

## The Millennium, Part 2. Who Are the Chosen People of God?

### 1. Introduction

1.1. Definitions: Eschatology; Millennium; Historic Premillennialism (minor & OK for PCA officers); Postmillennialism (minor & OK for PCA officers); Amillennialism (MAJOR in PCA, this is what your pastor believes!); Dispensational Pretribulation Premillennialism (NOT OK in PCA); Dispensationalism and the chronology of the end-times.

1.2. Therefore, it is the distinction between Israel and the Church and the purposes God has for each that sets dispensationalism apart from other eschatological systems." (Storms: Kingdom Come, 50-51)

1.3. What, then, is the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism? The answer is...A dispensationalist keeps Israel and the church distinct...Chafer summarized it as follows:

The dispensationalist believes that throughout the ages God is pursuing two distinct purposes: one related to the earth with earthly people and earthly objectives involved which is Judaism; while the other is related to heaven with heavenly people and heavenly objectives involved, which is Christianity...

This is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a person is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive. The one who fails to distinguish Israel and the church consistently will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions; and one who does will. (C. Ryrie: *Dispensationalism*, 44-45)

1.4. *Dispensational Doctrine of Israel and the Church* from Gerstner: *Wrongly Dividing*, 181-182

Israel	The Church
An ethnic group, descended from Abraham	Composed of all nationalities
Abrahamic covenant made his descendants God's chosen people was unconditional	Covenant of grace which brings the church into being is conditional in that it requires faith.

One becomes an Israelite by being born, not reborn.	Regeneration/new birth is required
Israelites never received a baptism by, or indwelling of, the Holy Spirit.	Holy Spirit is essential for a member of the church.
Israel is national and visible.	The church is individual and invisible.
Israel is an earthly people, with earthly promises and an earthly destiny eternally.	The church is a spiritual people with eternal life in heaven for its destiny.
Presently, Israel is in eclipse, but soon (probably) to be fully restored to the Promised Land and dominion over the earth.	The church is now alive, growing, and soon to be raptured to heaven.
Israel began with Abraham.	The church began at Pentecost

1.5. It is this distinction between Israel and the Church that makes Dispensationalism incompatible with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, constitutional documents of the PCA. Please see WCF 25; 19.3; WLC 62-66. A. 66 *"The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and their children."* A. 64 *"The invisible church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head."*

## 2. What does Scripture say? Ephesians 2:11-22

2.1. Context: Ephesians 2:1-10 – all are dead in sin (vv.1-3); salvation is in Christ alone by faith alone (vv.4-10)

### 2.2. Content:

#### 2.2.1. The Gentile Condition before Christ (vv. 11-12)

2.2.1.1. Seen as inferior by Judaism. They were the "nations", the "Goyim". The "uncircumcised" which was an abomination to the Jewish people. The Jewish people thought themselves superior because they had the covenant sign of circumcision, but Paul attacks that idea by "made in the flesh by hands" (what is worldly vs. what is Spiritual).

2.2.1.2. The true problem was being lost. Paul gives 5 parallel conditions that resulted: 1) separation from Christ, 2) alienation from the commonwealth of Israel, 3) strangers to the covenants of promise, 4) without hope and 5) without God in the world. These are all linked!

2.2.1.3. How can separation from Christ be linked to alienation from the commonwealth of Israel? Romans 9:4-5 *"<sup>4</sup>They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup>To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen."* "It would appear that Paul "can make this point because he conceives of Christ as the Messiah belonging to Israel [or, as Best says, 'the Messiah for whom Israel hoped']" (Storms, 183).

2.2.1.4. "The word "commonwealth" conveys the idea not only of a state or government but even more so of the rights extending to its citizens, i.e., privileges, blessings, resources, duties, etc. During the time of the old covenant God had restricted his elective purposes to Israel, but now, with the coming and cross of Christ, believing Gentiles are "fellow-citizens" (v. 19)" (Storms, 183).

2.2.1.5. "Covenants of promise". Notice they are plural! All OT covenants (Protoevangelium, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New) have their fulfillment in Christ who is the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. In the Old Testament, Gentiles were largely restricted from partaking in these covenants.

2.2.1.6. Gentiles were without hope (no salvation) and without God (no relationship). Hendricksen: they were "Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and Godless" (*Ephesians*, 129).

## 2.2.2. The Gentile Condition in Christ (vv. 13-18)

2.2.2.1. V.13 "now" contrasted with v.12 "at that time"; "in Christ" contrasted with v.12 "apart from Christ". V.13 "far" contrasted with "near". These are not merely geographical but primarily spiritual in meaning. Acts 2:39: *"For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

2.2.2.2. To what have the Gentiles been brought “near”? Christ? Certainly! Salvation? Certainly! But the passage gives us more. Everything in v. 12! “Gentile believers have been incorporated into “the commonwealth of Israel” and made heirs of the “covenants of promise.” More than that, by the work of Christ, God has made the two, that is, Jew and Gentile, into “one new man” (v. 15)” (Storms, 184).

2.2.2.3. Vv. 14, 16-18 are all about the fact that in Christ, two distinct people groups (Jews and Gentiles), are made into one people group, the Church. Ethnicity DOES NOT MATTER, only our relationship to Christ matters. That is all that has ever mattered. That's why the Lord gave us Psalm 1!

2.2.3. The Church of Jesus Christ (vv. 19-22)

2.2.3.1. V. 19 “fellow citizens”. All who are in Christ are members of the household of God (the true Israel).

2.2.3.2. V. 20 How much of the Scripture is ours? All of it! All testifies of Christ, the Cornerstone

2.2.3.3. V. 21-22 What is the Temple of God now? The Church – composed of all who believe in Christ.

2.3. Consequence

2.3.1. “The reference to the “commonwealth of Israel” and the “covenants of promise” alerted me to the fact that whatever privileges and blessings they entailed were now equally shared by Gentile believers. Any thought of Jewish priority or some unique and separate inheritance couldn't explain Paul's language. The “one new man,” i.e., the Church, in which both believing Jews and believing Gentiles were united by the blood of Christ, was heir to all the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The dispensational idea that in the age to come Israel would hold privileged status and be the unique focus of God's eschatological activity and blessing was ruled out by this passage. *Whatever a believing Jew can point to in the Old Testament and say, “Mine,” is no less the inheritance and future of a believing Gentile*” (Storms, 185).

3. Who Are the Chosen People of God?