

Scriptures and Doctrine :: The Israel of God

The Israel of God - posted by savannah, on: 2011/7/13 0:59

Galatians 6:14-16

But far be it from me to boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Jesus Christ ... is the new law, and the new covenant, and the expectation of those who out of every people wait for the good things of God. For the true spiritual Israel, and the descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham (who in uncircumcision was approved of and blessed by God on account of his faith, and called the father of many nations), are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ. - J. Martyr

Observe the power of the Cross, to what a pitch it hath raised him! not only hath it put to death for him all mundane affairs, but hath set him far above the Old Dispensation. What can be comparable to this power? for the Cross hath persuaded him, who was willing to be slain and to slay others for the sake of circumcision, to leave it on a level with uncircumcision, and to seek for things strange and marvellous and above the heavens. This our rule of life he calls "a new creature," both on account of what is past, and of what is to come; of what is past, because our soul, which had grown old with the oldness of sin, hath been all at once renewed by baptism, as if it had been created again. Wherefore we require a new and heavenly rule of life. And of things to come, because both the heaven and the earth, and all the creation, shall with our bodies be translated into incorruption. Tell me not then, he says, of circumcision, which now availeth nothing; (for how shall it appear, when all things have undergone such a change?) but seek the new things of grace. For they who pursue these things shall enjoy peace and amity, and may properly be called by the name of "Israel." While they who hold contrary sentiments, although they be descended from him and bear his appellation, have yet fallen away from all these things, both the relationship and the name itself. But it is in their power to be true Israelites, who keep this rule, who desist from the old ways, and follow after grace. - Chrysostom

By what rule? It is this rule, that they are new creatures in Christ, that they shine with the true righteousness and holiness which come from faith, and that they do not deceive themselves and others with the hypocritical righteousness and holiness which come from the Law. Upon the latter there will be wrath and tribulation, and upon the former will rest peace and mercy. Paul adds the words "upon the Israel of God." He distinguishes this Israel from the Israel after the flesh, just as in 1 Cor. 10:18 he speaks of those who are the Israel of the flesh, not the Israel of God. Therefore peace is upon Gentiles and Jews, provided that they go by the rule of faith and the Spirit.

"Upon the Israel of God." Here Paul attacks the false apostles and the Jews, who boasted about their fathers, their election, the Law, etc. (Rom. 9:4-5). It is as though he were saying: "The Israel of God are not the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel but those who, with Abraham the believer (3:9), believe in the promises of God now disclosed in Christ, whether they are Jews or Gentiles." - Luther

This is an indirect ridicule of the vain boasting of the false apostles, who vaunted of being the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. There are two classes who bear this name, a pretended Israel, which appears to be so in the sight of men, — and the Israel of God. Circumcision was a disguise before men, but regeneration is a truth before God. In a word, he gives the appellation of the Israel of God to those whom he formerly denominated the children of Abraham by faith, (Gal_3:29,) and thus includes all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were united into one church. On the contrary, the name and lineage are the sole boast of Israel according to the flesh; and this led the apostle to argue in the Epistle to the Romans, that — "they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." (Rom_9:6) - Calvin

According to the preceding context, this rule is the one by which before God only this is of consequence, that a person places his complete trust in Christ crucified, and that, therefore, he regulates his life by this principle. This will mean that his life will be one of gratitude and Christian service out of love for his wonderful Savior. Upon those — all those and only those — who are governed by this rule peace and mercy are pronounced. Peace is the serenity of heart that is the portion of all those who have been justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). In the midst of the storms of life they are safe because

they have found shelter in the cleft of the rock. In the day of wrath, wasteness, and desolation God "hides" all those who take refuge in him (Zeph. 1:2 ff.; 2:3; 3:12). See on 1:3. Hence, peace is spiritual wholeness and prosperity. Peace and mercy are inseparable. Had not the mercy of God been shown to his people they would not have enjoyed peace. God's mercy is his love directed toward sinners viewed in their wretchedness and need. See N.T.C. on Philippians, p. 142, for a list of over one hundred Old and New Testament passages in which this divine attribute is described.

So far the interpretation runs smoothly. A difficulty arises because of the last phrase of this verse. That last phrase is: "kai upon the Israel of God." Now, varying with the specific context in which this conjunction kai occurs, it can be rendered: and, and so, also, likewise, even, nevertheless, and yet, but, etc. Sometimes it is best left untranslated. Now when this conjunction is rendered and (as in A.V., A.R.V., N.E.B.), it yields this result, that after having pronounced God's blessing upon all those who place their trust exclusively in Christ Crucified, the apostle pronounces an additional blessing upon "the Israel of God," which is then interpreted to mean "the Jews," or "all such Jews as would in the future be converted to Christ," etc.

Now this interpretation tends to make Paul contradict his whole line of reasoning in this epistle. Over against the Judaizers' perversion of the gospel he has emphasized the fact that "the blessing of Abraham" now rests upon all those, and only those, "who are of faith" (3:9); that all those, and only those, "who belong to Christ" are "heirs according to the promise" (3:29). These are the very people who "walk by the Spirit" (5:16), and "are led by the Spirit" (5:18). Moreover, to make his meaning very clear, the apostle has even called special attention to the fact that God bestows his blessings on all true believers, regardless of nationality, race, social position, or sex: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek; there can be neither slave nor freeman; there can be no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). By means of an allegory (4:21-31) he has re-emphasized this truth. And would he now, at the very close of the letter, undo all this by first of all pronouncing a blessing on "as many as" (or: "all") who walk by the rule of glorying in the cross, be they Jew or Gentile by birth, and then pronouncing a blessing upon those who do not (or: do not yet) walk by that rule? I refuse to accept that explanation. Appeals to the well-known "Eighteen petition prayer of the Jews," to the meaning of the word Israel in other New Testament passages, etc., cannot rescue this interpretation. As to the former, Gal. 6:16 must be interpreted in accordance with its own specific context and in the light of the entire argument of this particular epistle. And as to the latter, it is very clear that in his epistles the apostle employs the term Israel in more than one sense. In fact, in the small compass of a single verse (Rom. 9:6) he uses it in two different senses. Each passage in which that term occurs must therefore be explained in the light of its context. Besides, Paul uses the term "the Israel of God" only in the present passage, nowhere else.

What, then, is the solution? In harmony with all of Paul's teaching in this epistle (and see also Eph. 2:14-22), and also in harmony with the broad, all-inclusive statement at the beginning of the present passage, where the apostle pronounces God's blessing of peace and mercy upon "as many as" shall walk by this rule, an object from which nothing can be subtracted and to which nothing can be added, it is my firm belief that those many translators and interpreters are right who have decided that kai, as here used, must be rendered even, or (with equal effect) must be left untranslated. Hence, what the apostle says is this: "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace (be) upon them and mercy, even upon the Israel of God." Cf. Psalm 125:5. Upon all of God's true Israel, Jew or Gentile, all who truly glory in the cross, the blessing is pronounced. - Hendriksen

The will refer to the individual Christians, Jewish and Gentile, and Israel of God to the same Christians, regarded collectively, and forming the true messianic community. Upon the true Israel, whose praise is from God and not from men; (Rom. 2:29). - Martin Vincent

The recognition of a distinctive people who are the recipients of God's redemptive blessings and yet who have a separate existence apart from the church of Jesus Christ creates insuperable theological problems. Jesus Christ has only one body and only one bride, one people that he claims as his own, which is the true Israel of God. This one people is made up of Jews and Gentiles who believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah. - O. Palmer Robertson

Shalom U'Vrachot

Re: What is a Jew? - posted by savannah, on: 2011/7/14 23:31

What is a Jew?

Who are examples of true spiritual Jews (Rom. 2:28-29)? Many physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in OT times, such as David, the man after God's own heart; godly Hannah; faithful Jeremiah and those in the great role call of faith in Hebrews 11. Also Gentile converts in OT days: Rahab of Jericho, Ruth the Moabitess, Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, etc. Also believers before Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, before Israel became a nation, before anyone spoke of "Jews:" Abel, Noah, Shem, for example. Jewish Christians are also true spiritual Jews. One thinks of the 12 disciples (except Judas), Barnabas, Paul, etc., in the first century AD. In fact, there has always been a believing Jewish remnant throughout the NT age, including, for example, Alfred Edersheim. Gentile Christians are also Jews inwardly. The Christian church—that is, elect believers, the church invisible—is now, and has always consisted of, spiritual Jews (whether ethnically Jew or Gentile). A true Christian church is a congregation of Jews, spiritual Jews, consisting of all those redeemed and called of whatever age or nationality. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ... But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly ... whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29).

Romans 2:28-29 is not unique in giving NT believers (whether Jews or Gentiles) names of the OT people of God. The Bible not only "spiritualizes" Jews; it also "spiritualizes" Israel. Listen to Asaph in Psalm 73:1: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart," with the second clause defining the true Israel. Christ speaks similarly to Nathanael: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile" (John 1:47). Paul declares in Roman 9:6, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." All believers are called "the Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16.

The OT people of God are not only called Jews (after Judah) and Israel (after Judah's father); they are also called the children of Abraham (after Israel's grandfather). Like the name Jew or Israel, the name children of Abraham is "spiritualized" in Scripture and applied to all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, who are given the faith of Abraham. John the Baptist proclaimed to the unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees, "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3:9). Jehovah later did this (in effect) in saving the Gentiles. Think of Christ's words in John 8. The unbelieving Jews claimed to be Abraham's children (33). Jesus told them that Abraham's children do the works of Abraham (39), and denounced them as being not the children of Abraham but the children of the devil (44). As Paul put it in Romans 9:7, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." Galatians 3:29 states, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So all saints of whatever nationality who trust in Jesus Christ crucified and risen are called Jews, Israel and the children of Abraham in the Word of God. We are also called the "circumcision," that is, the true spiritual circumcision: "neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh ... circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). In Colossians 2:11, Paul explains that in Christ we "are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands."

So all believers—you, too, child of God—are Jews, Israel, children of Abraham and circumcised—spiritually. We could also show from other texts that the elect NT church is the people of God, His covenant people, the diaspora (dispersed or scattered ones), etc.

The first important application of the truth regarding spiritual Jews is that which comes from the context in Romans concerning justification. Ethnic Jews are lost and must be saved. Nothing that they are or do can deliver them: not circumcision, not law-keeping, not religious rites. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh" (Rom. 2:28). Physical Jews must be justified by faith alone in Christ alone if they are to be saved, "for ... both Jews and Gentiles ... are all under sin" (3:9). There is no special route to heaven for ethnic Jews; they too, like Gentiles, must go to the true and living God through Christ alone.

Similarly, the religiosity of professing Christians is of no avail. Our works, baptism, piety, etc., do not justify us. Only the cross of Christ! Only His spotless life is perfectly righteous and it must be received by faith alone. "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory"—ethnic Jews and ethnic Gentiles (Isa. 45:25).

A second important application concerns ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. The OT and the NT do not speak of two radically different people with different eternal destinies. There is one people of God and one church in all ages and in

all lands. They are the spiritual people of God— inwardly, in the heart and in the spirit (Rom. 2:29). All believers, whether ethnic Jews or Gentiles, are spiritual Jews, Israel, children of Abraham and circumcision.

This gives us spiritual kinship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and believing OT Israel. It is not a matter of wearing a skull cap or of seeking salvation by keeping OT law. It is looking for all your righteousness and salvation in the cross of the Lord Jesus alone. There is no need nor calling to Judaize, that is, to adopt Jewish customs (e.g., a prayer shawl) or affect to be Jewish.

Believer, the OT is your book; read it, believe it, love it! You worship Jehovah. You are beloved by God. Yours are the promises of the OT and the NT. Yours is the inheritance of the new heavens and the new earth. For, "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" - A. Stewart

Re: The True Israel of God - posted by savannah, on: 2011/7/17 4:00

BASED upon the clear teachings of God's holy, inerrant, unbroken, verbally inspired Word, our purpose in this study on THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD is to show that the Scriptures teach in clear, bold, unmistakable truths, that all believers, God's children by the new birth, are the true Israel of God; and that they, and they alone, are God's chosen people upon the earth today and are the present heirs of the promises made to Abraham and his seed in Christ.

We will also be setting forth that the physical nation of Israel in the land of Palestine in the Near East today, is not God's chosen people or nation after the flesh, and neither will they ever again be dealt with as a nation in a so-called 1000-years of earthly prosperity with Christ sitting upon an earthly throne in Jerusalem. No, the Scriptures plainly teach that the nation of Israel was set aside at Calvary and that God's dealing with them now is the same as His dealings with the Gentiles: "For there is no respect of persons with God: there is no difference between Jew and Gentile for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 2:11; 3:22,23).

This precious truth of true believers being the true Israel of God has been lost among the rubble and trash of the false teaching of the past 150 years which says that God will yet deal with Israel as a nation, His chosen nation, and that most of all of the promises of the Old Testament given to Israel are physical promises and not spiritual and that the Jew will again arise as the chosen people of God in a so-called 1000-years reign of Christ upon this earth.

To continue go to the following link:

http://www.eternallifeministries.org/lrs_israel.htm

"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" Galatians 3:29.

Re: - posted by Josef83, on: 2011/7/17 6:50

Yeh, dispensationalism has done a wonderful work of spreading false doctrines.

Re: Israel of God revealed - posted by savannah, on: 2011/7/17 15:31

Josef83 said, "dispensationalism has done a wonderful work of spreading false doctrines."

You have spoken the truth Josef83...thanks be to God!

"Contrary to popular opinion, the physical, political nation of Israel is not the object of God's love, grace and favor. There are no promises given by God to the Jews, or anyone else, based upon race, nationality, or any other earthly distinction. This needs to be understood. All the promises of God are in Christ and made to sinners only in Christ (II Cor. 1:20). The promises of God are all promises of pure, free, sovereign, unconditional grace, made to, revealed to and given to faith (Gal. 5:6). "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34). He has no regard for circumcision, and no regard for uncircumcision. No man or woman is advantaged or disadvantaged before God by his race, nationality or works. God sees no worth in any human flesh, Jewish or Gentile, black or white, male or female, rich or poor. We are all, by nature, guilty sinners, in need of mercy, without claim upon God.

God no longer deals with the Jews as a nation. Because of their unbelief he has cut them off (Matt. 23:37-38; Rom. 11:20). Without question, God sovereignly rules the nation of Israel, just as he rules all others, in his providence. And any Jew who believes on Christ is saved, just as any Gentile who believes. But God has forever forsaken both Judaism and national Israel because of unbelief.

"The Israel of God" is not that little nation over in the middle east. "The Israel of God" is the church of God's elect, the house and temple of the living God, scattered throughout all the nations of the world and ages of time. The Israel of God is made up of redeemed sinners out of every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We who believe are the circumcision (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 2:28-29), the people of God's covenant (Heb. 10:15-17), the chosen and blessed nation of God's elect (I Pet. 2:9-10). God's church, his elect, are that Israel that shall be saved when "the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25-36). God's church, "the Israel of God," will be complete when all the elect Gentiles as well as elect Jews have been brought to Christ by his almighty grace (John 10:16). Salvation and grace are promised not to Abraham's physical seed, but to the spiritual seed of covenant promise (Rom. 9:6-8)." Don F.

Re: This is my body! - posted by savannah, on: 2011/7/24 8:28

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were 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:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, WHO HATH MADE BOTH ONE, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain ONE new man, so making peace;

And that he might reconcile both unto God in ONE body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

For through him we BOTH have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, BUT FELLOWCITIZENS with the saints, and of the household of God;

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 3:3,5,6

3 ...by revelation he made known unto me the mystery... Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be FELLOWHEIRS, and of THE SAME BODY, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

Romans 4:9-17

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of ALL them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Acts 7:37,38 This is that Moses, who said to the children of Israel, A prophet will the Lord your God raise up to you of your brethren, like me; him will ye hear.

This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him on the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the living oracles to give to us:

John 12:42,43 Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Rom 2:28,29 For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men, but from God.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2011/7/24 22:47

Quote:

No, the Scriptures plainly teach that the nation of Israel was set aside at Calvary

Of course, there are passages like Romans 11 that say the resurrection of the dead will not happen until unbelieving Israel be grafted back into the vine. So, "clearly" God has not set aside the nation in his dealings with them.

Replacement theology and dispensational theology, while both having valid points, fall into the deadly trap of creating two peoples of God. They both just go at it in different ways.