

What About Israel?

A person's understanding of the relationship between the church and Israel also plays a part in defining his/her end times theology. We will take a brief look at that.

There are several different views

Among the different views of the relationship between the church and Israel are:

- The church has replaced Israel (replacement theology)
- The church is an expansion of Israel (covenant theology)
- The church is completely different and distinct from Israel (dispensationalism / premillennialism)

Simple definition of each

Replacement theology teaches that the church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian church, not in Israel. The prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are spiritualized or allegorized into promises of God's blessing for the church. ¹

Covenant Theology views the covenants of Scripture as manifestations of either the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace. The entire story of redemptive history can be seen as God unfolding the Covenant of Grace from its nascent stages (Genesis 3:15) through to its fruition in Christ. Covenant Theology is, therefore, a very Christocentric way of looking at Scripture because it sees the OT as the promise of Christ and the NT as the fulfillment in Christ. Some have accused Covenant Theology as teaching what is called "Replacement Theology" (i.e., the Church replaces Israel). This couldn't be further from the truth. Unlike Dispensationalism, Covenant Theology does not see a sharp distinction between Israel and the Church. Israel constituted the people of the God in the OT, and the Church (which is made up of Jew and Gentile) constitutes the people of God in the NT; both just make up one people of God (Ephesians 2:11-20). The Church doesn't replace Israel; the Church is Israel and Israel is the Church (Galatians 6:16). All people who exercise the same faith as Abraham are part of the covenant people of God (Galatians 3:25-29).²

Dispensational premillennialists hold that the second coming of Christ, and subsequent establishment of the millennial kingdom, is to be preceded by a seven-year-long period known as the "Tribulation," the earthly activity of the Antichrist as well as the outpouring of God's wrath on mankind. Dispensational premillennialists hold that the nation of Israel will be saved and restored to a place of preeminence in the millennium. Thus, Israel will have a special function of service in the millennium that is different from that of the Church.

The fundamental difference between historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism consists in the latter's insistence on maintaining a distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church. According to dispensationalists, the millennium will be a period of history in which God reverts

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/replacement-theology.html>

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/covenant-theology.html>

back to fulfilling His Old Testament promises made to ethnic Israel, after this modern “Church Age” in which we live today is concluded. As such, the millennium will be a state of Jewish dominion over all the world, along with a newly restored Jewish temple and priesthood. ³

The real theological significance can be seen in four basic tenets which underlie classic dispensational teaching:

- a fundamental distinction between Israel and the church, i.e. there are two peoples of God with two different destinies, earthly Israel and the spiritual church
- a fundamental distinction between the Law and Grace, i.e. they are mutually exclusive ideas
- the view that the New Testament church is a parenthesis in God's plan which was not foreseen by the Old Testament
- a distinction between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ, i.e. the rapture of the church at Christ's coming "in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17) precedes the "official" second coming (to the earth) by 7 years of tribulation ⁴

From Zola Levitt's website

He says “that the Church is completely different and distinct from Israel, and the two should not be confused. In fact, the Church is an entirely new creation that came into being on the Day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection from the dead, and will continue until it is taken to Heaven at the Rapture return of the Lord Eph. 1:9-11).”

He continues -- In the future, both God's warnings and promises to Israel will come to pass. After the Lord is finished with the Church Age, and has taken the Church to Heaven in the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-18), God will restore Israel to center stage on the world's divine theater. First comes the devastating “Time of Jacob's Trouble” (Jer. 30:7) also known as the Great Tribulation. This is a dreadful period of seven years, which begins relatively lightly during the first half, but intensifies into full focus during the latter half. During this time the world is judged for rejecting Christ, but, more specifically, Israel is judged, purged and prepared through the fiery trials of the Great Tribulation for the Second Coming of the Messiah. This is the bad news.

And finally -- The good news is that, when Christ does return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation, Israel will be ready, willing, and eager to receive Him, and proclaim, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:39). As the stumbling of Israel brought blessing to the world at Christ's First Coming, the reception of Israel to Christ at His Second Advent will be like “life from the dead” (Rom. 11:15).⁵

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/dispensational-premillennialism.html>

⁴ <https://www.theopedia.com/dispensationalism>

⁵ <https://www.levitt.com/essays/israel-church/>

Differences Concerning Israel and the Church

Classic	Dispensational
God has always had but one spiritual people, represented by the remnant in every generation.	God has two bodies -- Israel and the church.
God's promises to Israel were conditional	God's promises to Israel were unconditional, and therefore are still binding.
All earthly promises to Israel have been either fulfilled or invalidated through disobedience and unbelief.	God's promises concerning the return to the land, rebuilding the temple, etc., were never fulfilled. They are therefore still future.
Israel was a type of the church and was superseded by the church.	Although Israel was a type of the church, they will always remain separate.
The church was prophesied in the Old Testament, in Old Testament language.	Christ instituted the church as a "parenthesis."
Christ was, and is, the only Hope of Israel. And Israelites (Jews) will be saved only if they accept him during this age.	Christ came the first time to establish an earthly millennial kingdom with Israel
The first advent of Christ completed Israel's redemption, and manifested the Israel of God. The first advent of Christ (the church) referred to in Galatians 6:16.	Israel rejected him, then God postponed his plan until the second advent.
Christ instituted a Jewish-Gentile church.	Christ instituted a Gentile church.
All unfulfilled spiritual promises to Israel are being fulfilled through the Christian church.	Israel is God's earthly people, the church is God's heavenly people.
This does not represent a change in God's plans, but evidences progressive (continually unfolding) revelation.	Israel's destiny is to remain on earth forever, the destiny of the church is to spend eternity in heaven.

My perspective as of Nov 2017

God has always had the world in view

- **Adam** - Gen 1:28 "**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth**"

Man constantly fell short

- **Noah** - Gen 6:13 ESV And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the

earth...Gen 9:1 ESV And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, **"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.**

- **The Tower of Babel** - Gen 11:8 ESV So the LORD dispersed them from there **over the face of all the earth**, and they left off building the city.

He chose ONE man who believed Him

- **Abraham** - Gen 12:1-2 ESV Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

And through his lineage brought forth the ONLY ONE who could actually fulfill the promise the LORD made to Abraham - that is Jesus Christ

- Gen 22:17-18 ESV I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and **in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**, because you have obeyed my voice."
- Gal 3:16 ESV Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, **"And to your offspring," who is Christ.**
- Rom 5:18-19 ESV Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, **so one act of righteousness** leads to justification and life for all men. 19 For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so **by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.**

Through Christ we inherit the promises given to Abraham

- Gal 3:14 ESV so that in Christ Jesus **the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles**, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

God did not reject His people, but He DID give them a spirit of stupor

Rom 11:1-36 ESV I ask, then, **has God rejected his people? By no means!** For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life." 4 But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 **So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.** 6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. 7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but **the rest were hardened**, 8 as it is written, **"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."** 9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; 10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."

What was the purpose of their stumbling? Reconciliation of the world

11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass **salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.** 12 Now if their trespass means **riches for the world**, and if their failure means **riches for the Gentiles**, how much more will their full inclusion mean! 13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry 14 in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. 15 For **if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world**, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

The dough and the root

16 If the **dough offered as firstfruits is holy**, so is the whole lump, and if the **root is holy**, so are the branches. 17 But if **some of the branches were broken off**, and you, although **a wild olive shoot, were grafted in** among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, 18 **do not be arrogant toward the branches.** If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but **the root that supports you.**

The branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in

19 Then you will say, "**Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.**" 20 That is true. They were broken off **because of their unbelief**, but **you stand fast through faith.** So do not become proud, but fear. 21 For **if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.** 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. **Otherwise you too will be cut off.**

Even they, if they do not continue in unbelief will be grafted in

23 **And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in**, for God has the power to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

A Mystery

25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: **a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** 26 **And in this way all Israel will be saved**, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

- All Israel will be saved (Jew and Gentile who are both grafted into the same root by faith)

They are enemies of God for our sake

28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

We at one time were disobedient, but we have received mercy because of their disobedience

30 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

They are no different than the Gentile - they too have become disobedient in order that they might be shown mercy

31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.

All are disobedient...now He can have mercy on all

32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Is the church the Israel of God?

Yes in this sense - every believer is grafted into the same root...

His intent is that THROUGH THE CHURCH his manifold wisdom should be known

- Eph 3:1-11 NIV For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, **the mystery made known to me by revelation**, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand **my insight into the mystery of Christ**, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has **now been revealed** by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 **This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.** 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and **to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery**, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There are so many Scriptures in the NT that speak to Gentiles in terms of their being Israel - here are a few

Gentiles are called “the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all”

- Rom 4:13 ESV For **the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.....**Rom 4:16 ESV That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring--**not only to the adherent of the law** but also to **the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,**

A Jew is one inwardly (not outward circumcision) but a matter of the heart

- Rom 2:27-29 ESV Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. 28 For **no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly,** nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 **But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit,** not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.
- Rev 2:9 ESV "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of **those who say that they are Jews and are not,** but are a synagogue of Satan.
- Rev 3:9 ESV Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan **who say that they are Jews and are not,** but lie--behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I have loved you.

Christians are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise

- Gal 3:14 ESV so that in Christ Jesus **the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles,** so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.
- Gal 3:27-29 ESV For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 **There is neither Jew nor Greek,** there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are **Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

- Gal 4:26-28 ESV But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

There is ONE NEW MAN

- Eph 2:12-19 ESV remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,** having **no hope** and **without God** in the world. 13 But **now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been brought **near by the blood of Christ.** 14 For he himself is our peace, **who has made us both one** and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by

abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might **create in himself one new man in place of the two**, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are **fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**,

Jesus helps the offspring of Abraham

- Heb 2:14-16 ESV Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. 16 For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps **the offspring of Abraham**.

There is only one New Covenant

- Jer 31:31-33 ESV "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when **I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah**, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**
- Heb 10:10-17 ESV And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, 16 "**This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days**, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," 17 then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."
- Luk 22:20 ESV And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is **the new covenant in my blood**."

Believers are the royal priesthood, the holy nation

- 1Pe 2:9 ESV But you are **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light
- Exo 19:5-6 ESV Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to

the people of Israel."

We who were not a people are now the people of God

- Hos 1:9-11 ESV And the LORD said, "Call his name Not My People, for you are not my people, and I am not your God." 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. **And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the living God."** 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head. And they shall go up from the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.
- Rom 9:22-26 ESV What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-- 24 **even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?** 25 As indeed he says in Hosea, "**Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'** and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" 26 "And in the very place where it was said to them, '**You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"**
- Exo 19:5-6 ESV Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.** These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."