

Has the Church replaced Israel in God's prophetic program? This topic is one of the more controversial in the Church today, and it has significant implications regarding the way we interpret Scripture, especially concerning the end times.

Before we can answer this question, we must define what we mean by "The Church" and "Israel."

THE CHURCH is "*The Bride of Christ*" (Ephesians 5:24-32) composed of all who receive Him as their personal Lord and Savior during the Church Age (from Pentecost until the Rapture). It is also described as "*The Body of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

The Greek word translated "church in the New Testament is "ecclesia" and means "a called-out assembly." Most of the time, the word refers to a local church, but the titles (Bride and Body) indicate that it is a universal assembly.

ISRAEL is a nation chosen by God and sustained by covenant promises, such as:

Deuteronomy 7:6, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

Not all individuals in this chosen nation are saved (Romans 9:6; 11:28).

Now we can answer the question: Has the Church replaced Israel?

There are two basic views held by those of us who believe the Bible to be the Word of God:

1. **REPLACEMENT VIEW – the Church has replaced Israel:** This is the understanding of most Reformed Theologians. They believe that the church has completely replaced Israel. Jews may still be saved on an individual basis by coming to Christ,

but the nation of Israel and the Jews as a people no longer have any part to play in redemptive history.

In order to reach this conclusion, many passages in the Bible must be spiritualized (not taken literally).

Augustine popularized the concept, primarily in THE CITY OF GOD, in the latter part of the Fourth Century.

2. **Separate View – the Church has not replaced Israel:** This is the view of Dispensationalists. They believe that God has not set Israel aside but will literally keep his promises to Israel.

God, prior to the church age, dealt primarily with the nation Israel; in the church age He deals primarily with the church; and following the church age He will deal primarily with the nation Israel once more.

This understanding is based on a literal interpretation of the Bible.

It is my belief that this is the correct understanding of the relationship of the Church and Israel.

Here is why:

1. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT FOUNDERS

ISRAEL was established by God through Abraham:

Genesis 12:1-3, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

This blessing was passed on to his son Isaac (Genesis 26:1-4,24; Galatians 4), his grandson Jacob/Israel (Genesis 28:10-15), and his descendants ("The seed of Abraham").

THE CHURCH was founded by **Jesus Christ**, who gave His life for it (Ephesians 5:25), is building it today (Matthew 16:13-20), sent the Holy Spirit to indwell it, and promised to come again for it (John 14:1-6). It began on the Day of Pentecost when the disciples were indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

2. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT FOUNDATIONS

ISRAEL was founded on the promises of God, some of which are called "covenants." These promises are still in effect and will one day all be fulfilled.

Israelites become what they are by physical birth. They are each one begotten by parents and their inheritance is transmitted by human generation.

THE CHURCH's foundation is Jesus Christ, Himself (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Ephesians 2:19-20, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens 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."

Christians become what they are by spiritual birth (being born again).

3. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS

ISRAEL was established to be "a light for the nations" (Isaiah 60:1-3) – a model nation for the world to see (Deuteronomy 4:6). A nation whereby God could display his omniscience, omnipotence, righteousness, character, faithfulness, forgiveness, and great love and mercy (Psalm 67:1-7).

Although they often failed, God was and is faithful and it was through the nation of Israel that God gave us the **Savior** (Galatians 4:4-5) and the **Scriptures** (Romans 3:1-2).

Their function can be summarized as “**Come & See.**”

God’s purpose and program for Israel was revealed in the Old Testament and **centered in Jerusalem**, and will again center in the Tribulation (Matthew 24:15-20) and the Millennium (Isaiah 2:1-5). Israel’s attention is primarily **INWARD**.

THE CHURCH’s function is defined by the Great Commission:

Matthew 28:18-20, “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”

The Church is the beloved Bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-8) to one day be presented blameless and spotless (Ephesians 5:27).

God’s purpose and program for the Church was not revealed in the Old Testament, but was revealed in the New Testament by Christ, the Apostles, and Prophets (Ephesians 3:5-6). Because of this, the Church is called a “mystery” (Romans 11:25; Ephesians 5:32).

This purpose began at Jerusalem and extended to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). The Church’s attention is primarily **OUTWARD**.

Its function could be summarized as “**Go & Tell.**”

4. THEY HAVE DIFFERENT FUTURES

ISRAEL’s hope and expectancy is earthly (a land, nation, King) was foretold by the Old Testament prophets. This includes a regathering, redemption, and restoration of the Kingdom (see Jeremiah 31).

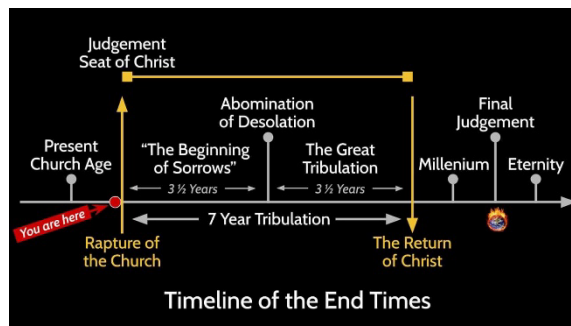
The key to understanding Israel’s future is the prophesy of 70 weeks given to Daniel.

Daniel 9:24, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

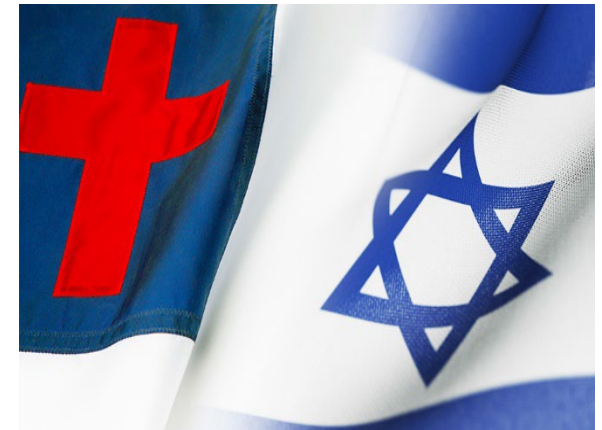
Sixty-nine of these weeks have been fulfilled already, leaving “one week” (7 years) to go. This week is called “*The Tribulation*” and “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jeremiah 30:7). During this time God will again deal with the nation of Israel (Romans 11), and they will turn back to God and be saved.

Every promise to Israel will be fulfilled by God. Israel will be the head of the nations, and no longer the tail, and all nations will send representatives to Jerusalem to honor and worship the King of Kings (Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1).

THE CHURCH will be raptured (removed from the earth) as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18). Every believer will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive either reward or loss of reward (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15) At the end of the Tribulation, we shall return to earth with Jesus Christ to reign with Him (Revelation 20:6).



THE TRUTH ABOUT ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH



Has the Church Replaced Israel in God’s Prophetic Plan?

“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”

– Deuteronomy 7:6

