

***ISRAEL: Yesterday, Today, & Forever***  
(Contrasts Between Israel and the Church)

If we are consistent in applying sound interpretation principles (hermeneutics), then we will note clear distinctions between Israel and the Church:

***Some Contrasts between Israel and the Church***

- 1) Israel is promised a land, nation, and citizenship in Canaan (Gen. 12:1-3). In contrast, the emphasis on the church is in relation to a HEAVENLY citizenship (Phil. 3:20).
- 2) The Jews fought physical battles (Deut. 7:1-2; 20:16-17). The emphasis in the church is only in regard to spiritual battles (2 Cor. 10:4-5; Eph. 6:10-18).
- 3) Israel is destined for earthly dominion over the nations (Isa. 60:12). The exalted position of the Church has its emphasis on “heavenly places” (Eph. 1; 3).
- 4) Christ is King of Israel, (Matt. 1:1, Jn. 12:12-15; Zech. 9:9). Christ is head of the Church, (Eph. 1:22-23, 5:23; Col. 1:18).
- 5) Worship for Israel was associated with a certain place (Ex. 25:8, 22). In contrast, worship in the Church Age has an “anywhere” emphasis (Jn. 4:21-24; Eph. 2:18).
- 6) Access to God was through the Aaronic priesthood under the system of the Mosaic Law (Num. 3:10). In the Church Age, all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).
- 7) Only on the Day of Atonement did the High Priest ALONE enter into the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16). Today we can come boldly at any time to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16, 10:19-20).
- 8) The Jews will ultimately be RESTORED and all the covenant promises of God to them will be fulfilled (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 11-12). The Church will be RAPTURED and taken to heaven (Jn. 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 3:10, 4:1).
- 9) Israel as a nation was a centralized testimony to the world at large (1 Sam. 17:46). The Church has an outward perspective in its mission to go to the entire world (Matt. 28:18-20).

There is some overlap – especially in relation to coming kingdom realities. However, the status of the Jew is “essentially” earthly as they were promised very specific material blessings related to the Promised Land. The status of the Church is “essentially” heavenly. It has been given heavenly/spiritual blessings. As I say, there is some overlap, but also distinctive differences.

***Conclusion:***

It is of the utmost importance that this divine distinction between these three groups of people (Jews, Gentiles, and Church) be observed in the interpretation of Scripture. What is true of one is not necessarily true of another.

The Church is not merely the old Jewish dispensation in another form. It is an entirely new thing. It is not mentioned in the OT and was unknown to the OT prophets (cf. Eph. 3:1-6). It was first revealed by Christ and was future in His day (cf. Mt. 16:18). Its character is described in the

writings of Paul. While all Scripture is written for our admonition and learning (cf. Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:11), there is no warrant for transferring the prophecies and promises of Israel to the Church. The Church had its origin at Pentecost (Acts 2) and is not in view in the OT.

### **The GREAT Divide**

In the United States, we have the Rocky Mountains. High up in these mountains is what is called by some, "The Continental Divide", and by others, "**The Great Divide**". This is the point that separates the rivers and streams that flow eastward into the Atlantic Ocean from those that flow westward to the Pacific Ocean. Depending upon which side of the DIVIDE that a drop of rain falls on makes all the difference as to where it ends up.

In Bible Study, THE GREAT DIVIDE is hermeneutics – principles of interpretation. How you read and interpret the Bible determines your final conclusions. On one side of the DIVIDE is literal or normal interpretation which has many streams of truth that flow into the ocean of God's truth. On the other side of the DIVIDE is allegorical interpretation which has many streams of error that flow into an ocean of error.

Whichever side of the DIVIDE you begin the journey on makes all the difference in where you end up. Make sure you are on the side of normal/literal interpretation that takes the Bible for what it plainly says. This will help ensure that you get God's truth regarding Israel and the Church right!

Sound principles of interpretation show that an enduring KEY apologetic of God is that of Israel. The Bible showcases Israel as a great proof of God. Get Israel right and you will get God right. Get Israel right and you will get prophecy right.

This matters because it relates to the promises and thus to the very character of God. If God cannot be trusted to fulfill His covenant promises to Israel, then why would we think that we can trust Him to fulfill His promises to us? Ultimately, this is about the very CHARACTER of God's faithfulness!

The two great HUBS of Bible prophecy are: 1) the Messiah, and 2) Israel. Most prophetic truth revolves around these two themes. Properly interpreting Israel is key to properly understanding the Bible and God's prophetic program. God help us to rightly divide His Word regarding Israel. It is all-important in terms of where we end up in our understanding of Biblical Truth. This matters to God and therefore it must matter to us as well.

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