed people of God and shepherd them. As a result of this Davidic shepherding the people will walk in God's commandments. Are we to understand that the immediate *Son of Jesse* will reappear in the NC as the king over all God's NC people? No, of course not. The Son of Jesse was a type and shadow of Christ the Messiah who is one of David's sons according to the flesh, the greater Son of David. Thus when the OC prophet speaks of a temporary, shadow, element of OC Israel, reappearing in the NC, what appears is the fulfillment, not the shadow. Jesus Christ the Messiah is the shepherd king described by Ezekiel, not David the son of Jesse.

XIII. The NT Ideal and "Rule": Jew and Gentile Rejoicing Together Without Distinction or Divisions

Regarding difficult matters it helps to see the forest from the trees. The following paragraphs attempt to summarize major portions of the NT as it relates to the salvation of Gentiles in relation to the salvation of Israel. Once this panoramic view is given two significant Pauline texts are discussed (Rom. 15:5-13 and Gal. 6:12-16).

The bringing of the Gentiles in mass (as opposed to the small precursor that occurred during OT times) into the people of God became a practical challenge in the NT churches. This challenge is addressed in numerous places. In the book of Acts Luke gives special attention to record the history of the Gentiles being grafted in. Out of all that Peter must have done, his being sent to Cornelius' household receives *detailed* recording (Acts 10) and his being confronted by "those of the circumcision" in Acts 11 is preserved for us. Later the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles was challenged when men from Jerusalem went to Antioch and began to teach the disciples that they must be circumcised in order to be saved. This occasioned the Jerusalem council and Luke carefully preserved this controversy and its outcome in Acts 15.

The book of Galatians is addressing Judaizing problems in that region.

When the book of Romans is considered historically one realizes that much of it addresses the issue of the salvation of the Gentiles and their being brought into the people of God (1:5-6, 13-14, 16, 3:9, 22-23, 29-30, 4:9-12, 16-17, 9:24-26, 30, 10:12-13, 19-20, 11:11-26, 15:8-13, 20-21, note 16:25-27 in relation to 1:5). One could say that this is Paul's major concern in the letter. This may be an overstatement but he wants the gospel understood, and he wants it understood that the gospel brings salvation to *both* Jew and Gentile, and that God has kept His promises to Abraham and Israel, and in saving both Jew and Gentile God's glory is magnificently displayed (Rom. 11:35-36)!

Peter address these matters in 1 Peter (2:4-10). Not in a controversial setting, but in a matter of fact manner as he knows he is writing to Jewish *and* Gentile believers and he states that the Gentiles are now part of the people of God, they are part of this holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices in the new temple (see Mal 1:10-11, 3:1-6 discussed above).

John has addressed these matters in his gospel in his own way. The most well known text in the Bible, John 3:16-18, focuses on the issue of the salvation of the Gentiles. John 1:10-13 addresses the question, "who has the right to be the children of God, the people of God (see discussion above)?" It is John who shows us the beginning of the salvation of the Samaritans and we hear their declaration that the Messiah is "the Saviour of the world" (4:42). John records the Saviour's statement, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. (10:16)". John expounds on the high priest's prophecy regarding the Saviour's death so we will know that the Saviour is dieing not "for that [Jewish] nation only but to gather together the [Gentile] children of God scattered amongst the non Jewish nations (11:51-52). This emphasis running through John's gospel climaxes in Jesus' own statement that if He be lifted up he would draw all peoples to Himself (12:22). Which reminds us of the OT promises that nations will run to Him and people from every nation will put their hope in Him.

This section is titled, "The NT Ideal and "Rule: Jew and Gentile Rejoicing Together Without Distinction Or Division". This *ideal* is expressed in two NT texts; Romans 15:5-13 and Gal. 6:12-16.

Romans 15:5-13 - This passage beautifully summarizes the great work of God of saving Israel His people and bringing the Gentiles into this blessing.

A reading of chapter 14 through to 15:5-6 will substantiate that the likemindedness for which Paul prays (15:5-6) could be threatened if either Jew or Gentile did not appreciate how the Gentiles were now incorporated into the people of God. Verse 7 exhorts, "Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." Christ had received the Gentiles to the glory of God, thus Jews ought to receive these Gentiles. Christ also had received believing Jews to the glory of God, thus Gentiles must drop their resentment and suspicions toward Jews.

Paul proceeds to explain that the Messiah has become a servant to the Jews (the circumcision) so that *both* Jews and Gentiles will receive God's mercy, "Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (15:8-9). The Jewish Fathers were given great promises, promises which God has never forgotten. Thus Jesus Christ has become a servant to the Jews to fulfill the promises made to the patriarchs "and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." The fulfillment of the promises to the patriarchs *does not exclude the Gentiles but includes them* for the covenant with the fathers (AC) from its beginning promised that all nations would receive God's blessing (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4). The fulfillment of the promises to the fathers widens the circle for the whole world, to bring the Gentiles in. This is Paul's understanding of the AC, that Abraham is "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) and becomes the father of Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 4:9-17, Gal. 3:26-29). Gentile and Jewish salvation has always been on the basis of the same covenants of promise. In Jesus Christ there is not a plan A for Israel, and a plan B for Gentiles. No, Plan A from the beginning has included the saving of the Gentiles and uniting them with the one people of God. This widened display of mercy, made known in Christ, alone confirms the promises made to the fathers, *and obliterates distinctions between Jews and Gentiles!*

Paul next quotes a number of passages which substantiate this claim that Gentiles will receive mercy along with the Jews. "As it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to

Your name.” (15:9) And again he says: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!” (15:10) This statement is expressing the “ideal” of 15:6, the Gentiles rejoicing with His people (faithful Jews) is that for which Paul prayed, “that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:6). Verses 11-12 contain additional quotes referring to the inclusion of the Gentiles into the people of God. The last thing that Paul wanted to see was that there would be a “Jewish” church on one side of town and a Gentile church on the other!

This unity of one body, Jew and Gentile, without distinctions, is the tenor of the entire NT and there will be no going back to *any kind* of distinctions between Jew and Gentile (believing or unbelieving) in the ages to come. Whatever one’s eschatology may be it should not violate this principle, or this rule; that there *is no going back to distinctions between Jew and Gentile*, which leads us to the next text.

Galatians 6:12-16 - Before discussing Galatians 6:12-16 one should keep in mind the earlier context of 3:26-29, 5:1-6. During the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants circumcision was the outward sign that identified who were “the people of God”. But during the NC what identifies the people of God is their relation to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, being in Him. And if one is Christ’s he is Abraham’s seed and one of the sons of God (3:26-29).

One the other hand if one insists on physical circumcision for ethnic Jews or Gentiles Christ will profit such persons nothing and they are *estranged from Christ* which puts them into the position of being outside of any redemptive covenant (see Eph. 2:11-12, Gal. 5:1-6). This is proof that the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants are ended now that the NC has been inaugurated by Christ. Those ethnic Jews who reject the Messiah end up in the same position that the Gentiles were in prior to the Gospel (estranged from Christ). To be *without Christ* is to be an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger from the covenants of promise. This is understood when we realize that the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants *are all fulfilled in the NC*. To be outside of the NC is to be outside of all the previously initiated redemptive covenants and promises made in them.

Now turning to Gal. 6:12-16. Paul’s statement in Galatians 6:15 forcefully cancels any distinction anyone might attempt to make between Jew and Gentile in Christ. The statement’s location as part of the conclusion of this letter gives it peculiar weight. Paul is summarizing his entire argument against those who would insist on circumcision and continuing to make a distinction between Jew and Gentile, i.e. circumcised and uncircumcised. In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision *avails anything*. A Jew can boast that he was circumcised the eighth day (Philip. 3:5); it avails nothing. A Jewish believer in Christ can say he’s double blessed *because he is Jewish*; this avails nothing. All that counts is “a new creation” (see also 2 Cor. 5:17 and Eph. 2:10).

Paul identifies in verse 16 on whom God’s blessing of peace and mercy rests; it is upon “as many as” walk according to this rule. The rule is what he stated in verse 15. No peace and mercy for the Judaizers. They do not walk according to this rule. They insist upon circumcising Gentiles. And that the Jew has some profit because he is a Jew. Their practice is essentially that Gentiles need to be made into Jews in order for them to be saved. This is MC thinking. Likely the judaizers are thinking (consciously or unconsciously) one must become a member of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, as Gentile proselytes were required to during OT times, to receive the full blessing of those covenants. This was true during that period of redemptive history. Only by being circumcised would they inherit the promises of Abraham *on an equal footing* with the circumcised ethnic Jew (see section IV). This would still be true *if they were living prior* to the coming of Messiah, prior to the age of fulfillment. But now that Christ has come these are NC times, times of fulfillment. It helps to understand that in a *fulfilled* sense it is still required that ethnic Jew and Gentile be “circumcised” to enter the NC and receive the blessing. But this “circumcision” is the *fulfilled in Christ circumcision* described as: “of the heart, by the Spirit” (Rom. 2:29), “the circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11-13), “a new creation” (Gal. 6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17), being “born of God” (John 1:11-13), being “born of the Spirit” (John 3:1-8).

Paul states that only those who live by this rule of no distinctions are worthy of the blessing of peace and mercy from God. This *rule* summarizes the whole tenor of the gospel given in the NT that the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile has been taken down and there is no longer any distinction between them.

Paul's pronouncement of peace is also "upon the Israel of God." To whom does Paul refer in 16b? Certainly not to the unbelieving ethnic Jewish people as a race, who would still practice circumcision and make a clear distinction between themselves and Gentiles. They do not walk according to the rule he has just stated. Thus the ethnic-nationalistic definition of Israel cannot work here.

Some realizing the implications of Paul's statement, that believing Jews and Gentiles may be the "Israel of God" to which Paul refers, realize such an understanding would violate one of the two major tenets of a dispensational approach to Scripture; that is, one must always keep Israel and the church separate. Thus, for these interpreters, Paul cannot be calling the *combined without distinction body* of believing Jews and Gentiles "the Israel of God". They have asserted that Paul is referring to the "elect, or converted Jews" *in distinction* from the rest of Gentile believers. In other words they want us to see two groups of people in this text:

- 1) "*as many as* walk according to this rule, peace and mercy upon *them*" - first group
- 2) *and* upon the Israel of God - a second group of people distinct from the first.

However this understanding does not agree with the whole point of Paul's letter, the immediate context or the sentence. O. Palmer Robertson gives a precise explanation: "On this [that it refers to the elect Jews] understanding, Paul would be pronouncing his benediction of peace first over "as many as" (that is, "all who") hold to the rule that the distinction between Jew and Gentile cannot serve as a basis for determining who is and who is not to be reckoned among the people of God. But then he would be extending that blessing to another category of people, and that presents the problem. He would in effect be violating the very rule that he himself has just established by pronouncing this blessing over elect Jews who did use circumcision to identify themselves as the people of God. "The Israel of God" would be a group of people *other than* all those who make it a practice never to regard a distinction between Jew and gentile as a basis for identifying the people of God. But this would have Paul contradicting his own line of argument. It would include in his apostolic blessing people who made the very distinction that Paul has just disallowed."

Who then is this "Israel of God"? Paul has already identified this "Israel of God" earlier in the letter, especially in 3:26,28-29. "For you are *all* sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (v26), "There is neither Jew nor Greek" (vs. 28), compare to 6:15, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything." "for you [believing Jews and Gentiles] are all one in Christ Jesus" (vs. 28b), "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed [offspring, descendants], and heirs according to the promise." (vs. 29). The "Israel of God" of 6:15 are the "seed of Abraham of 3:29" and the "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" of 3:26. Those belonging to Christ, Jew and Gentile, are "the Israel of God", and they walk according to the rule of verse 6:15, and upon them Paul pronounces "peace and mercy from God". The "them" of verse 16 and "the Israel of God" are one and the same group of people. They are the "new creation" referred to in verse 15.

"New Covenant Israel" has been repeatedly referred to in the earlier sections of this paper. They are the the people described by Paul in Gal. 3:26-29 and 6:15-16. They are the members of the New Covenant based on the blood of Christ. They are in Christ and the *one* body of Christ. In this study, the definition of Israel given in section III and applied from that point forward is that "Israel" has always referred to *the people of God, brought into relationship with Him, by the redemptive covenants He has initiated.* What then is the significant change between the OT and NT periods of history? Those ethnic Jews who do not receive the Messiah are cut off from the covenant relationship, those Gentiles who receive the Messiah are brought into covenant relationship. All promises made to Israel belong to Israel. *Gentiles who receive the Messiah are part of Israel.* They are heirs according to the promises of the AC. Ethnic descendants of Jacob who reject the Messiah are no longer part of Israel.

It should be repeated at this point, lest someone levy a charge of antisemiticism against this understanding, that no promises have been taken away from Israel, but it has been asserted that:

- 1) Ethnic Jews receive these promises *only* by faith in Jesus Christ and only inside the NC, and
- 2) Believing Gentiles also receive the full blessing of Abraham promised to Israel, inside the NC, and

3) Now that Messiah has come and established the NC the *unbelieving* Jew and Gentile stand on exactly the same footing before God. The gospel promise and invitation to them *both* is to come to Jesus Christ. If the Jew believes he will be grafted back into covenant relationship. If the Gentile believes he will be grafted in for the first time.

Point 3 is perhaps the most controversial. As explained above (section 8, VII-B) the unbelieving Jew ends in the same standing before God as the unbelieving Gentile because the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are ended. His participation in these covenants had given him significant blessing and advantage compared to the Gentile during this period of redemptive history (Rom. 3:1, 9:1-4). But unless he enters the NC that advantage ends as God has ended the relationship He established with the circumcised ethnic descendants of Jacob on the basis of those covenants. Arab, Jew, American..... outside of Christ stand before God in exactly the same manner. Arab, Jew, American..... in Christ stand before God in exactly the same manner. Whether or not the elect remnant among ethnic Jews referred to in Romans 11:5 will someday be shown to include every ethnic Jew living in a future generation (Rom. 11:26) is a separate question. Nothing expressed above is necessarily contrary to such a working of God.

Dispensationalism, instead of removing the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, which is the whole tenor of the NT, attempted to re-erect that wall, on both the believing and unbelieving sides of the matter.

XIV. Understanding the NT church in relation to the NC

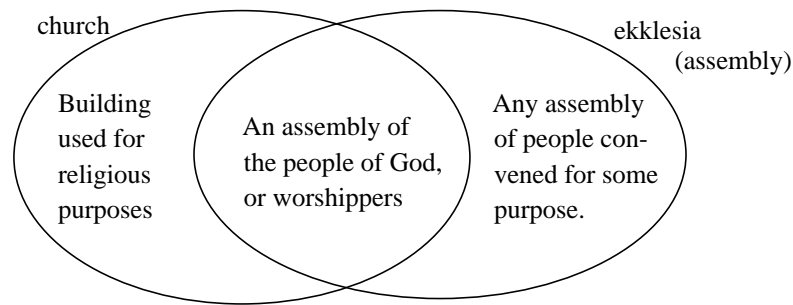
XIV-A. Introduction

The approach taken here is not to consider all the places in the NT where the term church is used and then attempt to categorize them as referring to the universal, visible, or local church. These categories have usefulness, but before we try to settle the universal, visible, local church questions there is significant benefit in taking a *historical* approach and considering the major *transition* that took place as a result of Jesus inaugurating the period of history He described to the Samaritan woman in John 4:21-23. “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father..... “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” If we consider this transition in *authorized* worship along with the bringing of the Gentiles into the people of God, we will end up with a better understanding of the NT church. During the AC and MC period God authorized His worship in only one place, Jerusalem, and there was to be only *one altar to Yahweh in all of Israel* (Deut. 12) and that associated with the temple and the MC priesthood. But now with the work of Christ and the gospel spreading across the planet, details regarding God’s authorized worship are significantly changed.

Prior to Christ’s coming there certainly did not exist anything *identical*, or even close, to what came to be known as “the church” after His resurrection. The NT church is *new*. But the NT church is not *an entirely new* and different thing. A helpful approach is to trace the understanding of Christ, the Apostles and Jewish believers in regard to the NT church, which is done below.

But first, the meaning of the Greek term ekklesia should be considered. Word studies alone on the term ekklesia cannot give us an adequate understanding of what the NT church is and too often the term is loaded up with meanings that the word, by itself, simply cannot be made to bear. Complicating matters is the fact that our English term “church” has *inseparably* to do with a religious gathering of people, or a building used for religious services of worship, or a larger institution having to do with the worship of God.

This inseparable association of our word “church” with religion *is not true regarding* ekklesia. A semantic diagram of the meaning of English “church” and Greek “ekklesia” is given below.



“Church” often refers to a building used for religious purposes, but ekklesia is never used to refer to a building. “Ekklesia” refers to *any assembly of people for some purpose*, which is its basic meaning. Thus ekklesia can be used in Greek in numerous places where the English term “church” is entirely inappropriate. In general, the English term “assembly” more accurately translates ekklesia, since “assembly” does not refer to buildings and may or may not have a religious association. The semantic range of “assembly” lines up with the semantic range of “ekklesia” better than “church”. Reading the following sets of uses of ekklesia will confirm the above semantic diagram.

Uses of ekklesia illustrating the non-religious nature of the term: Acts 19:32, 39-40; Josephus, *The Jewish War*, 1:550, 571, 6:243; *Autobiography* 1:311; 1 Maccabees 3:13; Sirach 26:5.

Sample uses of ekklesia that illustrate its use for the *group of people* we call the church: Matthew 16:18, Acts 5:11, 8:1, 14:27, 20:17, 20:28, Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Thes. 1:4, 1 Tim. 3:15.

The result of the fact that ekklesia is not a technical term dealing with religion or the worship of God is that *a definition of the NT church cannot be primarily obtained from the meaning of word by itself*. When defining the NT church *we must give more weight to the adjectives and adjectival phrases* that the NT writers use to qualify ekklesia. The adjectives and adjectival phrases *define* the “assembly” being referred to. Many times, of course, ekklesia is not qualified and simply the church or a church is referred to. However, in such cases we are to assume they have a religious assembly in view which has already been defined elsewhere by the adjectives and phrases which tell us *just what kind* of assembly this is. For example, “the ekklesia”, the assembly, could be any assembly of people. But “the ekklesia of God” refers to an assembly of people *belonging to God*. Taking the approach of giving primary weight to the adjectives and adjectival phrases modifying ekklesia does not lead to anything startling new or different (at least I don’t think so). However it will lead to understanding the *continuity* between the old and new testament eras, and the relationship between the NT church and the New Covenant. I would suggest the following definition for the NT church: The one body of believing Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ who inherit the promises made to Israel. This one body is manifested throughout the world in individual assemblies (churches) performing acceptable, in Spirit and Truth worship and service to God.

XIV-B. “My Church” - Jesus defined the NT church, Matt. 16:16-19, John 10:14-16, 11:50-52

After Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Lord stated, “I will build *My assembly*” (author’s translation). Due to the widespread use of the LXX, when Jesus made this statement and when Matthew wrote His gospel there would be an immediate association with the “assembly” or “congregation” of God, of Israel, of the Lord, under the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. *Ekklesia* is the term used by the Jews dozens of times to translate the Hebrew *qahal* (assembly, company, congregation) and other terms referring to the gathered people of God. God always had an “assembly”. Those whom he drew nearest to. A few samples of the use of ekklesia that illustrate its use for the MC assembly are: Acts 7:38, Hebrews 2:12, Deuteronomy 18:16, 23:9, 31:30, 1 Kings 8:14, Nehemiah 8:2, Psalm 35:18, Psalm 89:5, Psalm 149:1, Joel 2:16, 1 Maccabees 4:59, Sirach 46:7, 50:13.

NT Jewish believers in “Jesus the Christ” would naturally think that “the [OT] assembly (ekklesia) of God” is now being identified with “the assembly of Jesus who is the Christ”. Jesus, the Messiah sent by God, will build “His assembly”. This assembly associated with Jesus, will be the continuance of the assembly of God known in the OT (significantly changed, but yet it continues to be the assembly of God). There will not be two “assemblies of God”. There will not be two groups of people who are God’s congregation. There will be only one as there was before and *the people who associate with Jesus, believe Him to be the Messiah, will be the one true “assembly of God”*. Jesus’ statement in Matthew 16 was a major christological claim. His statement regarding the assembly and His relationship to it, tells us Jesus knows who He is. The NT church derives its identity from its relationship to Jesus, Israel’s Messiah, and this assembly is now the assembly of God.

The OT assembly often failed, was not faithful and as a kingdom did not succeed to maintain a true worship of God, even in the land of Canaan. That will all change now that Messiah has come. The assembly He will build will be indestructible for the “gates of hell will not prevail against it” (vs. 18). Furthermore, regardless of how one understands the controversial keys and binding, those who are part of His assembly on the earth will be part of His assembly and His kingdom forever, *they will be bound in heaven* (vs. 19). The “assembly of the Lord”, “The assembly of Israel” now becomes “Messiah’s assembly” and when this occurs it becomes indestructible and unstoppable in its mission.

Matt. 16:16-19 in the light of John 10:14-16, 11:50-52 and Acts 3:22-26 - Matthew 16:16-19 should *first* be understood in the light of Jesus’ own words recorded by John and Peter’s reference to the promise in Deuteronomy of God sending a prophet like Moses to His people. The term “church” is not used in these three texts but I’m asserting that the group of people referred to in these three passages is identical, His ekklesia, His Flock, the “gathered together in one children of God” (John 11:52).

John 10:14-16 - This one flock with one Shepherd is the NT assembly of Christ. The “My church” of “I will build My Church” is the one flock with the one shepherd to which Jesus refers. The Messianic Son of David is the fulfillment of great shepherd promises in Ezekiel 34:23-31. This *one* flock consists of believing Jews and Gentiles, the other sheep which are not of this [Jewish] fold, and “there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.”

John 11:50-52 - The children of God whom Christ will gather together into one are the believing Jews, i.e. from “that nation”, but the children of God being gathered together are not from “that nation only”, but are the children of God who were scattered abroad. Gentiles who would be called to believe in Israel’s Messiah. The “My Church” of Matthew 16 that Jesus builds is the “one flock” that he gathers and saves (John 10 and 11). This naturally becomes the basis for Paul’s and Peter’s expressions that elders are to “take heed ... to *all the flock*, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd *the church of God* which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and Peter, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:2). It might be said that I’m mixing references to “the universal church” and the “local church”. Well, yes, I am. The references in the gospels are to the one flock and assembly transcending all local places. But that one flock is manifested in local flocks or assemblies from Pentecost forward.

The language of the people of God being a flock, and the Lord being their shepherd is common covenant language. The people of God by covenant have always been referred to as a flock of sheep with God as their shepherd. This has not changed with the NC. Only now the Shepherd is the Son of God, the Son of David, the Messiah.

Acts 3:22-26 - This passage is significant for properly understanding the change in ethnic Israel’s covenantal relationship to God with the coming of the Messiah. With the coming, resurrection and ascension of Christ the promise of Deuteronomy 18:15-19 began its fulfillment. Peter warned Israel that “it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people” (3:23). “The people” to whom the prophecy refers are *the people of Israel*, those who are members of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. Those who do not heed this latter prophet, Jesus the Christ, will be utterly destroyed from among the people, they will be cut off from Israel. They will no longer retain their covenantal relationship with God or be considered “the people [of God]”. Those not heeding “The Prophet” will become the broken off branches of Rom. 11.

The warning issued by Peter in the context of calling Israel to repentance (Acts 2:38, 3:19) follows as the culmination of such warning at this time in redemptive history beginning with John the Baptist's ministry to Israel. Those who remain unrepentant, will be cut down and thrown into the fire (Luke 3:9, Matt. 3:11-12). The evidence of genuine repentance would be to receive the word of God's prophets who always called Israel to repentance. The ultimate prophetic call to repentance comes from Israel's greatest prophet, the one like unto Moses, the Messiah, the Son of God. An Israelite's rejection of "that prophet" leads to him no longer being among "the people [of God]", the covenant community.

The Lord Jesus' emphasis on the necessity that men hear His words in passages as Matt 7:24-26 and John 10:27 coincides with Deut. 18:18. Now that He has come, the reception of His word is the criterion as to who is and who is not a member of God's people, God's assembly, or the church. Those who receive the apostles word concerning Jesus, which is a receiving of Christ's word (Matt. 10:40, John 13:20), are added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47). Those Jews who receive His (the Prophet's) word are the new assembly, that we call the church. And as the history in acts unfolds we see that those Gentiles who receive the Jew's Messiah and His word become one with the people [of God] who do not reject the words of the final Prophet sent to Israel.

The understanding advocated here is that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are ended *because* they are fulfilled in the NC (see section VIII above). The promises contained in those covenants continue but *those covenants are no longer definitional as to who has the right to be called the children of God, people of God, or the house of God.* The status of a person in regard to these (and more) titles is now based upon one's relationship to the Messiah, God's Son. Even during the OT era, simply being Jewish did not make a person one of God's people, it was being circumcised and remaining in the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants that gave one a right to be called a child of God. Now, even Gentiles who receive Israel's Messiah, have the right to become the children of God (John 1:12, see section IX above).

XIV-C. The "house of God"

Heb. 3:5-6 - Christ is faithful as a Son over "His own house". The "My Church" of Matthew 16 which belongs to Christ, is "His own house" as expressed in the book of Hebrews. The key "identifier" of who are members of "His own house" is not circumcision or physical descent from Jacob. The "identifier" of the members of "Christ's house" is, "whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." Those who have persevering faith in Christ are members of "Christ's house". The church consists of only believers as does the membership of the NC. The house over which Moses was faithful and the house over which Christ is faithful *are not the same house.*

Heb. 10:19-21 - Now that Christ has come and the people of God are no longer "under Moses", the house of God is now the group of people for whom Christ functions as "High Priest". This is not Moses' house. The NC house of God are those people for whom Jesus functions as their High Priest and this group is His church. Those who reject the High Priest over the house of God (10:21) retain no special status of privilege before God, but face the most severe punishments (10:26-30). From Christ forward there are not two houses of God, if one is not in the house of God which is "Christ's house", one is as any unbelieving Gentile in relation to God.

1 Tim. 3:15 - Paul clearly viewed what we call the NT church as the continuance of the assembly and house of God of the OT. "*I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God*" (author's translation).

Eph. 2:19 - As Paul writes to believing Gentiles and explains how they are now partakers of all the blessings and promises made to Israel he tells them that they are no longer strangers but "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." The "household of God" is not a brand new thing but existed throughout the OT era as that group of people whom God drew near to and called His children, the people of Israel. The believing Gentiles through Christ have now become part of this family. The "one new man" whom Christ has created out of believing Jews and Gentiles (vs. 15), the "one body" being reconciled to God through the cross (vs. 16), the "household of God" (vs. 19), the "building" which is becoming a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (vs. 21-22), and the "same body" (vs. 3:6) is the identical group of people, and this group of people is the church of 1:22 and 3:10.

Gal. 6:10 - It is likely that the expression “the household of God” is synonymous with the expression used here, “the household of faith”, referring to the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ. This expression could be considered similar to the “identifier” given in Hebrews 3:5-6 (see above in this section).

John 8:31-39 - As has been discussed above, unbelieving Jews would lose the privileged status as the people of God or children of God - a status graciously conveyed on them by God initiating the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants with them - if they rejected the Messiah. John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul’s (and Peter, see Acts 3:22-23 above) all warned of this. Jesus warned the Jews who superficially professed faith in Him (8:31a) that they must “abide in His word” (think of Deut. 18:18 and Acts 3:22-23) if they would truly be His disciples. They quickly, in the very same interchange, began to reject His word regarding the necessity of their being set free from sin (vss. 32-36). When they invoked their privileged status, which was conveyed upon them by the Abrahamic Covenant (vs. 33), Jesus issued the warning that unless they were saved by Him from their sin their privileged status would come to an end. “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever.” Even though members of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, members of the OT house or family of God, they were still in bondage to sin and in this sense were slaves who ultimately would not receive the inheritance of a son. If they, through unbelief, reject the salvation from sin being offered to Israel *they would not remain in the house forever*. That is, their privileged, covenantally conveyed status, would come to an end. They would no longer be members of the house of God, nor would they become members of Christ’s house, or Christ’s assembly [church]. John 8:31-39, Matt 3:11-12, Luke 3:9, Rom. 11:17-23, and Acts 3:22-23 are parallel passages.

The terminology “house of God” is covenantal language from the OT meaning “family of God” and synonymous with other OT expressions such as, “people of God”, “the children of God”, the “house of Israel”. All these expressions refer to the membership of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants which initiated this special relationship between them and Yahweh. Now that Christ has come, which is actually Yahweh visiting His people, the “house of God” are those people who put their faith in Jesus to the end, those people for whom Jesus is their High Priest. They are His people, His church, His house, His flock, His children. He is their Shepherd - King - Priest - Prophet.

XIV-D. The body of Christ (Messiah)

Eph. 1:22-23 - God gave Christ to be head over all things to the church, the assembly, which is His body. This is not an easy metaphor to understand. The church isn’t simply a body, i.e. a collection of people, but *His body*. Believers in Christ are so closely united to Him that the assembly of believers are defined as “His body”.

Col. 1:18, 1:24 - “The church” is “the body of which Christ is the head”. “The assembly [of God]” is now “the body of which Jesus the Christ is the head.”

The question, “is there an OT counterpart to this idea?” has been much discussed. We see in the other terms and adjectival phrases (assembly, flock, house of God, children of God, His people) there is a strong OT association, but what about “the body of Christ”? The use of the metaphor appears to be unique to Paul. He could possibly be making a point with reference to both Jews and Gentiles. To the Jew, Jesus is the Christ and if you are not joined to Jesus *you are no longer* a part of the assembly [church] of God, you must be part of “the body of Christ”, who is Jesus. To the Gentile, Jesus is the Christ and if you are joined to Jesus *you are* part of Christ’s body, the assembly [church] of God.

XIV-E. The “one new man”

Eph. 2:15 - The “one new man” does not refer to a group of people separate from all the other designations Paul uses in Ephesians. The “one new man” of 2:15 is the church of which Christ is the head and the assembly of people which is His body. The phrase, “one new man”, and the extended discussion in 2:11 through 3:13, help us understand what the church is in its relation to the covenants and promises made to Israel (2:12, 3:6) and the gathering of the Gentiles into the people of God (2:19).

XIV-F. The New Covenant Temple

Eph. 2:21, 1 Cor. 3:15-17, 2 Cor. 6:16-17, 1 Pet. 2:4-10 - Referring to the NT church being the temple of God is not a new *spiritual illustration* that Paul creates. God dwelling in His people by the Holy Spirit is one of the major promises of the NC, and blessing brought to the people of God by the Messiah (John 7:37-39) according to OT Scripture. It is a major progression in Christ fulfilling the law and the prophets. The NT church marks a major progression in God drawing near to His people after “shutting down” the garden of Eden. The temple is where God is most manifested, where a special worship is to be performed which *cannot be performed individually or any other place*, and where those seeking His face will receive special blessing. The gathered people of God, the assembly or NT church of Christ, is now that temple, that “place”. This is why believers must attend church.

Paul sees the united Jew and Gentile body of Christ as an integral step of God fulfilling His covenant promises to dwell with His people and be their God. The “access to God” terminology in Paul likely has the temple idea in mind. Believers, Jews and Gentiles, now have their access to God, not through the Levitical priesthood serving in the temple in Jerusalem but through Jesus Christ, by one Spirit (Eph. 2:17-18).

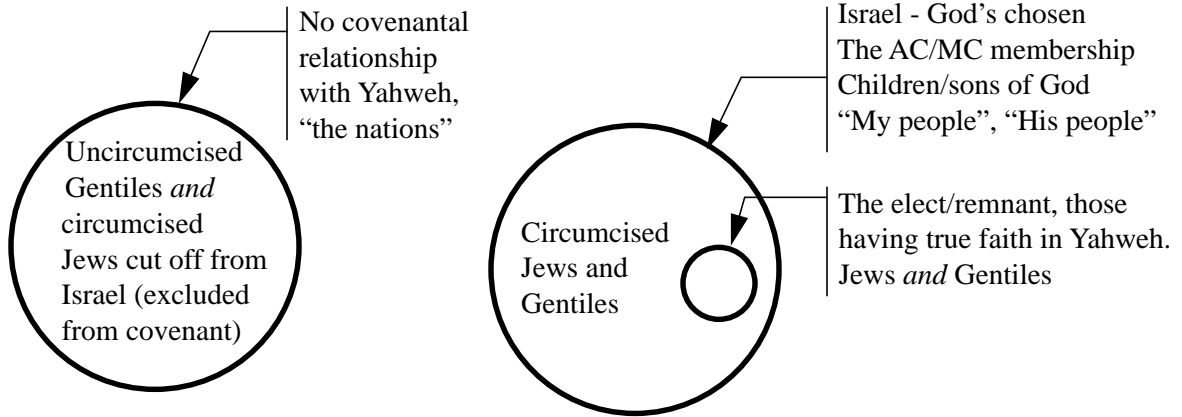
XV. Summary and Concluding Thoughts

What follows is a summary of the ideas regarding the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles and the relationship between the New Covenant and the New Testament church. This summary contrasts the understanding advocated here with a dispensational way of thinking on the one hand and a historic paedobaptist (reformed) way of thinking on the other. This summary is not a defense of these conclusion as all the earlier sections (I-XIV) provide the basis for these conclusions.

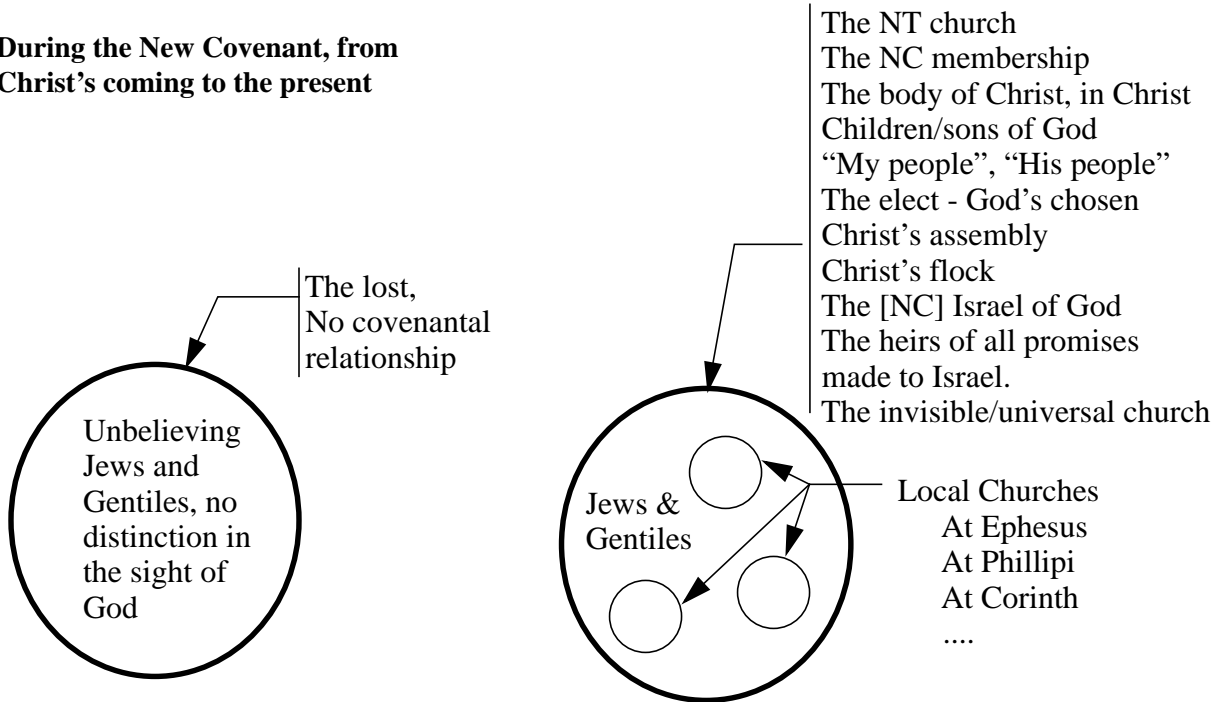
XV-A. The understanding advocated in these studies

The figure below shows the understanding of who are the “people of God” prior to and after Christ’s coming. Following the figure are 10 paragraphs summarizing the understanding advocated above.

During the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants - Prior to Christ's coming



During the New Covenant, from Christ's coming to the present

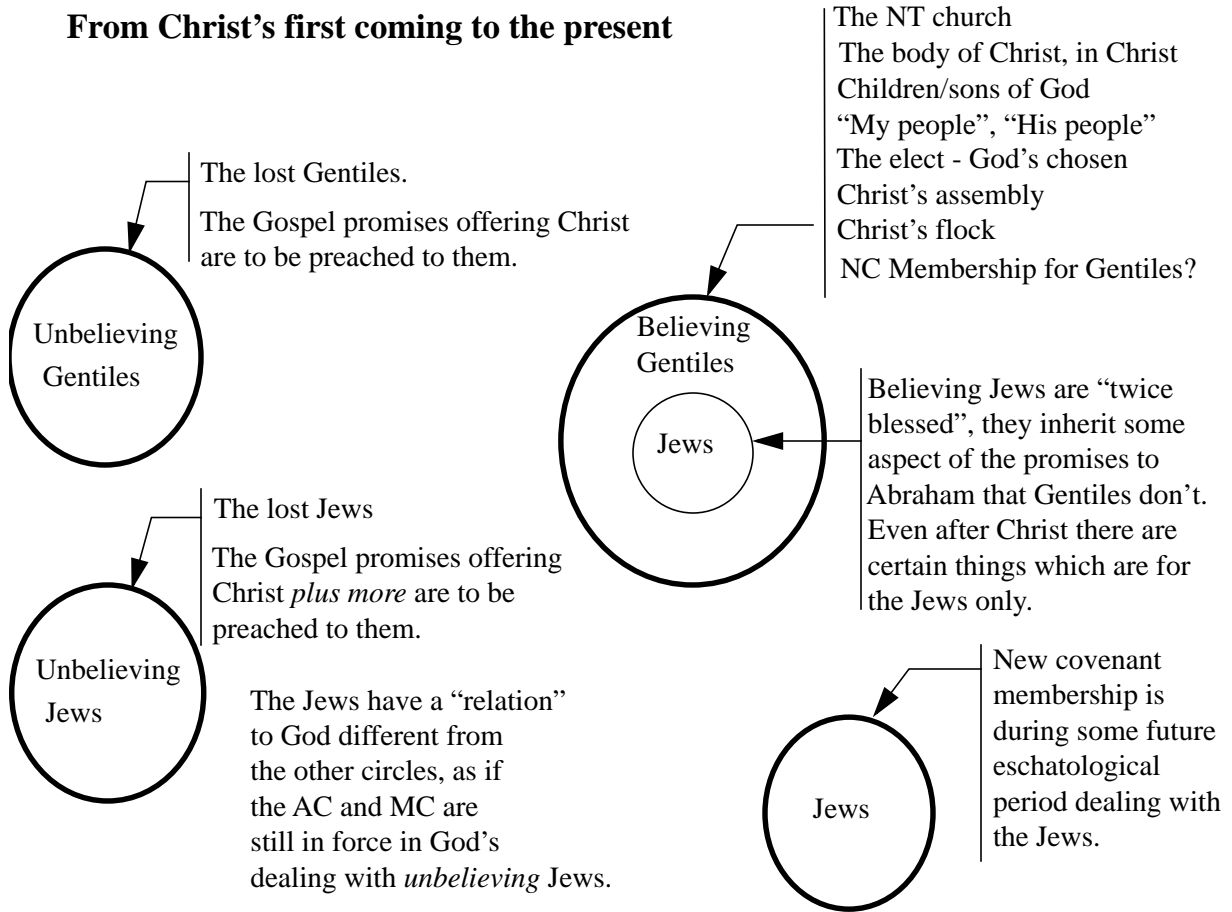


- A. "Israel" as "a people" is to be defined as "the people of God by covenant". This *same* definition applies to *both* the OT period of redemptive history (the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants) and the NT period of history (the New Covenant).
- B. Gentiles have always been part of Israel. During the OT period they became Israelites by professing Israel's God and being circumcised; they became covenant members. During the NT period they receive Israel's Messiah and receive circumcision of the heart; they become New Covenant members.
- C. A person may be a physical descendant of Jacob *and not* be part of Israel. This occurs when one is *cut off* from his people. Which means he has broken the covenant which conferred upon him the special status of being one of "the people of God [by covenant]". During the OT period this occurred if one refused circumcision (cut off from Abrahamic covenant) or persisted in idolatry (cut off from Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants). When a physical descendant of Jacob is no longer a member of the covenant his relationship and standing with God *is identical* to that of any Gentile. He is among the group called "not my people".

- D. When Christ came and inaugurated the New Covenant, those Jews who rejected Him, did not become New Covenant members and were “cut off” from the people [of God]. By rejecting the Messiah they lost their covenantal status and were no longer part of Israel. They are the broken off branches of Romans 11:17-23, the ones who reject the words of the prophet like Moses and are destroyed from among the people (Acts 3:22-23), the slaves that do not remain in the house forever (John 8:33-36) and the chaff separated out and burned by Messiah’s baptism of fire and the fallen trees (Matt. 3:8-12, Luke 3:9).
- E. With the inauguration of the New Covenant the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants were brought to an end (ending circumcision for Jew and Gentile ends the AC, ending the Levitical priesthood ends the MC). The promises of these covenants are now being fulfilled in the New Covenant through Christ. The unbelieving Jew, who does not become a member of the New Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ, no longer has a special relationship before God since he is no longer in a covenantal relationship with God. The only covenant now that confers a special, binding relationship to God is the New Covenant in Christ’s blood. Though the unbelieving Jew is a descendant of Abraham and Jacob, he is not part of Israel. Because of rejecting the Messiah he is now among the group of people called, “not my people”. The unbelieving Jew, no longer being a covenant member, has a standing before God which is identical to that of any unbelieving Gentile. With the coming of Christ and the ending of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants and the inauguration of the New Covenant, there is no longer *any* distinction between unbelieving Jew and Gentile. Both may be grafted into covenant membership by faith in Christ (Rom. 11:23).
- F. God’s Israel continues to exist, but it consists *only* of those Jews who are “Christ’s Assembly”. Christ’s assembly (Matt. 16:16-19), Christ’s flock (John 10:14-16, 11:50-52), Christ’s house (Heb. 3:5-6, 10:19-21) is New Covenant Israel (Jer. 31:31-34, Heb. 8:6-13, 10:15-17), the people of God by covenant. Those believing in Abraham’s Seed, Jesus Christ, will inherit *all* the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament now being fulfilled in the New Covenant.
- G. Through the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant that in Abraham’s Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, those Gentiles who receive Israel’s Messiah, receive *all* the promises made to Israel as they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in the New Covenant. The Gentile who has faith in Israel’s Messiah is given the right to become a child of God (John 1:11-13). Believing Gentiles and Jews have received New Covenant circumcision of the heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 2:28-29, Deut. 30:6). This one body of “Holy Spirit circumcised believing in Christ Jews and Gentiles” is the “Israel of God” today (Gal. 3:26-29, 6:14-16). This “one new man” (Eph. 2:15), this “body of Christ”, this “house of Christ”, this “one flock”, is the New Testament assembly [of God] or the church of God which He purchased with His blood. In this body there is no distinction between believing Jew and Gentile. The promises they both receive from the Abrahamic Covenant, now being fulfilled in the New Covenant, are 100% identical.
- H. If one understands *covenantal membership* and the *change instituted by God between Old Covenant and the New regarding membership*, there is no reason to refer to a “spiritual Israel” when discussing these matters. The focus needs to be on *who is* and *who is not* bound in a covenantal relationship initiated by God.
- I. The nation state we call Israel today is not to be directly equated with New Covenant Israel referred to by the prophets (Jer. 31, Eze. 37) and the re-settlement of *unbelieving* Jews begun in 1948 in this state *is not* the regathering of Israel of which the prophets speak. The regathering is a gathering together of *Jews and Gentiles* who believe in Jesus as the Messiah - Saviour. They are gathered into the *everlasting* covenant (new covenant) which will not be broken because all members of this covenant are given faithfulness by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, they all have circumcised hearts and are *forever* the people of God. Ultimately they will be settled in a new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells and God will dwell with them. This will be the new, restored Israel described in the prophets.
- J. Given the above, as shown in the figure, from the time of Christ forward the following expressions *are all describing exactly the same group of people* (see figure): “the people of God”, “the house of God”, “the church”, “the body of Christ”, Christ’s flock, sheep, those who are “in Christ”, those “born again”, those who have “entered the kingdom”, “the elect”, “Israel”, “children of God”, “the righteous, justified”, “the one new man”, “the called”, “My church”, members of the new covenant, sons of the kingdom.

XV-B. Critique and Comments Regarding the Dispensational Approach

The figure below “roughly” represents of who are the “people of God” after Christ’s coming from a classical dispensationalist perspective. There are seven paragraphs following critiquing this understanding.



- A. Consciously or unconsciously dispensationalists elevate *ethnic descendents above covenantal relation* in defining Israel. Biblically, what makes Abraham’s descendants “special” are the covenants God initiated with them. The covenants do not exist or continue to exist because Abraham has descendants. That is, the status of special relationship with God does not exist primarily because one is a descendant of Abraham, but because one is a covenant member.

Being Jewish (physically descended from Jacob) *without circumcision* means nothing. That is, one has no special standing with God because, without circumcision one does not remain in the covenant which gives the special standing - i.e. makes one one of the “people of God”.

- B. Consciously or unconsciously dispensationalists do not take into account *that the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants are ended*. Not accounting for the end of these covenants *and* that it was these covenants that gave special status even to *unbelieving* Jews, they continue to insist on a special status/relation of unbelieving Jews before God. But by idolatry and rejection of the Messiah unbelieving Israel broke the covenant and became, “not my people” except for the believing remnant. Only by entering the New Covenant in Christ can they again have the status of “my people”.

It should be understood that the *eschatological fulfillment* of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are obtained *only through faith* and ultimately through the New Covenant in Messiah’s blood, not by a continuation of the original Abrahamic Covenant requiring physical circumcision (Gen. 17:9-10, this is the argument of most of the book of Galatians! *Only* through faith, not circumcision).

Unknowingly the dispensationalist puts forth a situation like a marriage covenant which has been broken and then ended by the innocent party (in this case God) and yet the guilty spouse (Israel) continues to act as if she still has the special relation established by the original marriage covenant.

- C. While dispensationalists do not clearly account for the ending of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, they also do not account for *the beginning of the New Covenant in Christ's blood with believing Jews and Gentiles* (Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25, 2 Cor. 3:6, Heb. 7:22, 8:6, 10:16). Most dispensationalists will defer its beginning until some future, eschatological, period. Some have taught that there are two new covenants, one with the Gentiles and one in the future with ethnic Israel. However Paul knew he was a minister of the New Covenant to Jews and Gentiles as the apostle to the Gentiles (2 Cor. 3:6).
- D. The result of insisting 1) that the New Covenant promised in the OT has not begun, and 2) that believing Gentiles (i.e. circumcised in the heart, entered into the covenant) are not members of this covenant leads to *numerous OT promises made to Israel as not appearing to be promises for Gentile believers in Christ in the church today*.
- E. Dispensationalists seem to unconsciously represent that Gentile believers receive promises by faith *while outside the covenants made with Israel*. This is a serious misrepresentation as can be seen from Eph. 2:11-12, Rom. 11:17-23. In order for Gentiles to be saved *Paul grafts them into the covenants of promise by faith in the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ*. The promises are in the covenants, and only those who are in Christ by faith, remain in the New Covenant in His blood.

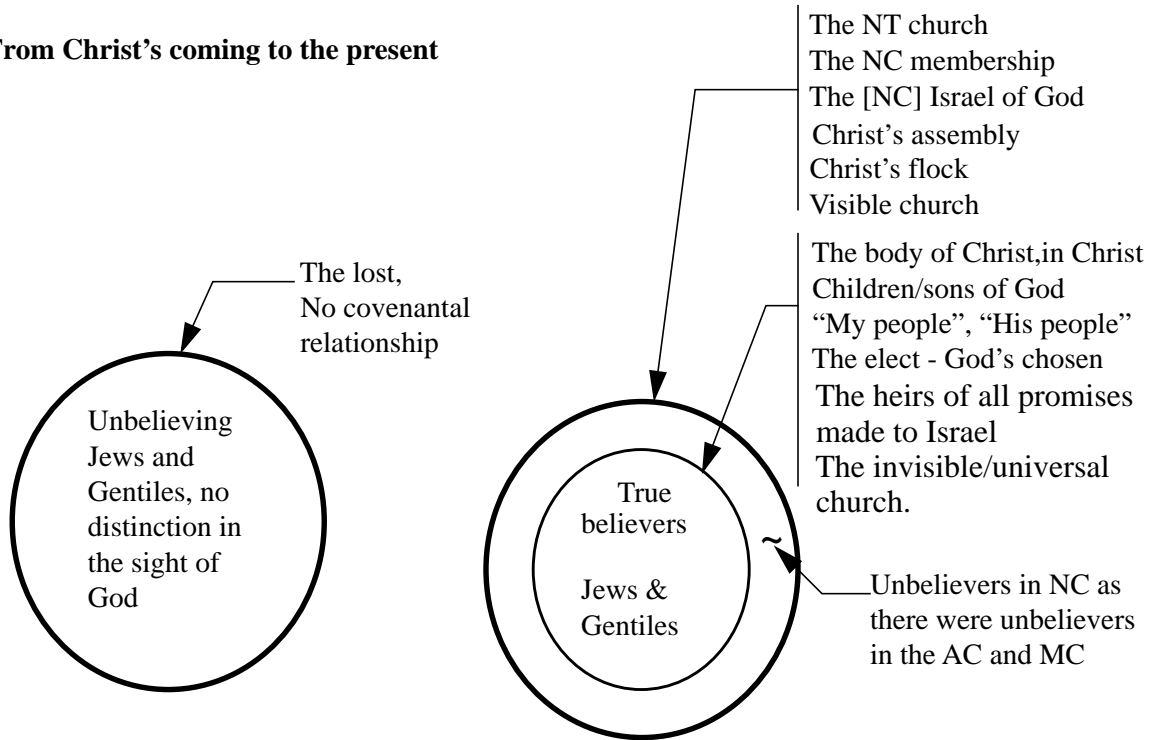
What the NT does with the coming of Christ and the inauguration of the New Covenant is to:

1. Get the unbelieving in Christ Jews out of the covenant.
 2. Get the believing in Christ Gentiles in the covenant.
 3. Keep the remnant of believing Jews, and newly believing Jews, in the covenant.
- F. The maintaining of any distinctions between Jew and Gentile, in regard to *both* believers and unbelievers, is contrary to the whole tenor and direction of the New Testament.
 - G. There are incorrect hermeneutical “rules” that dispensationalists often insist upon that lead to the mis interpretation of passages leading to the above errors. The two most prominent are; a definition of what “literal” interpretation means and an insistence that texts always be interpreted in a “literal sense” (see section XII above). And second, an insistence that “the church” and “Israel” must always be kept separate. This is applied in a way that often says, if a Scripture text is addressing Israel then it cannot be applicable to the church. And if a text is addressing the church then it does not apply to Israel.

XV-C. Critique and Comments Regarding the Historic Paedobaptist Approach

The figure below “roughly” represents who are the “people of God” after Christ’s coming from a historic paedobaptist perspective. The treatment of historic reformed paedobaptism here is limited and brief. There are seven paragraphs following critiquing this understanding.

From Christ’s coming to the present



NC membership consists of true believers, their children, and those who make a profession of faith, are baptized, and do not openly deny their profession.

- A. The most fundamental error of paedobaptist thinking is to insist that the membership of the New Covenant consists of believers *and* unbelievers just as did the membership of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Paedobaptists will assert that there is a much higher percentage of true believers in the New Covenant than the previous covenants, but that not all members are believers in Christ.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to demonstrate the untenable nature of this position (but see sections VII-B,C above). However a simple reading of Jer. 31:31-34 seems to clearly teach that *all* members know the Lord, have the law written in their hearts and have their sins forgiven. Also, the new covenant membership are those for whom Christ functions as “a High Priest over the house of God” (Heb. 10:21) and all of those for whom Christ functions as high priest must inevitably be saved because of the efficacy of His priesthood - which is the major argument of Hebrews chapters 5-10.

- B. Since unbelievers are considered as legitimate members of the NC, *God’s calling, Holy Spirit circumcision of the heart and faith in Christ cannot be entrance requirements* for becoming a member of the New Covenant (see Section VII-C).

So paedobaptists insist that for adults baptism and credible profession of faith makes one a member of the New Covenant. Also, children of believers who are baptized (as infants) become members of the New Covenant. The warrant for this practice is derived from the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham’s descendants and the Abrahamic Covenant requirement that children be circumcised, receiving the sign of the covenant. On this basis Abraham’s descendants became members of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants *whether or not they exercised faith in God* as Abraham did. The paedobaptist insists that these provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant *are nearly unchanged* in the New Covenant, except that baptism now replaces circumcision.

Thus unbelieving baptized children and baptized adults who do not openly deny their profession of faith, even though unbelievers in heart, are members of the New Covenant.

In understanding historic paedobaptists it helps to understand “confirmation”. Many (most?) historic paedobaptists would not admit their children at any age to the Lord’s table until their children made a credible profession of repentance toward God and faith in Christ. Some groups have formalized the credible profession in the practice that is known as “confirmation”, i.e. a confirmation that the child, or young adult, is now believing in Christ. Once faith is publicly confirmed he or she may participate in the Lord’s supper. This practice may be contrasted with a baptistic way of thinking which requires that one’s faith be confirmed prior to receiving baptism.

Among those churches which practice reformed paedobaptism the question of whether or not children should be admitted to the Lord’s table prior to a profession of faith has been the subject of much controversy.

- C. The paedobaptist definition of New Covenant membership is often equated with what is known as “the visible church”. That is, the group of people who profess to be Christians, but some of whom are not. The “invisible church” on the other hand is the true church which God sees consisting only of true believers, the inside circle in the above figure.
- D. In Paedobaptist covenant theology the visible church is the closely associated with Mosaic Covenant Israel consisting of believing and unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, only now that the Spirit has been given and the Gentiles are being called, the covenant membership consists of many more Gentiles and a much larger percentage of both Jewish and Gentile members have true faith.
- E. While dispensationalists have Gentiles being saved virtually outside of the new covenant, paedobaptists make the new covenant almost identical to the Abrahamic Covenant and find a justification for the practice of infant baptism based upon the genealogical promise made to Abraham and the practice of infant circumcision. However, God “covenants” in the New Covenant to do many things for *all* of its members which were never guaranteed to all members in the Abrahamic Covenant; Jer. 31:31-34, 32:37-41, Isa. 40:10-11, Isa. 40:1-2, Isa. 54:13-14, Hosea 2:14-23, and it is inconsistent to think that God does not perform *all* things He covenanted to do, for *all* members of the covenant.
- F. The Paedobaptist must either lessen the effectiveness of many NT descriptions of the New Covenant community or insist that the group of people referred to are not that community. A few examples will illustrate:

Matthew 1:21 - Jesus the Messiah *shall* save “His people” from their sins. The “His people” sounds like the New Covenant membership and this group of people *will be saved* from their sins. Thus the Paedobaptist must equivocate something; either “His people” is a group *different* from the New Covenant community, or there is some sense in which Christ does not save *all* of “His people” from their sins. Most choose the former option but the “His people” is clearly the covenantal language of the OT. *The only way someone becomes one of “His people” is to become a member of a covenant, in this case the New Covenant.*

Luke 1:76-77 - “To give the knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins”. Are these people, who are given the knowledge of salvation, the New Covenant community? Not according to paedobaptist thinking because the New Covenant community still has members who aren’t forgiven. Again, the “His people” language clearly identifies this group as the New Covenant community.

Many, many more NT examples could be given of the equivocation necessary when dealing with NT texts and trying to determine which NT titles really do describe the New Covenant community and which do not. Notice in the figure that one set of titles applies to the outer circle, covenant members, and another set of titles apply to the inner circle, those who will be saved in the end. Which titles apply to which circles differ among paedobaptist theologians.

However, *the New Testament defines the covenant community*, which Messiah visits with redemption, delivers, shepherds, intercedes for, dies, and reigns over forever. They are not a mixed group of believers and unbelievers. The Paedobaptist takes New Testament terms *and points back to their use in the OT* and says, “see, they were a mixed multitude but all were called ‘the children of God, His people, etc.’, so it is in the New Covenant now”. To do this (pointing backward) is to reverse the progress of redemption. In the *New* Covenant the *ideal-*

ization of all these OT terms and figures is achieved when the Messiah comes and the Holy Spirit is poured out. See the table (at the end of this document) which shows how these terms have been used in the OT and the NT and notice the *idealization* that has occurred now that Christ has come. The old covenant could, and was, broken. But the new covenant is an everlasting covenant - i.e. once initiated it is never broken.

- G. A brief word ought to be said about the visible / invisible / universal / local church. These expressions are often used in discussions relating to the NT church. The NT refers to what has been called the universal church. This is the circle in the upper right corner of the view presented in this paper, Christ's flock, Christ's body, the New Covenant membership, etc. The NT also refers to local churches which are to be local manifestations of the universal church. The NT *never* refers to a "visible church" in the sense that this expression is commonly used in paedobaptist and Roman Catholic theology. When the NT refers to the church it does so *idealistically*, as if the church (either the universal church or a local church) is what it is supposed to be; a body of regenerate believers in Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:2 as an example of the local church being referred to *idealistically*). This is obviously the case when the universal church is in view, this body is always what it is supposed to be by virtue of the head of the Church. The Church is Christ's body, those "in Him". With the "local church" if people are found associated with it, *appearing* to be members, who are not part of the universal church (i.e. Christ's body, New covenant members) they are to be disassociated from the visible body and not allowed to participate in the churches' ordinances. However, they were *never* really part of Christ's church - either universal *or* local. Nor had they been members of the New Covenant and became covenant breakers. The situation is as John described, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us." 1 John 2:19.

The above is in contrast to the paedobaptist view of the church which equates a mixed group of believers and unbelievers, which they consider the membership of New Covenant, with visible, local churches throughout the world *and that this mixed view of the church is legitimized by the New covenant*. The view presented in this paper has equated the membership of the New Covenant with what has commonly been called the universal/invisible Church, the sum of all of the elect throughout the ages.

XV-D. Comments Regarding Dispensationalism and Paedobaptism

Both dispensationalism and paedobaptism have significantly complicated our understanding and reading of the NT as the above figures reveal. Dispensationalism by insisting we must keep Israel and the church separate, and by maintaining that ethnic Israel has some special status/relationship to God out side of faith in Christ. Paedobaptism by equating the New Covenant membership with the "visible church" and insisting that unregenerate members exist in the New Covenant community make most NT expressions which actually define the church not able to be used to define the church, since these expressions refer to believers only. That is, those who in Christ, have the Spirit of God, the sons of God, the body of Christ. The un-desirable alternative for the Paedobaptist is to say one can be all these things, in Christ, part of the body of Christ, have the Spirit, and still be lost. If this un-desirable alternative is not taken, then one must say that none of these NT groups of people are the NT church or the New Covenant community, if one insists that the NC community is the NT *visible* church. This creates a "fog" in understanding the NT.

Paedobaptists have never sufficiently distanced themselves from Mosaic Covenant Israel in their definition of the New Testament church. Thus they have not adequately answered the just charges of dispensationalists who insist that the New Testament church is not Israel. True, the New Testament church is not *Old Covenant Israel*. However, when "Israel" is *properly defined* (i.e. covenant membership) we can see that the New Testament Church is New Covenant Israel, the one body of *believing Jews and Gentiles*, gathered and redeemed by Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

**The “Intensification” or “Idealization” of the use of terms
describing the people of God from Old to New Covenants**

Term	Old Testament “historical use” ^a applied to a mixed people, i.e. believers and unbelievers, members of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants	New Testament use of same term but now describing believers only, members of the New Covenant
Jew	Rom. 2:17, “Indeed you are called a Jew , and rest on the law, and make your boast in God”	Rom. 2:28, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly.. . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly”
The Cir- cumcision	Eph. 2:11, “remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision ”	Philp. 3:3, “For we are the circumcision , who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh”
Children of Abraham, Abraham’s seed	Matthew 3:9, "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as <i>our</i> father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”	John 8:39 - “They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.” Galatians 3:29 - “And if you <i>are</i> Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” And if you are not Christ’s then you are not Abraham’s see and an heir of the <i>fullness</i> of the promise, i.e. the final heavenly kingdom and land.
Israel	Philp. 3:4-5, “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel ”	Gal. 6:16, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumci- sion avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them , and upon the Israel of God ” Rom. 9, “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel” - you can be a descendant of Jacob and part of the OC community called Israel but not be part of Israel in the NC sense.
Jerusalem	Gal. 4:25, “for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children”	Gal. 4:26, “but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Heb. 12:22, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem , to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,”
Chosen generation	Numerous places in the OT, Deut. 7:6, 14:2; Psa. 33:12	1 Pet. 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation , a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” See also Titus 2:14
Holy nation	Ex. 19:6	
His own special peo- ple	Deut 7:6	The “you” addressed in this text is the “you, also, as living stones” of vs. 5 and the “to you who believe” in vs. 7 and those addressed in the latter part of verse 9, “that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” - notice the concept of “the call” - this is no mixed group.

Term	Old Testament “historical use” ^a applied to a mixed people, i.e. believers and unbelievers, members of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants	New Testament use of same term but now describing believers only, members of the New Covenant
Adopted	Rom. 9:4, (NASB/NIV) “who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons”	Rom. 8:9b “Now if any one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His”
Sons of God (or children or God)	<p>Deut. 14:1 NASB “You are the sons of the Lord your God; you shall not ... for you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”</p> <p>Isa. 1:2 - “I have nourished and brought up children (lit. sons), and they have rebelled against Me”</p>	<p>Rom. 8:15-17 - “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” This adoption is fully realized in the future (Rom. 8:23).</p> <p>All those adopted by God have the Spirit of God within them testifying to their adoption. And, because they are children, they are heirs of God and Joint heirs with Christ and will be glorified together with Him.</p> <p>Eph. 1:3, “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, ... having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself”</p>
My sheep, My flock	<p>Jer. 13:17, “But if you will not hear it, My soul will weep in secret for your pride; My eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, Because the Lord’s flock has been taken captive.”</p> <p>Eze. 34:6, “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill, yes My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth”</p>	<p>John 10:10-14, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd”</p> <p>John 10:26, “But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep.”</p>

- a. By “historical use” is meant references to OC Israel in the OT. I have been distinguishing the “historical use” of these terms from what I’ve called the “prophetic use” of the same (or similar) terms found in the numerous promises given by the prophets describing the NC period of redemptive history (i.e. beginning with Christ’s first coming). I am proposing that the our understanding of the “prophetic use” of these terms is to be governed by the NC (i.e. NT) revelation which shows clearly the fulfillment of these promises.