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THE CHURCH AS THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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Harry Wilson Whipple
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APPROVAL SHEET

THE CHURCH AS THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>Ant</i>	Flavius Josephus, <i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i> , by Walter Bauer, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDB	Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. <i>The New Brown—Driver—Briggs—Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> . Reprint, Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1979.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NA ²⁸	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
NAC	New American Commentary
<i>NIDCC</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of the Christian Church</i>
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NIDNTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>

NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
TPNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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PREFACE

It is with heartfelt gratitude that I acknowledge my doctoral supervisor, Robert Plummer, and committee member, Dean Clark. Their guidance and helpful comments are greatly appreciated and the project defense process was very encouraging to me. I was especially helped by Professor Gregg Allison in his seminar on ecclesiology and historical theology. His discussion gave me a greater awareness as to the development of how God's people have understood the church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper through the years. My conversations and shared experiences with other students and friends have been thoughtful, as the Lord brought many considerate brothers and sisters in Christ into my life. I am so thankful for my seminar professors, as well as the other members of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary faculty and staff, who have been truly helpful to me. This degree program has been very rewarding, and has proved to be enriching both academically and spiritually.

The Lord has certainly blessed my life with many wonderful relationships: Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, my sons, friends and co-workers, and especially my wife, Ruthie. My family and my church have supported me in every way, both in ministry and in life experiences. I am extremely thankful for the love and happiness that I have shared throughout my lifetime, and even now I continue to be genuinely blessed.

First and foremost, my eternal relationship with the Lord is my greatest of all blessings. I wonder at the thought that our Triune God has an eternal plan and purpose for each of us as individuals. Even before we were born, He knew us; and before He created the universe, He loved us. Now I can confess, all I have needed Your hand has provided; great is Your faithfulness unto me.

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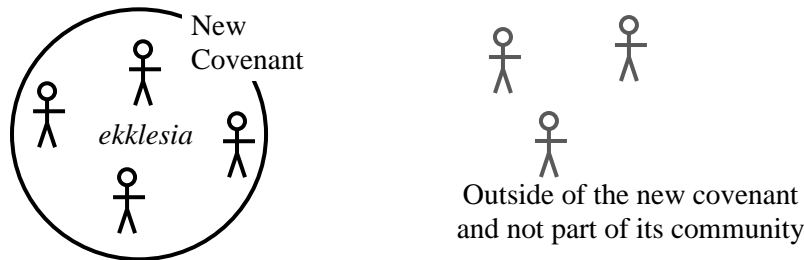
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project explored the simple question, “What is the church?” The Lord Jesus promised to build His Messianic community, “I will build My ἐκκλησία” (*ekklesia*) (Matt 16:18). Now two thousand years later, each segmented religious group sincerely believes this promise applies to them. Due to the fact that competing faith groups give conflicting claims asserting they are genuine, often at the exclusion of others, the result is considerable confusion and misunderstanding concerning the definition of the church.

The answer to the question “What is the church?” is not all that difficult. The church is the new covenant community. Gregg Allison rightly explains the church as covenantal: “as members in new covenant relationship with God and in covenantal relationship with each other.”¹ This understanding of the new covenant community is easy to illustrate:



All new covenant recipients participate in the *ekklesia*, while those who are not recipients do not participate in this community.

Figure 1. The new covenant community.

¹ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 31. Allison also states, “The church is the church of the new covenant.” (78)

The purpose of this project was to focus on the *ekklesia* as the community which consists of all new covenant recipients.

Context

Allison states in the video presentations which accompany his *Historical Theology* that throughout church history two basic answers have been given to the question of who constitutes the church. One answer is that the church consists of new covenant believers in Christ. This view is based on a discontinuity between God's people before the coming of Christ and those who lived after Him. Those who accept the church as consisting of new covenant recipients understand that Christians following Christ's public ministry have experiences that God's people who lived and died before the glorification of Christ could not have; one major example is the baptism of the Holy Spirit to incorporate believers into the church as the body of Christ. Another common view is both old covenant and new covenant together constitute the church. This belief understands a basic continuity between the people of God before and after the life of Christ.²

Wayne Grudem understands the church as the community of all true believers for all time. He references Ephesians 5:25, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her," to include all who are saved by the death of Christ. He explains that all believers in both the OT as well as the New are included in those who are redeemed by Christ.³ Grudem further explains that the church is invisible in its spiritual reality as the fellowship of all true believers, "the invisible church is the church as God sees it"⁴ and only God knows who truly belongs to Him. He contrasts the invisible and visible aspects of the church, "the visible church is the church as Christians on earth see it."⁵ This visible aspect includes all who confess faith in Christ and demonstrate that faith in their lives.

² Gregg R. Allison, "The Church: Its Nature, its Marks, and its Purposes," *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, video series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

³ Wayne Grudem, *Making Sense of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 34.

⁴ Grudem, *Making Sense of the Church*, 36.

⁵ Grudem, *Making Sense of the Church*, 37.

Millard Erickson also discusses the relationship between the doctrines of the visible church and the invisible church. He points out that Martin Luther questioned the differences between the church as it is found in Scripture and the characteristics of the church as it existed in his experience. The Reformers wrestled with the situation that among members of the visible church were those who were not true believers, and consequently not actually part of the body of Christ. They struggled whether the church was institutional or personal and spiritual. Both Luther and Calvin concluded the invisible church to be personal and spiritual as God's true people, while the visible church, as institutional, consists of both saved and lost.⁶

Philip Melancthon taught concerning the church: "Although the church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men." He condemned the Donatists, who withdrew from corrupt churches one thousand years earlier, because they refused to receive the ministry of men who had open, unconfessed sin in their lives.⁷

Not all Christians at that time were content to participate in churches that were a mixture of evil. Anabaptists gathered as a church with other believers who had freely responded to the gospel. They rejected coercion either by infant baptism or the power of the magistrate, unlike the Roman Catholics and other Reformers. "They were convinced that only by voluntarily associating themselves together could believers form a visible church according to the apostolic pattern of the New Testament."⁸

In Anabaptist teaching, regeneration was the mark of the true church and must be realized before church membership. "There can be no scriptural baptism without the prior experience of regeneration, and no church membership without baptism. It therefore

⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker 1998), 1218.

⁷ Philip Melancthon, *The Augsburg Confession*, "Article VIII: What the Church Is," accessed December 7, 2017, <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php#article7>.

⁸ William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 184.

follows that regeneration must be an accomplished fact before one is enrolled in the visible church.”⁹ Due to their practice of believer’s baptism and their insistence on the church as a voluntary community of believers, the Anabaptists were severely persecuted and countless numbers were martyred by Roman Catholics and Reformers alike.¹⁰

The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 states that the catholic, invisible church is the whole of God’s elect—past, present and future—gathered under Christ. The visible church “consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children.”¹¹ This church is sometimes more, sometimes less visible, and particular churches that make up the visible church are sometimes more, sometimes less pure. Even the purest of churches have a mixture of good and evil, but there will always be a church on this earth to worship God.

Louis Berkhof explains his view that the church was represented as families of believers during the patriarchal period. The church was saved in the ark by the family of Noah, and when true worship was on the verge of dying out, God made a covenant with Abraham and gave the sign and seal of circumcision to him. At Sinai, Israel as a nation became the church of God. He further explains that the NT church is essentially one with the church of the OT. In the transition from the OT to the New, the church was separated from its national character to become a universal body with a worldwide mission. “The church existed in the old dispensation as well as the new, and was essentially the same in both, in spite of acknowledged institutional and administrative differences.”¹²

John Darby was a young Anglican Church pastor in 1825. As a new convert himself, he became convinced through his ministry that the majority of his parishioners had a total absence of spiritual life. While meditating on this situation, it became clear to him that

⁹ Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 14.

¹⁰ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1985), 2:56-57.

¹¹ Presbyterian Church in America, *Westminster Confession of Faith*, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/WCFScriptureProofs.pdf>.

¹² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 570-71.

the church consisted only of those who were united to Christ.¹³ He argued that communion with Christ and the unity of the Spirit alone were the basis for the true church.¹⁴ In time, he came to understand that the church was a heavenly people, while Israel was earthly. Darby insisted on a strict discontinuity between Israel and the church, each with its separate destiny. He taught that the church was a mystery hidden in the OT and revealed only to the apostle Paul.¹⁵ Lewis Chafer refined this view of the church as an *intercalation* into God's plan for Israel and understood God's purposes for Israel and the church to be so divergent that the present church age was totally unforeseen by the OT prophets.¹⁶

Dispensational theology remains focused on a strict separation between Israel and the church.¹⁷ Dispensationalists define the church age as “the time period between Pentecost and the rapture, as a parenthesis of time interrupting the Messianic kingdom program.”¹⁸ Israel was the focus of God's redemptive activity before Pentecost and will return to the center of God's program during the tribulation and millennium following the rapture: Israel (Church) Israel.¹⁹ This definition of the church as all believers from Pentecost to the rapture is a signature of dispensationalism. Robert Saucy simply states, “The word ‘church’ is found only in reference to believers on earth during the present time between the first and second comings of Christ.”²⁰ Allison explains in greater detail:

¹³ Winston T. Sutherland, “John Nelson Darby: His Contributions to Contemporary Theological Higher Education” (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2007), 20-21.

¹⁴ Craig A. Blaising, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 16.

¹⁵ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 584; see also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 87.

¹⁶ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 4:41.

¹⁷ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 47.

¹⁸ Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 26; see John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 227-30.

¹⁹ Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 100.

²⁰ Saucy, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 209.

The company of all Christians stretching from its inception (accomplished by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and created by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost) to Christ's second coming at the end of this present age (The company of all Christians stretching from its inception (accomplished by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and created by the descent of the or, specifically, the rapture of the church prior to his return).²¹

While there has been continual revision of dispensational thought throughout its history, the definition of the church as believers between Pentecost and the rapture remains static. Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock define the church according to progressive dispensationalism: "The church is precisely redeemed humanity itself (both Jews and Gentiles) as it exists *in this dispensation* prior to the coming of Christ."²²

Rationale

The rationale for this project was to demonstrate that the church is the new covenant community equal to the body of new covenant recipients. The definition of the church as the new covenant community argues against covenantal theology, with its understanding that the church consists of all God's people from Abel to the last of the elect. This is not an argument against God's one plan of salvation—all the redeemed of all time receive forgiveness of sins the exact same way—only through the sacrificial atonement of Christ, which He accomplished on the cross. This definition acknowledges, however, a difference beginning in the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This occasion marked a change in God's covenant relationship to His people. For the first time God in the Person of the Holy Spirit was poured out in a manner different than ever before as He baptized and indwelt believers to bring the four new covenant provisions in the hearts and lives of recipients. This new covenant ministry of the Spirit was not possible prior to the work of Christ as sacrifice and new covenant High Priest. Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit ratifies the new covenant to God's people as individuals, who become the new covenant

²¹ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 31

²² Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 49, emphasis original.

community, distinct from the Mosaic covenant and its national covenant community. This old covenant with its animal sacrifices and external law inscribed on cold stone became obsolete, now the Holy Spirit makes each believer sufficient as a minister of the new covenant by writing His internal law on warm hearts. The church as the new covenant community now receives covenant blessings unrealized by previous generations.

The church as the new covenant community also conflicts with the view of the church culminating at the rapture. A second reason for this project would be to emphasize the continuation of the new covenant community, which consists of all Spirit-baptized believers. Hebrew prophets told of a future time that would be characterized by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They prophesied that the Messiah would give this Spirit outpouring at His coming to inaugurate His physical, global kingdom. Since the church is the covenant community of all who receive this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it would be reasonable to understand the church to be the community of all who receive this new covenant Spirit outpouring, both before and after the second coming of Christ.

Millard Erickson concludes,

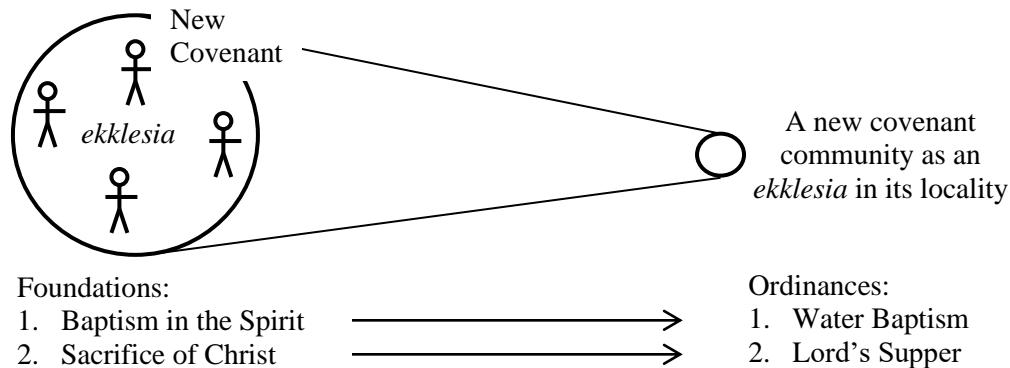
On one hand, some Reformed theologians see literal Israel as virtually swallowed up or displaced by the church as spiritual Israel. Nothing is left to be fulfilled in relation to literal Israel; consequently, there is no need for a millennium in which the Jews will be restored to a prominent place in God's work. On the other hand, dispensationalists regard Israel and the church as two eternally separate entities with which God deals in different ways. As Ladd has noted, the truth here, as in so many matters, lies somewhere between the two poles.²³

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to demonstrate that the *ekklesia*, commonly translated in English by the word *church*, is the new covenant community. The foundations of the new covenant are two: the work of God the Son in His sacrificial atonement, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in His outpouring, which includes baptism and indwelling of believers. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, since the day of Pentecost, to ratify the new

²³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1218. Also see Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 570-71; Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:29-35; George Eldon Ladd, "Israel and the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (October-December 1964): 207.

covenant to each one who receives the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. All who have been ratified into the new covenant by the Holy Spirit also participate in the new covenant community.



The entire new covenant community as well as its communities in various localities are identified by the sacrifice of Christ and our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Figure 2. New covenant foundations and its ordinances.

As the foundations of the new covenant are two, so the ordinances of the new covenant community are also two; the Lord's Supper symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ and water baptism symbolizes Spirit baptism. By baptism in one Spirit, new covenant recipients become members of the new covenant community, which is the body of Christ; and participants testify to receiving this Spirit baptism by baptism in water to become members of new covenant communities in localities where they reside. The new covenant community is manifested by representative communities around the world. These local communities remain viable only to the extent that they truly represent the new covenant and its covenant community.

As the new covenant provides the basis for the kingdom of God following the glorification of Christ, the purpose of the new covenant community is to serve as the government for this kingdom. At this time since Pentecost, Christian congregations make decisions as local new covenant communities in a participatory form of government under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the future physical aspect of the kingdom during the millennium, the new covenant community will also continue to serve as a participatory

form of government as local communities worldwide participate to make decisions for themselves under the theocratic rule of Christ.

Goals

The first goal was to demonstrate that biblical covenants are the outworking of God's rule on this earth. There is a difference between God's universal kingdom, or His eternal rule over all creation, and His mediatorial kingdom, or His rule on earth through man who acts as His representative. In creation, God made mankind in His image and gave to humanity dominion over all the earth. Due to disobedience against God, this authority has been severely diminished, if not destroyed, but in a series of covenants culminating with the new covenant, God will reestablish His governmental control over this world. In this program, God brings His mediatorial kingdom to earth through the Man Christ Jesus. As Man, Christ reclaimed dominion over creation that God originally gave to man, and He will share His dominion with humanity in the future millennial kingdom. The church will reign with Christ, as the new covenant community serves as kings subordinate to Him.

The second goal was to show that the word *ekklesia* designates a governmental decision-making body in three contexts: (1) ancient Greek city-states, (2) the Mosaic covenant community, and most importantly, (3) the new covenant community. Each of these bodies required a legal basis for existence and represented the will of the citizenry. The benchmark of success would be to point out clear examples in all three contexts in which decisions of the *ekklesia* would prove binding on the populace over which they have authority.

The third goal was to point out that the basis of the new covenant are also the two foundations of the new covenant community. Success would be realized as the two reasons that the new covenant exists, the sacrifice of Christ and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, would prove to be the legal basis for the existence of the church as the new covenant community. Further, it would also be successful to understand that the two foundations of the new covenant community are symbolized in the two ordinances of congregations in their various localities, as a manifestation of the new covenant community.

The fourth goal was to demonstrate that recipients of the new covenant are equal to the number of new covenant community participants. Simply, just as the new covenant will not end at the second coming of Christ, the church as the new covenant community will also not end at that point in time. This project will endeavor to show that the two foundations of the new covenant, the sacrifice of Christ and baptism of the Spirit, will also be the basis of the Messianic kingdom. In fact, the future spiritual/physical aspect of the kingdom will be founded on the new covenant. It becomes unreasonable to teach that the new covenant will be the basis of the millennial kingdom, but those who are ratified into the new covenant at that future time will not participate in the church as the new covenant community. This project would be successful as it demonstrates that there is no biblical reason to separate the new covenant from the new covenant community during the millennium. As the two foundations of the new covenant will continue until the very last human is redeemed, so that final believer will also be incorporated into the new covenant community as they participate in the sacrifice of Christ and the baptism in the Spirit.

Research Methodology

This project explored the Abrahamic covenant as a basis for both the Mosaic and the new covenant, as the apostle Paul explained in Galatians 3-4. Many Galatian Christians had become confused by some who taught that the Mosaic covenant was still operational. Before the cross, other ethnicities would participate in the promises of Abraham by accepting the authority of the Mosaic covenant and incorporating themselves into Israel through circumcision and the proselyte process. Many Galatian believers were abandoning the new covenant in order to accept the obsolete Mosaic covenant, so that they could receive the future promises of the Abrahamic covenant, which included being a people in a promised land with worldwide blessings. Paul explained that the Abrahamic covenant did not depend on the Mosaic covenant. God's covenant with Abraham was made more than four hundred thirty years prior to Sinai, the Abrahamic covenant existed before the Mosaic covenant and it would continue to operate afterwards. Following the cross and

Pentecost, now that the new covenant is ratified, Israel is no longer a covenant community due to the fact that Mosaic covenant ended. Before Sinai, ethnic Israel was an extended family with a covenant that God had given to their father, Abraham. After the cross, Israel returned to the status it had before Sinai. Ethnic Jews who accept God's word by faith will participate in the covenant promises both now and in a future day; individual Jews who cannot mix God's promises with faith forfeit Abraham's covenant and its promises become of no effect in their lives.

In the new covenant, recipients become children of Abraham and participate in the Abrahamic covenant. There are no ethnic, class or gender distinctives in the new covenant: "Neither is there Jew or Greek, neither is their slave or free, neither is their male or female, for all of you are one in Christ" (Gal 3:28). The new covenant is ratified to believers as individuals; as we belong to Christ, who is the Seed of Abraham, we also become Abraham's seed, and heirs of Abraham's promises in Christ.

Paul further explained in Ephesians 2-3 that when Israel was the Mosaic covenant community, other ethnicities were excluded from citizenship in Israel and were foreigners to the covenants of promise, but in the two foundations of the new covenant, the sacrifice of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit, God reconciled both ethnic Israel and other ethnicities into one body through the cross. Now believers from other ethnic groups are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens in the new covenant community. We are equally built on the foundation of the apostles, with Christ Himself as the cornerstone. Since Pentecost, all new covenant recipients are corporately a holy temple as a dwelling for God by His Spirit (Eph 2:22).

Paul pointed out in Romans 10-11 that the majority of ethnic Jews have rejected Christ, and consequently have been broken out of the cultivated olive tree of the Abrahamic covenant. Believers of other ethnicities who trust Christ for salvation are taken from their wild olive trees and grafted into the cultivated olive tree. Those of ethnic Israel who accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah are grafted back into their own branches. Paul explained that ethnic Israel has experienced this hardening so that believers from other ethnicities

can be included in the kingdom promises. He revealed that at a time in the future, all ethnic Jews will be saved. Paul quotes OT prophecies that the Deliverer will come to rescue the descendants of Jacob and ratify a new covenant with them when He takes away their sins (Rom 11:26-27; cf. Isa 27:9; Jer 31:34).

The dispensational separation between Israel and the church becomes difficult to understand in light of the new covenant community. Redeemed Jews do not lose their Hebrew ethnicity as they become new covenant recipients today; this is also true of other people groups, as redeemed Cherokee or Chinese do not lose their ethnic characteristics in the church at this time. The same is true during the millennium, Jews will not lose their ethnic heritage as they possess the land God promised Abraham to give to them. Every other ethnic group will also have territory allotted to them by God around the world, distinct from Israel. Ethnic Egyptians will live to the south of the land of Israel and ethnic Assyrians to the north during the millennial kingdom (Isa 19:23-25). Ethnic Israel will participate with all other ethnicities in the new covenant community, as first among equals. There is no separation between ethnic Jews and members of other people groups in the church as the new covenant community; all believers are members of one body of Christ regardless of ethnicity, this is true now, and it will also be true during the millennium.

Definitions

The following definitions of key terms are used in this ministry project:

The church. All new covenant recipients participate in the new covenant community, which is the *ekklesia*, the body of Christ. The new covenant was mediated by Christ on the cross and began to be ratified at Pentecost, as all who receive the sacrificial atonement of Christ are baptized in the Holy Spirit. The new covenant is eternal, and its covenant community will continue into the millennial kingdom following the return of Christ, as believers during the physical/political aspect of the kingdom will also receive the sacrifice of Christ as they continue to be baptized in the Spirit.

Mosaic covenant community. All Mosaic covenant recipients participated in national covenant community. This covenant and its covenant community began at Sinai

and became obsolete at the cross. The Mosaic covenant community was designated as *qahal* in Hebrew and as *ekklesia* in the LXX. The fact that both the Mosaic covenant community and the new covenant community were designated as an *ekklesia*, does not mean that they are synonymous. The two foundations of the Mosaic covenant and its community were the law (Torah) and animal sacrifices, while the two foundations of the new covenant and its community are the sacrifice of Christ and Spirit baptism.

Dispensationalism. A system for biblical interpretation with several distinctions: first, progressive revelation, God revealed truth about Himself and His plan of redemption in a series of ages, called dispensations. In each epoch, humanity is responsible to be stewards of the truth God has revealed. Second, the historical-grammatical method of biblical interpretation; this is a literal interpretation of the Bible, rather than a figurative system focused on typology. Third, the distinction between Israel and the church; God began His special focus on Israel as a national entity beginning with His promise to Abraham. This plan will culminate during the Messianic kingdom as Christ will rule the world as the King of the Jews, from His throne in Jerusalem. The church, however, began at Pentecost and will be completed at the rapture.

Covenantalism. A framework for biblical interpretation that understands God's providential plan for the redemption of humanity through system three overarching covenants of redemption, works and grace. The covenant of grace is revealed through successive historical covenants, to include the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and new covenants. In His grace, God predestines the elect to respond to the call of the Holy Spirit, so that each will accept the sacrifice of Christ for eternal salvation.

Messianic kingdom. The kingdom of God was present in the Person of Christ during His earthly ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. This kingdom continued in the resurrection and ascension of Christ; in His exaltation as King of Kings, He poured out His Spirit to initiate this current spiritual aspect of the kingdom. Believers are transferred into the kingdom of Christ as we believe on Jesus as Savior and receive Him as our King. There is a future spiritual/physical aspect to this kingdom, as Christ returns as King of the

world to take possession of the earth and rule the nations. After He has defeated all enemies, Christ will return the kingdom to His Father. The kingdom of God will continue in its spiritual/physical/eternal aspect in the new heaven and new earth.

Conclusion

The church is simply the new covenant community; nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. The new covenant has two foundations: the sacrificial atonement of Christ and outpouring of the Holy Spirit that results in Spirit baptism and indwelling of new covenant recipients; likewise, the new covenant community has the same two foundations. Both the new covenant and its covenant community began at the same time, on the day of Pentecost, as Christ requested the Father to pour out the Spirit on covenant recipients, baptizing them into one body. This new covenant ratification and participation in its covenant community, which is the church as the body of Christ, is a wonderful relationship that each Person of our Triune God worked together to provide to His people.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY AND ITS MEDIATORIAL MINISTRY

The new covenant is the last in a series of biblical covenants. A survey of these various covenants becomes important to understand the new covenant community. Simply, the covenants presented in Scripture are God's plan to bring His Mediator to earth. In our rebellion against God, mankind forfeited the royal dominion over the earth granted in creation, and Satan is exercising this authority because of man's fall into sin. However, God put a process into action to correct this tragedy. Through the outworking of these covenants, culminating with the new covenant, God reveals His perfect Man to defeat the devil and become King of the world. The new covenant community shares in this victory; Christ is the head as the supreme King in His glorification, and His Messianic community as His body, will be kings subordinate to Him in our glorification.

Introduction

The understanding of the church as the community of all new covenant recipients is a discussion firmly based in biblical covenants. One's view of the new covenant cannot be separated from the various other covenants revealed in the pages of Scripture. Thomas Schreiner rightly states that biblical covenants are foundational to what God reveals to us in His word:¹ "If we don't understand the covenants, we will not and cannot understand the Bible because we won't understand how the story fits together."²

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, "10 Things You Should Know about the Biblical Covenants," Crossway, July 17, 2017, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-biblical-covenants>.

² Thomas R. Schreiner, "Why You Can't Understand the Bible without Understanding the Covenants," Crossway, July 20, 2017, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-we-must-understand-the-covenants-to-understand-the-bible>.

This project argues that biblical covenants are the outworking of God's reign on this earth.³ God reveals Himself as the absolute Sovereign over all creation. "Yahweh has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19). "Your kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps 145:13).⁴ King David acknowledged God's universal kingdom, "The kingdom is Yours, O Yahweh, and You are exalted as head over all. Both wealth and honor come from You and You reign over all" (1 Chr 29:11-12). King Nebuchadnezzar also confessed God's sovereign authority, "I blessed the Most High, and gave praise and honor to Him who lives forever; for His dominion is eternal and His kingdom is from generation to generation" (Dan 4:34).⁵

Alva McClain asks how does one reconcile the Lord's Prayer in light of God's universal kingdom? The Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).⁶ He explains that although God's universal kingdom has always and will always rule over all, there is a difference between the exercise of this authority in heaven and its application on the earth. This difference is due to the sin and rebellion of mankind. McClain distinguishes between God's universal kingdom, His eternal rule over all creation, and His mediatorial kingdom, or His rule on earth through man who acts as His representative.⁷ Biblical covenants are the program in which God brings His mediatorial kingdom to earth through the Man Christ Jesus.

In creation, God made mankind in His image and gave humanity dominion over

³ William J. Dumbrell notes "an interrelationship of divine kingship and covenant" and states that "the goal of covenant is divine rule over the world, recognized by mankind." William J. Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 42.

⁴ OT translations are of Karl Elliger and William Rudolph, eds., *BHS* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984).

⁵ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 22-34. See also Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2017), 53-54.

⁶ NT translations are of Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *NA²⁸* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

⁷ McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*, 34-35; Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 54-55.

all the earth (Gen 1:26). He blessed man and commanded that they be fruitful and multiply on the earth, to fill it and subdue it, and to have authority over the created order (v. 28). Many have commented on the significance of the meaning of the Hebrew words *רָדָה* (*radah*, to rule, have dominion, vv. 26, 28) and *כָּבַשׁ* (*kabas*, to subdue, bring into subjection, v. 27). McClain notes, “The very first of the divine injunctions laid upon him were regal in character.”⁸ Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum state, “Humans rule as a result of this royal status. The term “to rule” (*radah* in Gen 1:26, 28) is particularly true of kings, as Ps 72:8 illustrates. Also the term “to subdue” (*kabas*) specially speaks of the work of a king (2 Sam 8:11).”⁹ Paul Williamson adds, “Thus it would appear that humankind is created as God’s vicegerent: to reign in a manner that demonstrates his lordship over all creation.”¹⁰ Eugene Merrill concludes, “God had created man for the express purpose of conveying to him the status and function of image, that is, man was to represent God in his dominion over all creation.”¹¹

Schreiner understands a covenant of creation, even though the word *covenant* itself is lacking from the account of Genesis 1-3. God, the sovereign ruler of all creation, gave Adam and Eve subordinate authority over the earth. He promised blessings for obedience and a curse for disobedience. Man disobeyed and experienced the covenant curse.¹² Gentry and Wellum agree, they see a divine-human relationship with both vertical and horizontal dimensions in Genesis 1. The covenant relationship between God and man is characterized by sonship, and the covenant relationship between man and the earth is

⁸ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 42.

⁹ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 196.

¹⁰ Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God’s Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 46.

¹¹ Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 18.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 19-27.

characterized by “kingship and servanthood, or better, servant kingship.”¹³ They explain, “As servant king and son of God mankind will mediate God’s rule to the creation in the context of a covenant relationship with God on one hand and the earth on the other. Hence the concept of the kingdom of God is found on the first page of Scripture. Indeed, the theme is kingdom through covenant.”¹⁴

The term *covenant* designates the foundational relationship between God, man and creation, as the basis for follow-on biblical covenants. Gentry and Wellum emphasize that while the word *covenant* is not used in Genesis 1-3, covenantal language is used to describe “man’s relationship to God as son and his relationship to earth as servant king.”¹⁵

Adam and Eve’s disobedience amounted to absolute treason against God. They willfully declared their independence from the Creator who had entrusted them with His authority to govern the earth; and at the same time allied themselves to a cunning creature in rebellion against God. In this act of treachery, the royal couple attempted to dethrone God. Those who had been commissioned to extend God’s rule throughout the earth had sided with the enemy. Not only did man forfeit control over the earth to this scheming creature, but became subjects to its evil authority.¹⁶

Each of man’s relationships suffered due to sin. Concerning man’s relationship with God, humanity became separated in spiritual death. Concerning the relationships between mankind, tension and turmoil, shame and blame existed with other people; and concerning man’s relationship with creation, what had been blessed became cursed, and man would be forced to toil over the ground in order to be able to eat.¹⁷

In a prophecy appropriately called the *protoevangelium* (the first gospel), God

¹³ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

¹⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201.

¹⁵ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 217.

¹⁶ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 78-79.

¹⁷ Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 67.

focused His attention on the spiritual entity behind this act of rebellion. Genesis 3:15 tells of enmity between the woman and Satan, between Satan's seed and her Seed. "It recognizes the essential conflict between Satan and the Lord and indicates that this conflict will also involve the people of God and the followers of Satan."¹⁸ The seed of the woman is a clear reference to the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, who came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8, 10), at the cost of His own sacrifice.

In the beginning, God gave man dominion over creation so that humanity would serve as mediator of an earthly kingdom under the authority of God's universal sovereignty. Due to disobedience against God, this authority has been severely diminished, if not destroyed, by mankind's unmitigated rebellion. In a series of covenants, beginning with Noah, continuing with Abraham, Moses, David, and culminating with the new covenant, God revealed His plan to reestablish His governmental control over this world. In this plan, Christ would be the ultimate mediatorial ruler, as God the Son He would perfectly represent God to man, and as Man He would perfectly represent man to God. As Man, Christ would reclaim the dominion over creation that God originally gave to man.

Covenant with Noah

The fall of man resulted in two diametrically opposite kingdoms: those who were in rebellion to God came under the authority of the devil, while those who surrendered to God's authority were transferred into His kingdom. This conflict between those who accepted God's sovereignty and the others who remained in opposition quickly became manifest as Cain killed his brother (Gen 4:8). Abel exhibited a life of righteousness due to his faith (Heb 11:4), while Cain was of the wicked one (1 John 3:12). Enoch also walked with God (Heb 11:5), while others of his generation demonstrated their depravity (Gen 4:23). Because of rejection of God's authority structures, chaos and violence became the result. As humanity continued to struggle for dominance in cruel ways; Yahweh saw that the wickedness of mankind was great and every thought was continually evil (Gen 6:15).

¹⁸ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 93.

As the result, God purposed to destroy the pre-flood world, and to begin anew with Noah, who had found grace in His eyes (v. 8).

Williamson explains that because of the universal rebellion which characterized humanity, God accomplished a reversal of creation. God had put a protective canopy around the world (Gen 1:6-8), but this was collapsed on the surface of the earth (Gen 7:11). God had also separated water under the land (Gen 1:9), which was broken up as the fountains of the deep (Gen 7:11).¹⁹

The first mention of the word *covenant* in the Bible is between God and Noah (Gen 6:18). The Hebrew word בְּרִית (*berith*, covenant) is also translated as a treaty or alliance between nations or ethnic groups,²⁰ an agreement or pledge between men,²¹ or a marriage (Prov 2:17; Mal 2:14). Covenants were common in the ancient world, and those who entered into a covenant took an oath in the name of their gods to witness that binding agreement. Archaeological research reveals factors common to ancient covenants; the oath between contracting parties, the swearing to gods, blessings to those who keep the covenant and curses on those who break it.²² The covenant making process is commonly כָּרַת בְּרִית (*karat berith*, cutting a covenant), which refers to making a sacrifice as part of the ritual and inviting participants to eat of the sacrifice as a feast to celebrate the event.²³ However, the word that God used to establish the covenant with Noah was not כָּרַת (*karat*, cut), but קָוַם (*qoom*, confirm) in Genesis 6:18; 9:9; 11, 13.

Gentry and Wellum understand that God confirmed His previous commitment to preserve, provide for and rule over creation. Like Adam, Noah was God's representative

¹⁹ Williamson, *Sealed with Oath*, 60.

²⁰ Israel and Gibeon, Josh 9:6-16; Israel and Phoenicia, 1 Kgs 5:26; Israel with a future hostile prince, Dan 9:27. BDB, “בְּרִית,” 136.

²¹ Jacob with Laban, Gen 31:44; David with Jonathan, 1 Sam 18:3; and David with Abner, 2 Sam 3:12.

²² J. Arthur Thompson, “Covenant,” in *ISBE*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:790-91.

²³ Elmer B. Smick, “בְּרִית,” in *TWOT*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:128.

on earth, through whom God’s purposes would continue. Using the same language as with Adam, God commanded Noah to be fruitful, to increase in number and to fill the earth (compare Gen 9:1 with 1:28).²⁴ The divine image as the basis of God’s original mandate for mankind’s rule over creation in Genesis 1:26-28 remains the basis for Noah’s renewed covenant in Genesis 9:6. Human life is protected because the image of God is a seal of His ownership.²⁵ Following the chaos of the pre-flood world, Yahweh established a covenant of order to guide human society (8:21-9:17). God promised never to again destroy all life by means of a flood, and gave the rainbow as a sign. This covenant was established with the global descendants of Noah, as well as animal creation (9:9-10). In His covenant with Noah, God reasserted His governmental rights over creation.²⁶

Psalm 8:6 celebrates the dominion that God gave to man and the royal status that authority entails. “You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, You put all things under his feet.” Gentry and Wellum explain, “It is clear and obvious that the psalm writer has the text of Genesis 1:26 before his mind word-for-word.”²⁷ The Hebrew terms in Psalm 8:5, עָטַר (*atar*, crowned), כְּבוֹד (*kabowd*, glory), הָדָר (*hadar*, honor), and in verse 7, מָשַׁל (*mashal*, to rule, govern) speaks of the authority of a king. In addition, the phrase “place under his feet” designates royalty.²⁸

The author of Hebrews quoted Psalm 8:5, 6 and provided a commentary: “For in subjecting all things to him, God left nothing not in subjection to him, but at present we do not yet see all things in subjection to him” (Heb 2:8). God originally gave dominion to man, but humanity forfeited the original dominion to a large extent. The writer concluded in verse 9, “But we see Jesus.” The Lord Jesus is the representative Man now crowned with

²⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 165; Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 71.

²⁵ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 167.

²⁶ Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 71-72; Merrill, *Theology of Pentateuch*, 23.

²⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 196.

²⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 196.

glory and honor, and He will restore the dominion over the earth back to mankind at a time in the future.²⁹ God's sovereign authority will be brought to earth through the mediation of Christ as His kingdom will be established on the earth. New covenant recipients will also reign with Him at this future time (2 Tim 2:12).³⁰ Creation and Noahic covenants reveal the dominion of creation that Christ as Man will restore to humanity. The wolf and the lamb will feed together; the lion will eat straw like the ox" (Isa 65:25). The apostle Paul looked to the day when creation would be set free from bondage as the glory of God's children is revealed (Rom 8:21).

Covenant with Abraham

When knowledge of God was dying out, as humanity rejected Him for false worship, Yahweh chose one man to establish a covenant, so through Abraham and his descendants the whole of mankind would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). Following the tower of Babel, which was a futile attempt at building a humanistic world government and religious system in rebellion to His commands, God turned His attention to one particular individual through which He could accomplish His divine regal will on earth.³¹

Through a process of life experience for Abraham, God promised to give him a multiplicity of descendants and a land where these descendants could thrive (Gen 13:14-17). Abraham believed God, and He accounted that faith to him as righteousness

²⁹ Alexander comments,

Throughout these verses, the author of Hebrews is speaking of humanity ("man") in general. He anticipates a time when their status as God's viceroys will be re-established and everything be subject to them. Having affirmed this, the author of Hebrews then proceeds to focus on Jesus Christ. . . . By becoming a perfect human vicegerent in the present, Jesus is able to re-establish the vicegerent status of other human beings in the future. . . . The establishment of Christ's viceregency is undoubtedly one of the central ideas associated with the kingdom of God in the New Testament. Christ's human reign is intimately tied to God's creation blueprint. By reigning as man, Christ will enable the earth to be filled with those who are priest-kings. (Alexander, *Eden to New Jerusalem*, 93-94)

³⁰ "We will also reign together" [with Him] (2 Tim 2:12). "You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev 5:10). "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev 20:4). "They will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev 20:6).

³¹ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 49.

(Gen 15:5-6). He cut up sacrifices to commemorate this covenant, but Yahweh Himself walked between the pieces alone (Gen 15:9-12), to signify that the fulfillment of this covenant was totally His responsibility, without the effort of man.

McClain discusses God's mediatorial kingdom in the context of the patriarchs. Yahweh would speak directly to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and they would mediate the divine will, although often very imperfectly. These patriarchs were genuine mediators through whom God ruled His chosen line of humanity. Genesis 14 records the invasion of four kings from Mesopotamia against five kings in the Jordan River region, led by the king of Sodom. These invading kings defeated the armies of Sodom and its allies, and plundered the defeated cities. They took Lot, Abraham's nephew, and in response, Abraham pursued this hostile army with his own household servants, defeating the forces of these five kings in the vicinity of Damascus. After the battle was won, he recovered the captives and returned with the property back to the Jordan Valley region. This account reveals that Abraham had kingly stature and regal authority among the local populace, but more, he was God's personal representative on earth during his lifetime.³²

Abraham was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, and also by the king of Sodom. He disregarded the king of Sodom, but highly regarded Melchizedek and gave him a tithe of all the recaptured spoils.³³ In this interaction, Abraham found himself as an equal among kings. This equality is also recognized in his friendship treaty with Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen 20:2), and in the sons of Heth, who spoke of him as "a mighty prince among us" (Gen 23:5-6). Alexander concludes: "While Abraham is never called a king, these observations suggest he is one in all but name. Moreover, the

³² McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 50; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 236.

³³ Psalm 110 finds a correlation between Melchizedek and the Messiah as God's ultimate King (v. 2) and Priest (v. 4). The book of Hebrews reveals Melchizedek as "king of righteousness" and as king of Salem "king of peace" (Heb 7:1-3). Due to the fact that Melchizedek was both king and priest, he is an illustration of Christ Jesus as both King of Jerusalem and God's new covenant High Priest in His mediatorial kingdom on this earth. Alexander, *Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 81.

Lord covenants with Abraham that kings would be among his descendants (Gen 17:6).”³⁴ McClain succinctly summarizes the terms of the Abrahamic covenant: (1) innumerable descendants through natural generation (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:3-5),³⁵ (2) an irrevocable title to a definite land area on earth (Gen 13:14-17; 15:18; 17:7-8);³⁶ and (3) final world supremacy through which mankind would participate in God’s blessings³⁷ (Gen 12:2-3).³⁸

The OT Scriptures focused on the promises to the descendants of Abraham as a people in the land that Yahweh had given them. God delivered Israel from Egypt because of His covenant with Abraham (Exod 6:8). He gave the land of promise to Israel due to the Abrahamic covenant (Josh 21:43-45). The conquests of David and authority of Solomon correspond to Yahweh’s promise with Abraham (1 Chr 18:3; 1 Kgs 4:21). Moses warned the people of Israel that disobedience to God would result in captivity, but as the remnant would return to Yahweh and confess their sins, He would remember His covenant with Abraham (Lev 26:27-42). Nehemiah claimed this promise (Neh 1:8-9), so God enabled him to return to the land. Isaiah prophesied that Yahweh will return Israel to their land from the ends of the earth, due to the fact that they are descendants of Abraham, His friend (Isa 41:8-16). Jeremiah revealed that Yahweh will bring the descendants of Abraham and Jacob back to the land from captivity to be ruled by a descendant of David at a future time (Jer 33:23-26).

Circumcision was the sign of this covenant (Gen 17:10-14). By accepting this sign, the recipient claimed inclusion in God’s covenant with Abraham to participate in

³⁴ Alexander, *Eden to New Jerusalem*, 82-83.

³⁵ “He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So will your descendants be’” (Gen 15:5).

³⁶ “On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land from the river of Egypt to the great river of Euphrates’” (Gen 15:18).

³⁷ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 155.

³⁸ “I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3).

these promised blessings. Negatively, Abraham's descendant who remained uncircumcised would be separated from the covenant.³⁹

The Abrahamic covenant contains promises that Christ as the Seed will reveal to humanity. The apostle Paul understood the promises to Abraham as fulfilled in Christ, who is the Seed (Gal 3:16). Christ inherits the blessings and mediates the promises to those who belong to Him; as the result, those who emulate the faith of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile, are in Christ and consequently are Abraham's seed (Gal 3:26-29). Paul declares Abraham to be the father of all who believe regardless if they are Jews or Gentiles (Rom 4:9). Christ as Abraham's Seed is both the heir and mediator of the triple promises of this covenant, which He will fulfill during His kingdom reign: God promised that (1) a populace would (2) possess territory with a (3) worldwide scope.⁴⁰

Concerning a populace in an earthly kingdom, Saucy writes: "The fact that the true seed of Abraham includes both Jews and Gentiles does not rule out a continuing distinction for Israel in the NT."⁴¹ He points out that calling Gentiles as seed of Abraham should not be understood as including believing Gentiles into spiritual Israel. If Abraham were merely the father of Israel, believing Gentiles would become part of spiritual Israel, just like believing Gentiles became proselytes into national Israel under the Mosaic covenant economy. However, the apostle Paul taught that Abraham was more than that, he is the father of many nations (Rom 4:18; Gen 15:5), not just one.⁴²

This distinction is important, due to land assignment according to ethnicity in the millennium. Paul taught that Abraham and his descendants received the promise that he would be heir of the world (Rom 5:9). This promise is understood in the universal blessing "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Ethnic Israel

³⁹ Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant*, 94.

⁴⁰ Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 49.

⁴¹ Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 50.

⁴² Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 51.

will receive its territory allotment in the physical kingdom according to the promise of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 15:7; 18-21); God will be true to His word.⁴³ However, other ethnic peoples as believing Gentiles, and seed of Abraham, will also receive their allotted land as distinct from Israel (Isa 19:23-25). Egyptians will have their territory to the south of Israel, while the Assyrian people will have their allotment to the north, and a highway will travel through the land of Israel connecting the two. These ethnicities in the future physical aspect of the kingdom will be seed of Abraham as believing Gentiles, but they will be distinct from Israel in both populace and territory. Believing Gentiles are not part of Israel, either physically or spiritually, this is true now and also in the millennium.

Covenant with Israel through Moses

After a time period of four generations in Egypt, God liberated the descendants of Abraham and Jacob from bondage under the leadership of Moses, and established a covenant with Israel at Sinai (Exod 19:5; 24:7-8). This covenant consisted of a law (Torah) as a divine constitution given to Israel,⁴⁴ and included a system of animal sacrifices to effect ceremonial cleansing which enabled the people to approach Yahweh in worship, to cover sin and to restore the blessings of the covenant in the case of disobedience to God's commands. This covenant made at Sinai did not replace or revoke the Abrahamic Covenant, as the apostle Paul explained in Galatians 3:17, but put a code of laws in place to allow for a successful residence of the promised land.

Vlach notes that other covenants of God's mediatorial kingdom program were unconditional, but the Mosaic covenant was conditional—if Israel obeyed, they would

⁴³ “Then you will know that I am Yahweh, when I bring you into the land of Israel into the ground for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers” (Ezek 20:42).

⁴⁴ Hayim Donin writes, “As this God-intoxicated family and those who joined them grew in number, accepting the Torah as their Divine Constitution . . . they assumed the characteristics of a nation . . . exercising the attributes of national sovereignty.” Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 8. He adds, “Torah is the embodiment of the Jewish faith. It contains the terms of his Covenant with God. It is what makes a Jew a Jew.” (27)

experience blessings, but if they disobeyed, then curses would be the result (Deut 28-29).⁴⁵ McClain points out that Moses was a mediatorial ruler as Israel transitioned from an extended family into a nation. While Moses was never referred to as a king, he exercised authority mediatorially under God's control.⁴⁶ O.T. Allis rightly states, "Moses exercised the office of a king; he represented the invisible King."⁴⁷

Moses represented Yahweh to the people: "He [Aaron] will speak for you to the people and he will be as a mouth for you, and you will be to him as God" (Exod 4:16). In the case of rebellion against the authority of Moses, God Himself intervened to punish those in disobedience (Num 16:28-30). Moses also represented the people to Yahweh (Deut 9:24-29), as he faithfully interceded for the nation in times of God's anger against Israel's lapses into idolatry and disobedience. In this mediatorial ministry, Moses serves as an illustration of Christ; "Yahweh your God will raise up for you from your midst, from your brothers, a Prophet like me; you will hear Him" (Deut 18:15).⁴⁸

Israel became the representation of God's kingdom on earth, "You will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Before this time, the kingdom of God had been manifested to humanity by individuals and families who acknowledged God's authority over them, but beginning at Sinai, the theocracy was established. Israel was ruled by God, who was their King; they were led by judges who represented God to them, and in turn they were a mediatorial nation, representing God to the world.⁴⁹

The Ten Commandments, especially the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath, as a mandatory rest on the seventh day, served as signs for this covenant (Exod 20:8-11; Ezek 20:12).⁵⁰ Schreiner points out that the Sabbath's role as the sign of the

⁴⁵ Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 96-97.

⁴⁶ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 63.

⁴⁷ O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: P & R, 1945), 59.

⁴⁸ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 60.

⁴⁹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 318-27; Williamson, *Sealed with Oath*, 99.

⁵⁰ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 338-40; Williamson, *Sealed with Oath*, 100.

covenant is indicated by being the longest commandment and its central position. The Sabbath commandment is also repeated twice in emphasis as a sign between Yahweh and the people of Israel (Exod 31:13, 17).⁵¹

During His life and on the cross, Christ as Servant obeyed the law's demands. Christ fulfilled the righteous requirement of the Mosaic covenant, as the apostle Paul stated: "He wiped away the handwriting of the decrees against us, and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to His cross" (Col 2:14). There is no legal regulation in the Mosaic covenant left for those in Christ to fulfill. There is no residual requirement that God's people need to accomplish. The Lord Jesus finalized the Mosaic covenant in His sacrifice and rendered it obsolete. "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4).

It is true that the legal requirement of the Mosaic covenant is no longer binding on God's people, but that does not mean that believers are no longer under law. New covenant recipients have a higher law that the Spirit Himself has written on our hearts and minds. We obey God out of love for Him and a desire to please Him in all things.

Jesus said, "I did not come to abolish (καταλῦσαι, *katalusai*, destroy) the law or the prophets, I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matt 5:17). In His life, Christ fulfilled the Torah regulations; and in His death, He fulfilled the Levitical requirements. However, the Lord did not abolish OT prophecies. Allison explains that the expression "law and prophets" referred to the Hebrew Scriptures, what is now called the "Old Testament."⁵² The Lord did not come to put an end to that portion of the Bible, but came to fulfill everything written in them concerning Him. All prophecy concerning the Messiah that was not fulfilled in His first coming will be fulfilled when He returns to rule the world in His second coming.

⁵¹ Schreiner, *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World*, 66.

⁵² Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 77.

Saucy understands the Mosaic covenant as administrative in nature and for a limited time only. Its purpose was to set forth the terms of obedience in order to receive the blessings of the covenantal promises. Because the people could not obey its external legal regulations, this temporary covenant was terminated that it might be replaced by a new, eternal covenant.⁵³

The apostle Paul discussed at length the purpose of the Mosaic law and its place in the lives of God's people in Christ (Gal 3:10-28). Those who rely on the Mosaic law for their standing before God are under a curse (Deut 27:26). As the remedy, Christ became our curse thereby setting us free from the curse of the law (v. 13). Now free from the law, the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant come to Gentiles as the Holy Spirit applies the sacrifice of Christ by faith (v. 14). The Mosaic covenant did not add to or set aside the Abrahamic covenant, which came first (v. 17). Covenant promises were given to Abraham and to Christ, who is his Seed (v. 16). The law was added later to teach people the difference between sin and righteousness (vv. 19, 21).

Under the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, children were born into a national covenant by physical birth and received the covenant sign of circumcision on the eighth day. This covenantal law was external and the covenantal sign was external as well. The purpose of the Mosaic covenant was for the people to internalize this external law. They had been circumcised externally and were a member of the national covenant, but both Moses and the prophets called on the people to "circumcise their hearts" (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25) and come to love Yahweh wholeheartedly and to accept His authority unconditionally on their lives.⁵⁴ The apostle Paul explained that the physical circumcision of ethnic Israel becomes meaningless if it is not accompanied by heart circumcision (Rom 2:29). External circumcision for the ethnic Jew is without value unless they also become spiritual Jews through the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 28).

⁵³ Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 120-21.

⁵⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 648.

There were many believers during the OT time period who received God's promises by faith. Abraham believed God, who accounted this faith as righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:1-4); David celebrated God's forgiveness of sins (Ps 32:1-2; Rom 4:6-8). Throughout human history, there is only one plan of salvation by grace through faith (Eph 2:8) as Hebrews 11 demonstrates. However, the majority of people under the Mosaic covenant could not internalize God's relationship; they could not mix God's word with faith (Heb 4:2). The apostle Paul explained that throughout Israel's history, the majority rejected as in the days of Elijah, and only a remnant received God's grace (Rom 11:2-6). This resulted in a mixed community of the Mosaic covenant, as some experienced God's salvation, while most of national Israel did not.⁵⁵

Covenant with David

In response to David's desire to build a temple for God, Yahweh established a covenant with him that guaranteed the Davidic dynasty. Yahweh promised that a future descendant of David would be the King of an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:12-16). The promises to David establish earlier prophecies that kings would come from Abraham (Gen 17:6, 35:11), that a scepter would come from Judah's tribe (Gen 49:10) and Balaam's prophecy of a star and scepter that would rise out of Israel (Num 24:17).

God based His covenant to David on the promise of a future place for His people Israel, where they would never be disquieted and the wicked would never again oppress them (2 Sam 7:10). To this end, Yahweh declared that a direct Descendant would reign on David's throne forever (vv. 13, 16).⁵⁶ This immediate fulfillment was in Solomon, who built the first temple in a time of great peace; however, his reign was marred by worship of foreign gods to please his many wives (1 Kgs 11:4-6). The ultimate fulfillment would be the Messiah, God is His Father, and He is God the Son. The Messiah will bring an era of total peace, He will give Israel a place of safety to call their own, and will build a temple

⁵⁵ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 648.

⁵⁶ Williamson, *Sealed with Oath*, 125-28; Dumbrell, *Creation and Covenant*, 226-26; Vlach, *He Will Reign*, 115-16.

for the worship of God. Solomon was certainly an illustration of David's ultimate Son, as Christ explained about Himself, "a greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). David, Solomon and each of the succeeding kings of Judah were mediatorial rulers, to varying degrees of success or failure, as each one was held accountable to Yahweh and His law. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant as the NT presents Him as the covenant King (Luke 1:32-35). This role as King of Israel is demonstrated by the Hebrew title Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ, *mashiach*). The LXX translated *mashiach* as χριστός (*christos*, Christ); both Messiah and Christ have the same meaning as *the anointed One*. Messiah in the OT (Ps 2:1, 6) and Christ in the NT (Matt 2:2, 4; Mark 15:32) are used in parallel as King. The fact that the name *Jesus* is used so closely with the title *Christ* by the apostles and other early writers show the importance that the Christian community placed on the claims of Jesus as God's ultimate King.⁵⁷

The sign of the Davidic Covenant is Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14). This sign was given to Ahaz, a son of David (v. 13), and the fulfillment was revealed to Joseph, also a son of David (Matt 1:20-23). The angel announced the Lord Jesus as Immanuel and declared that He would be both the Son of God Himself and the Son of David (Luke 1:32-33). The angel revealed that God would give Jesus the throne of David to reign over Israel forever, in fulfillment to the prophecy that a Child will be born to receive the throne of David, this Son would be the Mighty God and the government will be on His shoulders (Isa 9:6-7). The book of Hebrews also demonstrates Christ as God the Son by the Davidic covenant, "I will be to Him a Father, and He will be to me a Son (Heb 1:5; 2 Sam 7:14). "To the Son, He said, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (Heb 1:8; Ps 45:6).

The people of the earth will rebel against Yahweh and His Messiah (Ps 2:1, 2); however, God gives His anointed King the many ethnicities as an inheritance and the entire world as His possession. The Messiah will shatter those rebels against His authority like

⁵⁷ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 174.

clay pottery (vv. 8, 9).⁵⁸ Psalm 72 celebrates the King whose reign is characterized by righteousness, justice and material prosperity. “He will reign from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth” (v. 8). “All kings will fall down before Him, all nations will serve Him” (v. 11). This King will protect the poor and needy (vv. 12-14). Schreiner calls attention to verse 17, “People will be blessed in Him, all nations will call Him blessed.” He writes, “The Davidic Covenant is organically related to the covenant with Abraham, and a Son of David will be the means by which the promises made to Abraham will come to pass.”⁵⁹

In the temple courts, the Lord Jesus asked the Jewish leadership about the Christ. They answered that He was the Son of David. Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’” He continued: “If David called the Christ ‘Lord’ how can He be his Son?” (Matt 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). D. A. Carson explains that the dominant Jewish view was that the coming Messiah was the Son of David. Jesus shows by Psalm 110 that understanding to be inadequate. “What Jesus does is synthesize the concept of a human Messiah in David’s line with the concept of a divine Messiah who transcends human limitations.”⁶⁰ In His answer to the high priest during the questioning following His betrayal, the Lord Jesus clearly presents Psalm 110 to Himself: “you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power” (Matt 26:64).

Psalm 110 was important to the apostles in demonstration that Jesus was the Christ. Peter at Pentecost appealed to Psalm 110:1 to show that God made Jesus both Lord

⁵⁸ Williamson, *Sealed with Oath*, 139.

⁵⁹ Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, 78-79.

⁶⁰ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 468. Even current-day Jewish rabbis reject the deity of the Messiah. Donin explains, The word Messiah is derived from the Hebrew word *mashiach* which means *anointed* (with oil). The Messiah in Jewish thought was never conceived of as a Divine Being. As God’s anointed representative, the Messiah would be a person who would bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the people Israel through the ingathering of the Jews to their ancestral home of *Eretz Yisrael* and the restoration of Jerusalem to its spiritual glory. He would bring about an era marked by moral perfection of all mankind and the harmonious coexistence of all peoples free of war, fear, hatred and intolerance (see Isa 2, 11; Mic 4). (Donin, *To Be a Jew*, 14-15)

and Christ (Acts 2:32-36). Peter stated that the resurrected and ascended Christ was sitting at the right hand of God to pour out the Holy Spirit whom He had received from the Father. Paul explained that Christ must reign until He will have put down all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor 15:35).

Saucy explains that Peter's statement of Christ as seated at God's right hand (Acts 2:32, Ps 110:1) is not a location, but is a position of authority. "God's right hand" speaks of honor and closeness, there is no heaven vs. earth presence implied. Christ would not leave His throne at the Father's right hand in heaven to descend to earth at His second coming; the Lord would always occupy the place of greatest honor and closeness with the Father at all times wherever He may be.⁶¹ The throne is a symbol of government, so "taking the throne" would be assuming the authority of that government.⁶² Walter Grundmann sums up the significance of Peter's message from Psalm 110; "The Messiah has entered into His glory; the Messianic Age has dawned. Jesus in the place of honor at the right hand of God has a share in the glory and power and deity of God which He exercises by sending the Holy Spirit."⁶³

New Covenant

Following the captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria and the subsequent captivity of the southern kingdom of Judah by Babylon, Yahweh announced through His prophets a new covenant to replace the Mosaic covenant at a time in the future. Israel had continually failed to keep the conditions of the Mosaic covenant; and as a result, they experienced judgment through defeat by hostile nations and exile from their land. Jeremiah looked to the future in chapters 30-33 in a prophecy called "The Book of Consolation."⁶⁴ In a spirit of comfort, Jeremiah prophesied that at a future time ("the days

⁶¹ Saucy, *Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 70-73.

⁶² Otto Schmitz, "θρόνος," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittle, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:162.

⁶³ Walter Grundmann, "δεξιός," in Kittle, *TDNT*, 2:39-40.

⁶⁴ J. Arthur Thompson, *Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 551.

are coming,” 30:3) Yahweh will bring back His people Israel and Judah from captivity, and they would again possess the land given to their fathers. God’s future blessings to Israel are based on the past promises of the Abrahamic covenant (v. 3).

Yahweh explained in Jeremiah 30:4-7 that the combined people of Israel and Judah must first endure “a time of trouble for Jacob.” God revealed that this distress would be great, with nothing like it in the experience of the people, and only a remnant of the descendants of Jacob would survive (v. 7). Yahweh further explained that He would liberate Israel so that foreigners would no longer enslave them (v. 8). Charles Feinberg comments, “This could never be said of any deliverance to this present hour; it must refer to Messianic times.”⁶⁵ The descendants of Israel will serve both Yahweh their God and a King from David’s dynasty. God’s future blessings to Israel are grounded in that Yahweh will restore Israel to spiritual health and heal wounds previously deemed to be incurable (vv. 12, 17). Their city will be rebuilt from its ruins (v. 18), and the people of Israel will be established before God (v. 20). He would have mercy on the families from the northern tribes (31:1). They would again plant vineyards in Samaria (v. 5) and the people of Ephraim will go to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh their God (v. 6). He will gather them from the ends of the earth (v. 8), and turn their mourning into joy and give them comfort rather than sorrow (v. 13). Just as God will bless the northern people of Ephraim, He will also bring the southern people of Judah back from captivity to bless them in the land (vv. 23-24).

In Jeremiah 31:31-34, Yahweh announced that He will make a new covenant with the combined people of Israel; not just the tribe of Judah centered at Jerusalem, but the other tribes captured by the Assyrians and lost to history would also be included. At that time, God would make a covenant different than the one following the exodus. Israel continually broke the Mosaic covenant, as the result, they had received God’s punishment. In this future restoration, Yahweh would make a covenant superior than previously at Sinai, because He did not want to repeat counterproductive patterns of rebellion with succeeding

⁶⁵ Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah*, in vol. 6 of *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 560.

generations, so that future Israel would not return to previous cycles of sin, apostasy, judgment, repentance and restoration, which characterized their history.

God would cut (כָּרַת *karat*) the new covenant by means of a sacrifice. This sacrifice must be cut to make the covenantal ritual effective.⁶⁶ This points to the ultimate fulfillment as the God-Man, who is the innocent victim that provides atonement from sin through the sacrifice of Himself once for all. On the night He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took the cup and said, “This is the new covenant in My blood which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20). The book of Hebrews is clear that Christ is a Mediator of a better covenant (8:6) due to the better sacrifice of Himself (9:15).

The four provisions of this new covenant includes: (1) Yahweh will write His law on their hearts and minds, (2) He will be their God and they would be His people, (3) each one will know Yahweh with a personal relationship, and (4) He will forgive their sins and never remember their disobedience anymore. The author of Hebrews attributes the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34 to God the Holy Spirit. “But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, as He said before, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them in those days,’ says the Lord, ‘I will put My laws on their hearts and write them on their minds’ (Heb 10:15-16). Yahweh in the Person of the Holy Spirit internalizes God’s requirements of holiness to recipients as He qualifies each one to serve Him through the new covenant. He writes God’s internal laws on warm hearts, in distinction to external old covenant laws which were engraved on cold stone (2 Cor 3:3, 6).

Gentry and Wellum explain the difference between the old and new covenants:

In the old covenant, people became members of the covenant community simply by being born into that community. As they grew up, some became believers in Yahweh and others did not. This resulted in a situation within the covenant community where some members could urge other members to know the Lord. In the new covenant community, however, one does not become a member by physical birth but rather the new birth, which requires faith on the part of every person. Thus only believers are members of the new community: all members are believers, and only believers are members. Therefore in the new covenant community there will no longer be a

⁶⁶ Elmer B. Smick, “כָּרַת,” in Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *TWOT*, 1:457.

situation where some members will urge other members to know the Lord. There will be no such thing as an unregenerate member in the new covenant community. All are believers, all know the Lord, because all have experienced the forgiveness of sins.⁶⁷

Opinions differ as whether the *new* covenant is really *new* or whether it is a *renewed* covenant. Throughout Israel's experience, the people would renew the Mosaic covenant, as in Deuteronomy 5:2-3, 29:1; Joshua 24 and 2 Kings 23. The debate centers around the word חָדַשׁ (*hadash*), which means *renewed* in Lamentations 3:23, but *new* as a qualitatively difference sense in the majority of uses. Gentry and Wellum state that whether *hadash* means *new* or *renewed* would depend on the context of Jeremiah 31:31.⁶⁸

Jack Lundbom comments that this new covenant cannot be reduced to a renewed Mosaic covenant; although he understands that the new covenant retains continuity with the covenant made at Sinai. He explains that the new covenant is different because it is written on the heart and based on the forgiveness of sins, unlike the Mosaic covenant.⁶⁹

Gentry and Wellum conclude that the new covenant is *new*, as they focus on structural differences between the new covenant and the previous Mosaic covenant that it replaced. D. A. Carson observes that “God dealt with his people in a mediated or ‘tribal’ fashion”⁷⁰ as the Holy Spirit would not be poured out on individual believers, but would anoint leaders of the community, distinctively prophets, priests and kings. As the leadership of the national community were faithful to Yahweh, the nation experienced blessing, but if the leaders proved to be disobedient, the national community would suffer. Carson notes that proverb of the sour grapes was true for Israel (Jer 31:29-30; Ezek 18:1-4, 25-32), as citizens of the community would be negatively impacted by the sinful decisions of their leadership. However, there would be a paradigm shift in the new covenant, individuals

⁶⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 510.

⁶⁸ Of this adjective, 53 occurrences mean “*new* and different” (Exod 1:8; Deut 32:17; 1 Sam 6:7; Ps 33:3; Ecc 1:9); however, 3 rare occurrences mean *renewed* (Lam 3:23; Job 29:20; Eccl 1:10). Jeremiah used *hadash* 4 times; 3 as *new* (Jer 26:10; 31:22, 31; 36:10) and once as *renew* (Lam 3:23). Gentry and Wellum, 646; also BDB, “ חָדַשׁ ,” 294.

⁶⁹ Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 466.

⁷⁰ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 150-58. See also D. A. Carson, “Evangelicals, Ecumenism, and the Church,” in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. B. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 359-60; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 510.

would be blessed for their personal relationship with God; regardless on the status of God’s relationship with family or national leaders. Carson states,

The new covenant would bring some dramatic changes . . . The new covenant would bring with it a new emphasis on the distribution of the knowledge of God down to the level of each member of the covenant community. Knowledge of God would no longer be mediated through specially endowed leaders, for all of God’s covenant people would know him, from the least to the greatest.⁷¹

Gentry and Wellum point out that under the Mosaic covenant community, each covenant mediator proved to be faulty due to sin. Moses as prophet sinned as he disobeyed God by striking the rock twice (Num 20:12), Aaron as priest sinned in creating the golden calf (Exod 32:4), David as king sinned in the episode of Uriah and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:26-27). However, Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant; He is God’s perfect Prophet, High Priest and King, all in one.⁷²

They explain that previous covenants were based on genealogy and a physical relationship that was passed down through the generations from the original mediator (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel and David). However, the new covenant is distinctly new, because it is ratified individually to each recipient by a spiritual relationship to Christ, who is the new covenant Mediator.⁷³



Figure 3. Physical relationship of previous covenants vs. spiritual relationship with Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant.

⁷¹ Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 153.

⁷² Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 647.

⁷³ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 649. Williamson comments, “This new covenant community is not defined by biological ancestry but rather by spiritual descent.” Williamson, *Sealed with Oath*, 146.

In addition, Gentry and Wellum note that the newness of the new covenant is understood by the complete forgiveness of sins. Prior to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, provisional forgiveness was granted through animal sacrifice. God accepted the animal sacrifices of Abel (Gen 4:4), Noah (Gen 8:20-21), Job (Job 1:5) and Abraham (Gen 22:13), animal sacrifices were also instituted into the Mosaic covenant through the Aaronic priesthood (Lev 1:1-5). Those who were spiritually perceptive understood that animal sacrifices were not sufficient⁷⁴ (1 Sam 15:22, Ps 51:16, Hos 6:6). The book of Hebrews shows that the Aaronic priesthood was deficient in that the priests could not continue their ministry because of death (Heb 7:23). Animal sacrifices were not of sufficient value to forgive the sins of humans (Heb 10:4, 11); as the result, these old covenant sacrifices needed to be repeated continually (Heb 10:1-3).

Yahweh becomes the God of new covenant recipients and they become His people. Each new covenant recipient enjoys a personal relationship with Yahweh, as He completely forgives all sins of those who participate in the sacrificial atonement of Christ. The book of Hebrews shows that it is the Holy Spirit who ratifies the new covenant to all who receive the atonement available in the sacrifice of Christ. “I will never remember their sins and their lawlessness anymore” (Heb 10:17). Hebrews concludes that with such complete forgiveness, further sacrifices for sins are no longer necessary (v. 18).

This new covenant is also called an eternal covenant and a covenant of peace (Ezek 37:26). God will make an eternal covenant with the people of Israel so they will never depart from Him. Yahweh will rejoice over Israel as He replants them in the land. They will be His people and He will be their God, both that generation and their children after them (Jer 32:37-41).

Gentry and Wellum note that these prophets spoke of this future covenant as an eternal covenant (6 times),⁷⁵ as a covenant of peace (3 times)⁷⁶ and as a new covenant

⁷⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 650.

⁷⁵ Isa 55:1-5; 61:8-9; Jer 32:36-41; 50:2-5; Ezek 16:59-63; 37:26.

⁷⁶ Isa 54:9-10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26.

once (Jer 31:31-34). This same covenant is referred to in the NT as the new covenant 6 times⁷⁷ and as the eternal covenant once (Heb 13:20); so the most common title (eternal covenant) in the OT is used only once in the New, and the most common title (new covenant) in the NT is used only once in the Old.⁷⁸

In the OT, the term *new covenant* is mentioned only once in Jeremiah 31:31; however, the concept of new covenant is referred to throughout Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and among the minor prophets, such as Hosea, Joel and Zechariah. Pierre Buis pioneered a model to determine if an OT passage referred to the *new covenant* when that phrase was not used.⁷⁹ He observed 3 new covenant references —Jeremiah 32:37-41, Ezekiel 37:21-28 and Baruch 2:25-31⁸⁰—and noted that each passage contained the same elements: (1) the gathering and return of Israel, (2) the concept “I will be their God and they will be My people,” (3) internal renewal, (4) declaration of a *final covenant* [his translation of *eternal covenant*] and (5) covenant blessings. Buis discovered that Jeremiah 31:31-36; Ezekiel 34:25-31, 36:22-25 and Zechariah 7:7-8:17 included four of the five elements. In addition, Deuteronomy 30:1-10 (which he understands to be post-exilic), Jeremiah 24:5-7 and Ezekiel 16:53-65 reflected several of the elements. He concluded that these 10 passages referred to the new covenant in the OT.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:8; 9:15; 12:24.

⁷⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 434.

⁷⁹ Pierre Buis, “La Nouvelle Alliance,” *Vetus Testamentum* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1968):1-15, quoted in Dave Fredrickson, “Which Are the New Covenant Passages in the Bible?” in *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant*, ed. Mike Stallard (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012), 53.

⁸⁰ Baruch 2:25-31 (KJV *Apocrypha*),
And, lo, they are cast out to the heat of the day, and to the frost of the night, and they died in great miseries by famine, by sword, and by pestilence. And the house which is called by thy name hast thou laid waste, as it is to be seen this day, for the wickedness of the house of Israel and the house of Judah. O Lord our God, thou hast dealt with us after all thy goodness, and according to all that great mercy of thine, As thou spakest by thy servant Moses in the day when thou didst command him to write the law before the children of Israel, saying, If ye will not hear my voice, surely this very great multitude shall be turned into a small number among the nations, where I will scatter them. For I knew that they would not hear me, because it is a stiff necked people: but in the land of their captivities they shall remember themselves. And shall know that I am the Lord their God: for I will give them a heart, and ears to hear. (accessed March 31, 2019, <https://biblia.com/bible/kjavapoc/Bar2.25-31>)

⁸¹ Buis, “La Nouvelle Alliance,” 2, quoted in Fredrickson, “New Covenant Passages in the Bible,” 54.

Walter Kaiser appears to be the first evangelical to propose a model to determine new covenant passages in the OT.⁸² He used Jeremiah 31:31 as a baseline due to the fact that it is the only time the term *new covenant* is used in the Hebrew Scriptures. He searched for additional references to the terms (1) eternal covenant, (2) new heart or new spirit, (3) covenant of peace, and (4) the word *covenant* linked with the phrase *in that day*. Kaiser found 7 passages mentioning an *eternal covenant*;⁸³ a *new heart* or *new spirit* is found in 3 or 4 references;⁸⁴ the *covenant of peace* in 3 passages;⁸⁵ and a *covenant in that day* in 4 passages⁸⁶ for a total of 16 or 17 passages referencing the new covenant in the OT.⁸⁷

Fredrickson questions the inclusion of *covenant of peace* found in Isaiah 54:10 as better understood to refer to the Noahic covenant. He further notes that the phrase *eternal covenant* in Isaiah 24:5 clearly refers to the Noahic covenant, and its use in Isaiah 55:3 and 61:8 would be best understood to refer to the Davidic covenant. He concludes that “the Kaiser model does a good job of capturing new covenant passages in the OT, given the model’s brevity and simplicity.”⁸⁸

Hosea prophesied that Yahweh will make a covenant with Israel in a future day (Hos 2:16-23). They will call Him “Ishi” (אִשִּׁי my Husband), instead of “Baali” (בַּעֲלִי my Master), because the people of Israel will never remember the names of the false Canaanite gods anymore. God will also make a covenant with creation, so that both the animals and the earth will be at peace. Yahweh will say to those who are not His people, “You are My people!” and they will answer, “You are my God!” (v. 23).

⁸² Walter C. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34,” *JETS* 15 (Winter 1972): 14; Walter C. Kaiser, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34,” in *The Bible in Its Literary Milieu*, ed. John Maier and Vincent Tollers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 109, 117. See also Fredrickson, “New Covenant Passages in the Bible,” 30.

⁸³ Isa 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer 32:46; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 36:26.

⁸⁴ Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:46; and Jer 32:39 (LXX).

⁸⁵ Isa 54:10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26.

⁸⁶ Isa 42:6; 49:8; 59:21; Hos 2:18-20.

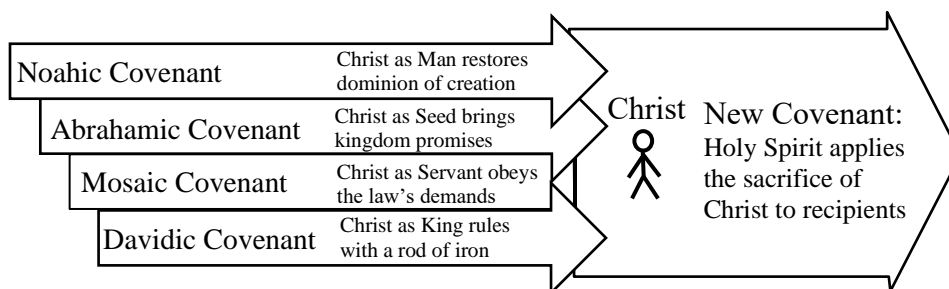
⁸⁷ Kaiser, “Old Promise New Covenant,” 14; see Fredrickson, “New Covenant Passages in the Bible,” 33.

⁸⁸ Fredrickson, “New Covenant Passages in the Bible,” 35-37.

Ezekiel declares that God will make an eternal covenant with the people of Israel (Ezek 16:60). They will know Yahweh because of this covenant (v. 62), and will be ashamed of their past sins when God provides atonement for them (v. 63). This covenant of peace will include wild animals, which will become peaceful, and the earth will increase its produce. The people of Israel will be safe in their productive land, because Yahweh is their God (Ezek 34:25-31). The promises of the Messianic kingdom are interwoven with the provisions of the new covenant. Yahweh will cleanse them from all their sin and idolatry (v. 25). He will take away their heart of stone and give a heart of flesh (v. 26). He will put the Holy Spirit within them, so that they will keep His judgments (v. 27). They will dwell in the land that He gave to their fathers, they will be His people and He will be their God (v. 28).

The sign of the new covenant is the manifestation of God’s Holy Spirit. “I will pour out My Spirit on your descendants and My blessing on your children” (Isa 44:3). “I will pour My Spirit on all people” (Joel 2:28, 29). “I will put My Spirit within you to cause you to walk in My statutes” (Ezek 36:27). The writer of Hebrews confirms that the Holy Spirit will ratify the new covenant to its recipients and fulfill its provisions. “The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, after He said, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord’” (Heb 10:15-16).

Summary



Previous covenants build to Christ and His kingdom that the new covenant initiates and each bring a different dimension to the kingdom.

Figure 4. Biblical covenants establish the Messianic kingdom.

The new covenant is the constitution of the Messianic kingdom, as the Holy Spirit writes His law on the hearts of its recipients it becomes the legal basis for the rule of law in the kingdom of God. Just as the Mosaic covenant put a code of laws in place to allow for a successful residence of the promised land, the new covenant institutes a law to enable successful citizenship of God's kingdom. This Messianic kingdom has a current spiritual reality which began at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the future physical/political rule to begin at the return of Christ to this earth, and the eternal future reign when Christ defeats all enemies and delivers the kingdom back to God the Father.⁸⁹

This Messianic kingdom requires dominion. God granted dominion to man at creation and reiterated this authority in His covenant with Noah. This dominion was lost in the fall, but Christ as the perfect Man reclaimed man's dominion from Satan, and will restore this authority to humanity at a time in the future. Although Christ now has all authority in heaven and earth (Matt 28:29), He is waiting for the future glorification of redeemed humanity to reveal this authority in us. In the revelation of the sons of God, creation will be released from its current bondage (Rom 8:18-25), and Christ will return dominion over creation to glorified mankind. In the future, the church as the new covenant community will share in Christ's inheritance over all rule and authority, power and dominion (Eph 1:18-23). Dominion is realized with glorification, both in Christ and in us. Glorification for Christ was a process of humiliation, death and resurrection; and in the same way, glorification will be realized by redeemed humanity by humiliation, death and resurrection as well.

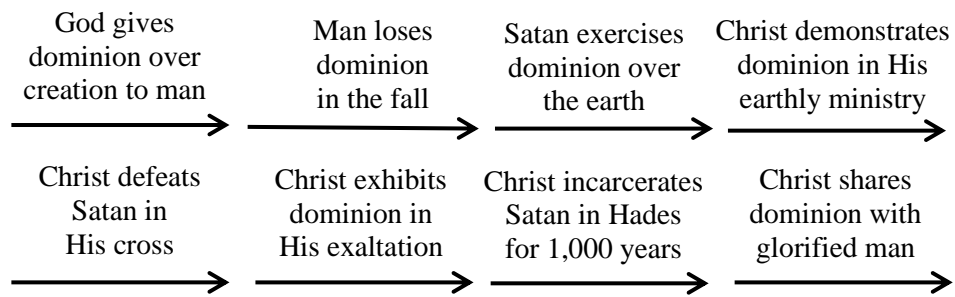
⁸⁹ "Doctrinal statement," Good News Baptist Church of Alexandria, Virginia, affirms, The kingdom of Christ is already present in this age in a dynamic sense (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20; 17:20-21). Men are able to enter into this kingdom by the means of the new birth (John 3:3-7). At the point of regeneration, men are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God in which they can experience in this present age the power of God's rule in their lives (Col 1:13). However, there is a future aspect of the kingdom which is not realized throughout the earth in this present age (Luke 22:14-16, 18). This future aspect of the kingdom can further be divided into two distinct periods. First, there will be a one-thousand-year reign of Christ upon this earth (Rev 20:4). Second, there will follow an eternal state in the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). (accessed March 15, 2019, <http://www.goodnewsbaptistchurch.org/our-doctrine.html>)

In His first coming, Christ as Man exhibited resident authority over nature. He healed deformities and diseases, He calmed storms and commanded the wind, He also demonstrated power over animals, in fish and donkeys. Jesus also revealed His absolute control over Satan and his subordinate demons. These were glimpses into the conditions during Christ's kingdom rule on this earth, but God's people still experience sickness and suffering as nature is not yet subject to man. Humanity continues to struggle in a world cursed by sin. In His second coming, Christ as Man will fulfill the Adamic mandate over creation. Sung Wook Chung accurately describes the role of Jesus as the Last Adam in His rule over the earth: "Therefore by establishing the millennial kingdom, Jesus Christ, as the last Adam, will restore and fulfill not only the spiritual/priestly dimension but also the physical/institutional dimension of the first Adam's kingdom."⁹⁰

Chung explains that the first Adam's authority over the earth was both spiritual as priest and physical as king. In His first coming, Jesus as the last Adam, began to restore both the spiritual and physical dimensions of Adam's rule over the earth. For example, although Christ crushed Satan's head in His cross, the devil still maintains a great impact on both the spiritual and political aspects of this world system; however, in His second coming, Jesus as the last Adam, will eliminate Satan's influence for one thousand years. Christ has already restored the spiritual dimension of the first Adam's dominion as Priest in His resurrection and ascension, but He will also fulfill the physical dimension of Adam's original authority as King. Not only will Jesus reclaim this lost dominion in Himself, but He will share this priest-king authority with the new covenant community as the church. Chung further explains, "The first Adam's priest-kingly activity, which was thwarted by the fall, will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. Therefore, the millennial kingdom will be a restoration and fulfillment of the Edenic kingdom on earth."⁹¹

⁹⁰ Sung Wook Chung, "Toward the Reformed and Covenantal Theology of Premillennialism," in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to 'Left Behind' Eschatology*, ed. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 142.

⁹¹ Chung, "Toward Reformed Theology of Premillennialism," 143.



Christ fulfills the creation and Noahic covenants by defeating Satan, removing authority over the earth from him and returning it to humanity.

Figure 5. Christ as Man restores the dominion of creation.

This Messianic kingdom requires a realm, which combines a population with a territory. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations and through him all the people groups of the earth would be blessed. This covenant with Abraham guaranteed that physical descendants would inhabit a land of promise.

Throughout the OT, God confirmed to ethnic Israel that they would inherit the land of Canaan in a future kingdom context; however, ethnic Jews as individuals must follow Abraham’s example of faith in order to participate in the promises of kingdom blessings. Those among ethnic Israel who would not place their faith in God’s word and surrender their autonomy to Him could not be counted among the kingdom citizens.

The same is true with Gentiles; those among the many people groups who believe Christ as Savior and receive Him as their King are transferred into the kingdom of God. Both spiritual Israel and spiritual Gentiles are counted as Abraham’s seed through the work of the Holy Spirit and are promised to inherit the future earth. Abraham and his Seed, who is Christ, are heirs of the world (Rom 4:13). Psalm 37:9-11 promises that in contrast to evildoers who will not be found, those who wait on Yahweh will inherit the earth. The Lord Jesus quoted this psalm in His sermon on the mount, “The meek will inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). This promised realm requires a future planet over which the redeemed from the many people groups, with ethnic Israel as first among equals, can realize earthly blessings.

Redeemed Israel will receive its land inheritance as God promised to Abraham, but the redeemed from the many nations will be given other allotments around the world. Ethnic Israel will receive the new covenant as the Hebrew prophets foretold, and the other ethnicities who call upon name of Yahweh for salvation will receive the new covenant in equal measure. All kingdom citizens regardless of ethnic background, both resurrected saints and those in normal bodies, will inherit the blessings promised by the Abrahamic covenant and participate equally in the new covenant community.

Christ as the Seed of Abraham inherits the kingdom.

- (1) Those of ethnic Israel, with covenant promises, can accept Christ or refuse Him.
 - Those who are in Christ participate in His kingdom inheritance.
 - Those who reject forfeit any covenant promises.
- (2) Those of other ethnicities, without covenant promises, can accept Christ or refuse Him.
 - Those who are in Christ participate in His kingdom inheritance.
 - Those who reject never realize kingdom blessings.

Christ inherits the Messianic kingdom, and all who are in Him inherit the kingdom as well.

Figure 6. Christ as Seed Brings Kingdom Promises.

This Messianic kingdom requires a King. God made a covenant with David that a future Descendant from his dynasty would reign for eternity. Yahweh decreed that His Son would be the King; His Messiah would receive the nations as an inheritance and the entire earth as a possession. A future physical kingdom is necessary for Christ to rule the nations with a rod of iron and to share that authority with new covenant recipients.

Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God (Eph 1:20) "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion" involves a two-stage process, "not only in this age but also in the coming one" (v. 21). This exaltation extends to the new covenant community, due to the Father putting all things under the feet of the Son, "and gave Him to be head over all things to the *ekklesia*" (v. 22). The Lord is exalted in this present evil age (Gal 1:4); however, God's people now share in the suffering and persecution that Christ Himself experienced during His life on earth (Col 1:24). If we endure now, we will also reign with Him in the future (2 Tim 2:12). In the coming age, Christ will rule the nations with a rod

of iron (Ps 2:9), and He promises that the church as the new covenant community will also share in His authority. “To the victor who keeps My works to the end, I will give authority to him over the ethnicities, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, as pottery is broken in pieces, just as I also have received from My Father” (Rev 2:26-27).

Grant Osborne points out that Matthew 25:31 evokes Psalm 110 as Christ explains that He will be “sitting” on His throne in the future kingdom context, and his disciples will also be “sitting” on thrones with Him (Matt 19:28). The apostles, who are foundational to the new covenant community, will participate in Christ’s authority as they render judgment as kings over the tribes of Israel.⁹²

Christ Jesus, the Son of David and heir of the Davidic Covenant, is currently the mediatorial King as He perfectly represents man to God and represents God to man. Through His indwelling Spirit, He reigns in the hearts and lives of new covenant recipients as we receive Him as Savior and acknowledge Him as our King. Because this community represents only a fraction of the total population on earth today, its authority is limited. At this time, the church as the new covenant community has no control over those who remain in rebellion outside the kingdom of God. In His return, Christ will share governmental authority with the new covenant community—as He reigns in us now, we will reign with Him in the physical/political aspect of His kingdom. Because every person alive, both Jew and Gentile alike, will pledge allegiance to Christ as King and receive the outpouring of the Spirit at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, the new covenant community will include everyone on earth as a participant. On that day, this community will represent the entire population, so its authority will be universal and its control will be complete.

Noah, Abraham, Moses and the judges of Israel, David and his dynastic kings were all mediatorial leaders, who represented God to the people among whom they lived, and in turn, represented the people to God. Mediatorial representation takes three offices; prophet, priest and king. Noah, Abraham and Moses as mediatorial rulers demonstrated this

⁹² Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 998.

ministry of representation as they declared authoritative messages from God as prophets, performed sacrifices acceptable to God in a role as priests, and were kings in all but title.

These representative functions were separated during the Mosaic covenant, so that not one person could accomplish all three functions. Notable examples were able to fulfill two; David was both a king and a prophet, Samuel was a prophet who filled the role of priest, but he was not a king, although he was a judge. Kings who took upon themselves to perform a priestly function were severely punished, as was Saul (1 Sam 13:13) and Uzziah (2 Chr 26:16).

Christ Himself is the ultimate mediatorial Prophet, Priest and King, perfectly representing God to man in His deity and perfectly representing man to God in His humanity. He is the Prophet like Moses (Deut 18:18), Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4, Heb 7:17), and King in the dynasty of David (Luke 1:32). The Lord Jesus served as Prophet in His earthly ministry (Luke 7:16), as Priest as He presented His sacrifice for the atonement of mankind (Heb 4:14), and as King as He took His place at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (Rev 19:16).

New covenant participants receive every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 1:3), as He is Prophet, Priest and King, we become prophets, priests and kings subordinate to Him. We are priests. New covenant recipients are like living stones being built into God's temple to offer spiritual sacrifices as a holy priesthood (1 Pet 2:5). Because of what He accomplished on the cross, Jesus is the new covenant High Priest (Heb 8:6) and new covenant participants are now and forever His subordinate priests.⁹³ We do not need another person to be involved in the forgiveness of our sins, each new covenant priest can go directly to the throne of grace for access to God (Heb 4:15-16).

The apostle Peter characterized the new covenant community as a chosen

⁹³ Alexander writes,

1 Peter 2:9 describes the church as a royal priesthood, closely echoing Exodus 19. . . . This passage presents the followers of Jesus Christ as having royal and priestly status. As such they are heirs to the creation mandate that centered on the extension of God's temple-city throughout the whole world. The same idea is reflected in Revelation 5:10: "and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." (Alexander, *Eden to New Jerusalem*, 96)

people group, a royal priesthood, a holy ethnicity and a people possessed by God (1 Pet 2:9). From Sinai to the cross, Israel as the Mosaic covenant community represented God's kingdom on earth, "You will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). As the Levitical sacrificial system of the Mosaic covenant was replaced by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, the new covenant community transitioned to represent the kingdom of God on this earth. The mission of this Messianic community is to be witnesses of Christ to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), both at this time and also during the millennium. As subordinate priests to our great High Priest, we represent people to Him and in turn represent Him to the people among whom we live. We are a royal priesthood, and while our priestly ministry is evident now, we do not yet reign on this earth. In the future, physical aspect of the kingdom, we will be kings.

We are prophets.⁹⁴ Joel prophesied that in the outpouring of the Spirit, all would receive spiritual gifts. The prophet Joel foretold that when the Messiah came to set up the global aspect of His kingdom, old men would dream dreams and young men would see visions (Joel 2:28). Each new covenant participant receives a direct revelation of God, as we receive the outpouring of the Spirit. Everyone understands personal knowledge of Yahweh from the least to the greatest (Jeremiah 31:34); this is true now and it will be equally true during the millennium. When the Lord Jesus returns to earth to reveal Himself as the ultimate mediatorial Prophet, Priest and King, the church as the new covenant community will represent Christ as subordinate mediatorial prophets, priests and kings in localities around the world.

The purpose of the new covenant community is to serve as mediators subordinate to Christ, who is the ultimate Mediator in His relationship to the world. This

⁹⁴ Raymond Dillard, *Joel*, in *The Minor Prophets*, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). Dillard comments that we should also teach the prophethood of all believers just as we speak of the priesthood of all believers:

Protestant theology is accustomed to speaking of the 'priesthood of all believers'; perhaps in light of Acts 2 and Joel 2:28-29, we must also speak of the 'prophethood of all believers'. . . . The possession of the Spirit would never again be the restricted preserve of a few; all who call on the name of the Lord (2:32) now have the equipage and the obligation incumbent upon prophets to bear witness to their generation. (1:295)

ministry involves offices of prophet, priest and king, which is accomplished perfectly in Christ at this time; however, the new covenant community represents this mediation imperfectly during this lifetime. In a future day, Christ will reside at His capital of Jerusalem as King, and there will be a need for representatives commissioned by Him in localities around the world. At that time, the new covenant community will serve as a participatory form of government among the many ethnicities in a multiplicity of towns and cities worldwide. This authority is in place now with limitations in the spiritual aspect of the kingdom of God, and this authority will be complete in the future spiritual/physical aspect of Christ's kingdom. In that future context, glorified saints will participate in the Davidic covenant to rule the various nations under the authority of Christ.

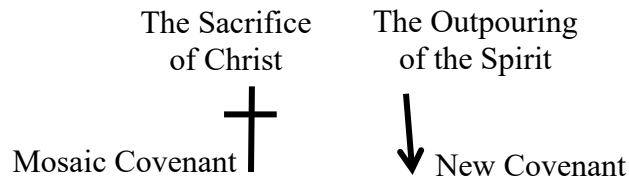
CHAPTER 3

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

The new covenant has two foundations, both of which are necessary for ratification. First is the sacrificial atonement of Christ, who serves as the Mediator of the new covenant; and second is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who applies this atonement in His baptism and indwelling. The sacrifice of Christ was accomplished on the cross and the outpouring of the Spirit began at Pentecost, fifty days later. Starting on that day, Spirit baptism resulted in new covenant ratification and participation in the new covenant community. As John the Baptist and other Hebrew prophets foretold, Spirit baptism initiates kingdom citizenship, and Paul and the other apostles revealed that Spirit baptism places the individual into the body of Christ, which is the *ekklēsia*, as the church. The new covenant is eternal, so it will continue into the future as the Spirit baptizes and indwells each believer.

Introduction

The cross made a difference, but how much of a difference remains a matter of question. Before the cross, the lives of God's people were regulated by the Mosaic covenant; but following the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that was no longer true, the people of God had experienced a change. The nature and extent of this change was not fully understood at first by Jewish believers gathered at Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit took time and effort to communicate through the apostles the far-reaching implications and expectations of the new covenant.



Prior to the sacrifice of Christ, the Mosaic covenant was in effect, but following the outpouring of the Spirit, the new covenant was in effect.

Figure 7. The Mosaic and new covenants in relation to the cross and Pentecost.

The new covenant is ratified to each individual as the Holy Spirit applies the sacrificial atonement of Christ to believers. This work of the Spirit takes place as He is poured out by coordination by the Father and the Son resulting in the baptism and indwelling of each new covenant participant. This combined action of the Son and Spirit provides the two foundations to the new covenant. The Mosaic covenant also had two foundations: the book of the covenant and the blood of the covenant, which correspond to new covenant foundations. The blood of the covenant corresponds to the sacrifice of Christ and the book of the covenant corresponds with the outpouring of the Spirit.



- Foundations:
1. The blood of the covenant (Levitical sacrifices)
 2. The book of the covenant (Torah)

- Foundations:
1. The sacrifice of Christ
 2. The outpouring of the Spirit

Just as the new covenant has two foundations, the Mosaic covenant also had two foundations. The blood of the covenant was accomplished by animal sacrifices and the book of the covenant was the law revealed to Israel by God through Moses.

Figure 8. The foundations of the Mosaic and new covenants.

The new covenant is superior to the Mosaic covenant which it replaced. This is the clear teaching of Hebrews 8:6, “But now, He [Jesus] has obtained a superior ministry, as He is also mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises.”

Now that the new covenant is in place, the Mosaic covenant is obsolete, “In saying ‘new,’ He made the first obsolete; which then has become obsolete, old and about to vanish” (v. 3). The Mosaic covenant lost its force and authority at the cross when the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus replaced animal sacrifices, which served as the basis for the old covenant. Paul Ellingworth states, “The statement falls short of saying that the old cultus has already disappeared,”¹ due to the on-going ritual at that time. The Levitical service and its animal sacrifices would end with the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD 70.

The Sacrifice of Christ

To the author of Hebrews, the sacrifice of Christ provides the foundation for the new covenant, just as animal sacrifices served as the basis for the Mosaic Covenant. “The first [covenant] was not consecrated without blood. After Moses spoke every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats . . . and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant, which God commanded you’” (Heb 9:18-20, cf. Exod 24:8).

The writer points out that the new covenant is better because the λειτουργίας (*leitourgias*, priestly ministry) of Christ is superior to any Levitical sacrificial service under the previous covenant. Ellingworth explains, “Christ’s high priestly ministry is the heart of the new covenant (8:6). . . . From this point on, the new covenant is never mentioned without an explicit reference to the blood of Christ’s sacrifice (10:29; 12:24; 13:20).”²

The superiority of the new covenant is shown in its better promises. The author of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 from the LXX to point out the four new covenant provisions: God will inscribe His laws of the hearts and minds of the recipients; He will be their God and they will be His people; all will know God with a personal relationship; and He will completely forgive their sins (vv. 10-12). The writer understood that the forgiveness of sins required a sacrifice, “without bloodshed there is no forgiveness” (9:22);

¹ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 419.

² Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 413.

however, animal sacrifice could never affect the total forgiveness that the new covenant promised. The same sacrifices were repeated time and again in Mosaic covenant worship, but they could never take away sin. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (10:4).

The new covenant needed a better sacrifice to promise that God would never remember the recipients’ sins again. “We have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:10). “After Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins forever, He sat down at the right hand of God” (10:12). The fact that God the Son became Man so He could be the sacrificial atonement for sinful humanity is a foundational new covenant principle. God cannot die, so the Son became the God-Man. Christ as Man sacrificed Himself, and Christ as God made that atonement sufficient for all mankind.

This sacrifice of Christ is the foundation for the new covenant. On the night He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus told His disciples, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). Matthew’s account (26:27-28) adds “for the forgiveness of sins.” All three synoptic Gospels speak of blood poured out, in Matthew and Mark (14:23-24), the blood is poured out for many, while Luke personalized it, the blood is poured out *for you*.

Bock comments, “The ‘blood of the covenant’ language resembles Exodus 24:8”³ as Moses inaugurated a covenant with God at Sinai. As the Lord celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples, they looked back to the deliverance of Israel in the exodus, which put in motion the events which culminated in the ratification of the Mosaic covenant. He became our Passover as He was sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7), and this sacrifice became the foundation for the new covenant.

The Outpouring of the Spirit

The personal relationship that the Holy Spirit establishes with the believer is also foundational to the new covenant. The book of Hebrews quoted the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34 from the LXX twice, first in Hebrews 8:10-12 to focus

³ Darrell Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1728.

on the importance of the sacrifice of Christ as the basis for the new covenant, and again in Hebrews 10:15-17 to point out the role of the Holy Spirit in ratifying the new covenant to the believer. The writer attributed the new covenant prophecy of Jeremiah to the Holy Spirit, “The Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, after He said, ‘This is the covenant that I will make after those days, says the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts and inscribe them into their mind’” (vv. 15-16). It is Yahweh in the Person of the Holy Spirit who accomplishes the provisions of the new covenant to the lives of God’s people.

Hebrews also emphasized the new covenant promise of the forgiveness of sins, as the Holy Spirit states, “I will never remember their sins and lawlessness anymore” (v. 17). “We have made holy through the offering of the body of Christ, once for all” (v. 10). “Christ having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God” (v. 12), and “by that one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being made holy” (v. 14). The Holy Spirit applies the atonement available in the sacrifice of Christ to each new covenant recipient, and the author of Hebrews concluded that due to such complete forgiveness, there is no need of a further sin offering forever (v. 18).

The Person of the Holy Spirit internalizes God’s requirements of holiness to the recipients as He makes each one qualified to be a representative of the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6). Jeremiah 31:33 promised that Yahweh would write His law on the hearts and minds of all those who receive the new covenant. The apostle Paul explained that it is the Holy Spirit who writes God’s internal laws on warm hearts for the new covenant, in distinction to the external old covenant laws which were engraved on cold stone (vv. 3, 6). It is the work of God’s Spirit to personally ratify the new covenant as He makes God’s requirements for holiness internal in each recipient, as a replacement to the external requirements for holiness that marked the old Mosaic covenant. James Dunn writes, “With the law the old covenant stood or fell; so it is with the Spirit in the new. This is certainly Paul’s understanding of the situation (2 Cor 3:3, 6-8).”⁴

⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 48.

The apostle Paul taught that the Mosaic covenant brought death, but the Holy Spirit brings life in the new covenant (2 Cor 3:6-7). The Mosaic covenant as engraved on stone revealed glory, but the ministry of the Spirit in the new covenant as written on hearts is much more glorious (vv. 7-10). He explained that the glory of the Mosaic covenant was temporary and passing away, while the glory of the new covenant remains permanent (v. 11). Paul concluded that a covering remains on ethnic Israel when the old covenant is read, so they cannot understand that the Mosaic covenant was replaced (vv. 14-15). This covering is only removed as the believer turns to Christ, the covering is taken away by the Holy Spirit, as each one receives liberty as a new covenant recipient (vv. 17-18).

This work of God's Spirit that ratifies the new covenant is termed "receiving the Holy Spirit."⁵ Jesus promised those who believe in Him would receive the Spirit only after He was glorified (John 7:37-39). During the Feast of Tabernacles celebration, the high priest would lead a procession, which carried water from the pool of Siloam to be poured out at the base of the altar in the temple. This water ceremony symbolized both the provision of water during the wilderness wandering (Exod 17:6; Num 20:11) and the pouring out of the Spirit in the last days. Pouring out water illustrated the eschatological river that would flow from the temple during the Messianic kingdom to bring life to whatever it touches (Ezek 47:1-9; Zech 13:1).⁶ D. A. Carson comments, "Jesus' pronouncement was clear: he is the fulfillment of all that the feast of Tabernacles anticipated. If Isaiah could invite the thirsty to drink from the waters (Isa 55:1), Jesus announces that he is the one who can provide the waters."⁷

⁵ "He said this concerning the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were about to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). "You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "They might receive the Holy Spirit" (8:15). "They received the Holy Spirit" (8:17). "Who have received the Holy Spirit" (10:47). "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?" (19:2). "Did you receive the Spirit by works of law or by hearing in faith?" (Gal 3:2).

⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, TPNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 322; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:722-24; J. Jeremias, "λίθος," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:277-78.

⁷ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 323.

The Lord Jesus also promised that He would not leave His disciples as orphans after He ascended to heaven, but promised to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit as the *Paraklete* to remain with His people forever (John 14:16-18, 26).⁸ Jesus explained to His disciples that it was to their advantage that He would go away, because if He did not return to heaven, He would not be able to send the Holy Spirit to them (16:7). The Lord informed them that the Father would send the Spirit as His request (14:15), also the Spirit would be sent by the Father in the name of the Son (14:26), would be sent by the Son from the Father (15:26), would proceed from the Father (15:26), and also would be sent by Christ (16:7). Carson points out, “The same sending can be described in various complementary ways, granted the tight cohesion of the Father and the Son.”⁹

During the Upper Room Discourse, Christ taught that the Holy Spirit remained *with* the disciples at the present, but at a future point when the Spirit would be sent by the combined action of the Father and the Son, He will be *in* them (14:15). This coming of the Spirit would result in a change in the relationship God had with those who believe in Him. Larry Pettegrew states,

Although the disciples had the Spirit with them in an old covenant sense, they did not have His ministry as the *paraklete*, intimately and personally living in them, in the new covenant sense. The present “with” is contrasted with the future “in” to make vivid the discontinuity between the old and new covenant activities of the Spirit.¹⁰

Outpouring of the Spirit Results in Spirit Baptism

Andreas Köstenberger points out that John focused on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his Gospel. Jesus would baptize in the Spirit (1:32-33), the Spirit rested on Jesus

⁸ “I will ask the Father and He will give you another *Paraklete* that He may be with you forever. He is the spirit of truth, whom the world is not able to receive because it does not see Him or know Him. You know Him for He remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans” (John 14:16-18). “The *Paraklete*, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to memory all things that I said to you” (v. 26).

⁹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 499.

¹⁰ Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 70.

in fullness (3:32), He was the Agent of regeneration (3:5-8), He was active in worship (4:23-24) and the giving of life (6:63). However, in the farewell discourse of Jesus, John presented a “vastly enhanced portrayal” of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit would come to indwell believers, Christ would come to them in the Person of the Spirit. It would be as if the Son Himself was taking residence in them. The departure of Jesus would not leave the disciples alone, as God had been with them through Jesus in His earthly life, in the sending of the Spirit, God would indwell each one individually. The presence of God would be in the Spirit (14:15-17), in the Son (14:18-21) and in the Father (14:22-24). All three Persons of the Trinity would indwell God’s people in the sending of the Holy Spirit (14:23).¹¹

Prior to the events of Acts 2, the disciples had placed their faith in Christ, but they had not received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus instructed His disciples to wait for the gift of the Spirit, as He had already explained to them (Acts 1:4). Jesus reminded them of John’s baptism and that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days (v. 5). Ten days later at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them in fulfillment of Christ’s promise (Acts 2:1-3).

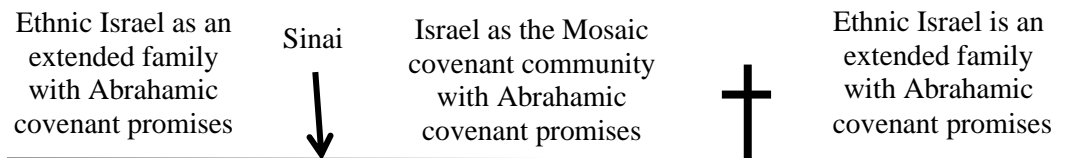


Figure 9. Ethnic Israel before Sinai and after the cross.

As Jewish believers, the disciples had participated in the Mosaic covenant and its covenant community all their lives until it became obsolete in the sacrifice of Christ. At the cross, Israel reverted to the status they had before Sinai, ethnic Jews were posterity of Abraham with promises of a land under the rule of God as an extended family. Ethnic

¹¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 435-37.

Israel remained physical descendants of Abraham into the future, but with the end of the Mosaic covenant, they ceased to be a covenant community.¹²

In the outpouring of the Spirit, as He ratified the new covenant to the disciples, these believers became participants in a covenant community again, but it was a new covenant community.¹³ Jewish people who continued to reject the Lord Jesus as Christ did not become participants of this new covenant community, because they did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. These Jewish unbelievers continued to be natural descendants of Abraham, but promises of a land in a future kingdom did not benefit them. They would not experience any future blessings, because they rejected the King they could not participate in His kingdom.

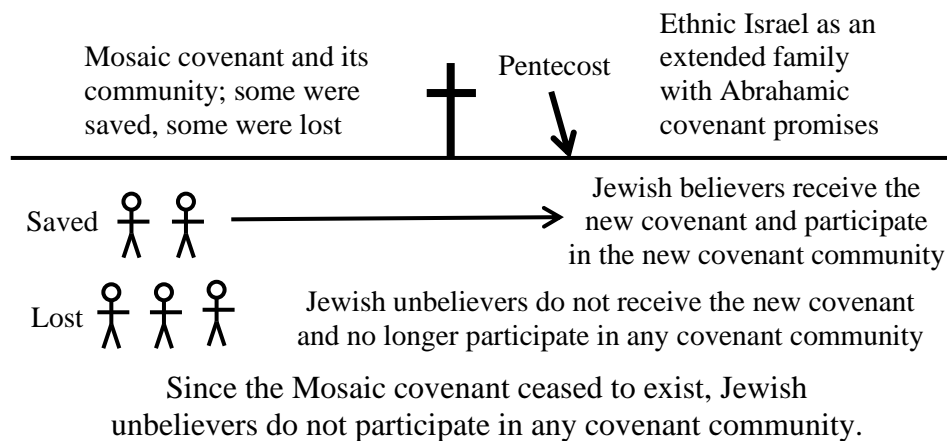


Figure 10. Jewish believers become new covenant recipients.

¹² Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). Allison states,

As the revelation of God and his ways progressively unfolds in the OT, three themes become more pronounced. First, the Mosaic covenant is a failure (because of the people of Israel's sin) and will one day become obsolete. Second, the old covenant will be replaced by a new covenant. Third, this new covenant will be associated with a fresh, new, unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Weaving these themes together, I will argue that they establish the new covenant as the covenant through which the church relates to God. (70)

¹³ Dunn comments,

For Luke, Pentecost was the beginning of the new covenant in the experience of the disciples, and that the Spirit is the essence of the new covenant without whom there is no new covenant and no entry into or participation in it. Pentecost inaugurates the disciples as the new covenant people of God, and is 'the beginning of the period of the Church'. . . The Spirit is the reality on which the church is founded. (Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit*, 49)

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit beginning on the day of Pentecost was the same outpouring of the Spirit as prophesied by OT prophets. The outpouring of water is used to illustrate this outpouring of the Spirit.¹⁴

I will pour out water on the thirsty land
and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your descendants
and My blessing on your children (Isa 44:3).

In background to the book of Joel, the people of Judah experienced a famine, due to a devastating locust plague, which was revealed to be judgment from Yahweh for covenant unfaithfulness. Yahweh promised rain (Joel 2:24-27), which would produce bountiful crops. More than just physical blessings demonstrated by the outpouring of rain, God would give greater spiritual blessings when He pours out His Spirit on the descendants of the people during the future Messianic kingdom (2:28-29). Each participant of this future new covenant community would be endowed with spiritual gifts by this outpouring.¹⁵

This future day will feature the prophethood of all believers;¹⁶ dreams and visions become common methods of divine revelation as distinctions of age, gender and social standing are erased in the standing of each individual before God. The totality of this experience recalls Jeremiah's prophecy that every new covenant recipient would understand a personal relationship with Yahweh "from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jer 31:33). Dillard explains the radical character of the outpouring of the Spirit. National Israel was dominated by privileged, well-educated, older Jewish men, who would pray, "I thank You, God, that I was not born a Gentile, a slave or a woman."¹⁷ God revealed

¹⁴ "Until the Spirit is *poured* out on us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field" (Isa 32:15). "Neither will I hide My face for I have *poured* out my Spirit on the house of Israel" (Ezek 39:29). "I will *pour* My Spirit on all people" (Joel 2:28, 29). "I will *pour* out on the house of David and on the residents of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look on Me whom they have pierced" (Zech 12:10).

¹⁵ Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 98; Thomas J. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, WEC (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 68-69; Raymond Dillard, *Joel*, in *The Minor Prophets*, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 1:294-95.

¹⁶ Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 99; Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 70; Dillard, *Joel*, 1:294-95.

¹⁷ Dillard, *Joel*, 1:294-95.

a new covenant structure in which everyone has equal access to Him. Male or female, young or old, even slave or free have no advantage or disadvantage in their personal relationship with Yahweh Himself.

God will demonstrate His power as the Son returns to earth on that great and awesome Day of Yahweh (Joel 2:28-3:21). This day will feature unusual, even unnatural occurrences in the earth (blood, fire and smoke) as well as the sky (sun and moon). Christ will defeat the combined armed forces of the world which have mobilized against Israel, and He will save, both physically and spiritually, everyone who calls on His name (2:32).

The apostle Peter explained that the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was the same Spirit outpouring as foretold by Joel. “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). He (or most likely Luke) quoted the LXX of Joel’s prophecy, “I will pour out (ἐκχεῶ, *ekcheo*) My Spirit” (Acts 2:17-18; Joel 2:28-29 [LXX 3:1-2]). Peter declared that Jesus was “exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you are both seeing and hearing” (v. 33).

Allen states that Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy: “Like so many Old Testament promises, this passage bursts its original wrappings and leaps into the New Testament with wider and deeper significance, Peter cited verses 28-32 at Pentecost and claimed their fulfillment.”¹⁸ Dillard agrees, “The New Testament, of course, understands the phenomena of Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy.”¹⁹ Some from covenant theology argue that OT prophecies of Israel are now fulfilled in the church, there can be no future events for ethnic Jews to experience, as biblical promises have been removed from Abraham’s physical descendants and transferred to his spiritual seed.²⁰

¹⁸ Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 102.

¹⁹ Dillard, *Joel*, 1:295.

²⁰ Paul D. Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Winchester IL: Crossway, 1988), 126.

Dillard writes, “There can be little doubt in this context that Joel intends *all flesh* to refer to Israel alone,” he continues, “yet Paul understands that Joel spoke better than he knew. In Christ that greatest barrier of all was destroyed—the barrier between Jew and Gentile (Rom 10:12). Paul applies Joel’s oracle to true Israel, the elect Israel and not simply Israel according to the flesh (Rom 9:6-15).”²¹

Dispensationalists generally assert that Joel 2:28-29 is an illustration of Pentecost: “The best position to take is that Peter used Joel’s prophecy as an illustration of what was transpiring in his day and not as a fulfillment of this prediction.”²² It would undermine foundational principles of dispensationalism to link the Spirit outpouring at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Spirit that will occur at the return of Christ. Spirit baptism at Pentecost resulted in the beginning of the church, and if the same manifestation of the Spirit would take place at the second coming of Christ according to Joel’s prophecy, then Spirit baptism on that day means the church will be millennial as well.

Thomas Finley comments on Joel 2:28-29 that on the day that Yahweh will intervene in history to deliver His people and set up His kingdom, He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. He agrees with Walter Kaiser’s assessment that the believing Jewish community will be the recipient, to include Gentiles who were servants in Jewish households.²³ Kaiser understands that Joel is a preliminary fulfillment of Pentecost, and Pentecost is a harbinger and sample of Joel’s prophecy:

We conclude that the promise of the Holy Spirit in the last days has received a preliminary fulfillment in the series of events at Pentecost, Samaria, and Caesarea. But those events and the subsequent baptisms of the Holy Spirit that take place whenever anyone receives Christ as Lord and Savior and is thereby ushered into the family of God are all mere harbingers and samples of that final downpour that will come in that complex of events connected with Christ’s return.²⁴

²¹ Dillard, *Joel*, 1:295.

²² Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 82.

²³ Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*; Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 97.

²⁴ Kaiser, *Old Testament in the New*, 91; also see Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 76.

Finley understands that Pentecost represents the inception of the church and struggles with this dilemma:

What is the implication of Peter's reference to Joel's prophecy for the relation between Israel and the Church? If one assumes a literal fulfillment for the many prophecies of the OT to national Israel, it will not do to simply say that the Church is spiritual Israel. On the other hand, some stress the discontinuity to the point that the events of Pentecost cannot have been a fulfillment in any sense of the promised outpouring of the Spirit.²⁵

Finley concludes:

Comparison demonstrates, then, considerable overlap between Joel's prediction that God would pour out His Spirit upon "all flesh" and the situation of the Church at Pentecost and its early stages of growth. Actually, we might say that the latter events are a fulfillment "in miniature" of Joel's prophecy.²⁶

Current progressive dispensationalists realize that the outpouring prophesied by Joel and explained by Peter in Acts 2 is the same manifestation of the Spirit. However, many traditional dispensationalists cannot admit that this outpouring in Joel 2 results in Spirit baptism. The apostle Paul is clear; Spirit baptism is reception into the body of Christ, which is the *ekklesia* (1 Cor 12:13). If Joel prophesied of Spirit baptism, recipients would be added to the church. To escape this conclusion, words like illustration, harbinger, sample, preliminary fulfillment and fulfillment in miniature are used to distance Spirit outpouring in Joel's prophecy from Spirit baptism in Peter's explanation.

In response, it must be pointed out that Joel told that God's Spirit would be poured out on everyone ("all flesh"); however, the Holy Spirit was outpoured only on six hundred twenty Jewish believers at Pentecost; one hundred twenty at Jerusalem and another five hundred in Galilee. Joel spoke of visions and dreams, while Acts 2 only reported that the believers were speaking in the various languages of diasporic Jews. Joel prophesied of wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth below, but Luke does not record such apocalyptic occurrences. The prophet Joel revealed judgment on hostile nations, as the people of Israel would be rescued from this great time of danger, but Pentecost proved to

²⁵ Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 76.

²⁶ Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, 75.

be uneventful, except for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit as the sound of rushing wind, and flames of fire on each of the believers.²⁷

Joel prophesied that God’s Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, and at the return of Christ there will be only two categories of people; those who call upon the name of the Lord and those who neglect Jesus as Savior and reject Him as King. Those who rebel against Christ’s authority will die in judgment, while those who are saved inherit the kingdom. At the beginning of the millennium, everyone (“all flesh”) will receive Spirit outpouring because no one else will be left alive.

Peter’s message was not that the events of Joel’s prophecy were being fulfilled before the eyes of his Jewish audience, he wanted those who were listening to him to realize that the last days had already begun. The end-time clock was ticking. The apostles understood that they were in eschatological times, which began with the revelation of Christ.²⁸ These last days would feature the outpouring of God’s Spirit, which had begun that very morning. These last days will ultimately include judgment as Joel prophesied, so the wise course of action would be to call on the name of the Lord for salvation (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32).

	Peter’s explanation at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18)	Joel’s prophecy of the coming of Yahweh (Joel 2:28-29)
Different occasions:	The enthronement of Christ at His ascension	The return of Christ at His second coming
Joel told of Spirit outpouring at the return of Christ, while Peter explained that the same occurrence also began fifty days after the cross.		

Figure 11. Differences of occasion between Joel’s prophecy and Peter’s explanation.

Those who pledge allegiance to the Lord Jesus as Messiah also receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; they consequently receive the new covenant forgiveness of

²⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 90.

²⁸ 1 Pet 1:20; 1 Cor 10:11; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:1-2; 9:26; 1 John 2:18; see Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 112.

sins and citizenship in God's kingdom. This has been true since the day of Pentecost, and it will be equally true on the first day of the millennium.

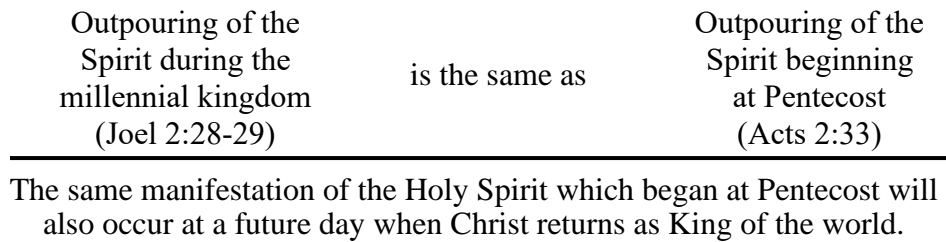
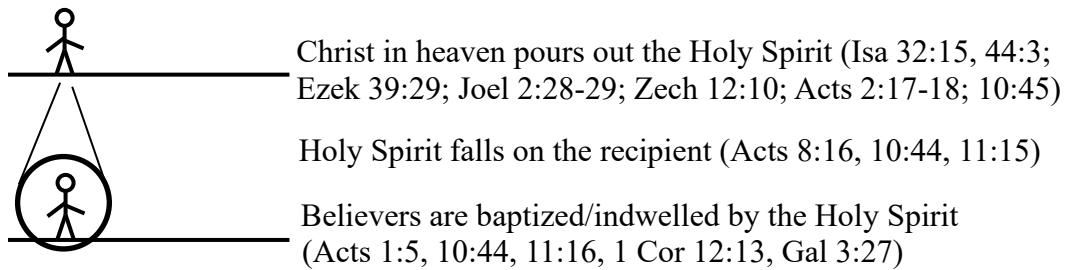


Figure 12. Same outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and during the millennium.

Luke recorded that the Spirit was also poured out on Gentiles at a later time at Caesarea. "Circumcised believers, who came with Peter, were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even upon the Gentiles" (Acts 10:45). NT writers understood the outpouring of the Spirit to equal Spirit baptism. The Lord Jesus spoke of the gift of the Holy Spirit from the Father, which He had promised to His disciples, as baptism in the Spirit which was prophesied by John the Baptist. "He commanded for them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, 'which you heard of Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Spirit in a few days'" (Acts 1:4-5).

The apostle Peter identified this Spirit baptism with the outpouring of the Spirit that Joel had foretold. In Acts 2:33, he explained that the exalted Christ received the Holy Spirit from the Father to pour out upon the believers, just as He promised in John 15:26. Peter also equated the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Gentiles (Acts 10:45) with Spirit baptism John the Baptist had proclaimed:

As I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as upon us in the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit.' If then God has given to them the same gift that He also gave to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, how was I to prevent God? (Acts 11:15-17).



Outpouring of the Spirit is the same manifestation as baptism of the Spirit. Outpouring is the action of Christ, while baptism is the reception of the believer.

Figure 13. Outpouring of the Spirit results in Spirit baptism.

This was the ministry focus of John the Baptist. He understood from OT prophecy that the Messiah would pour out his Spirit and John’s mission was to prepare the people of Israel to receive this Spirit outpouring in order to participate in the Messianic kingdom.²⁹ John proclaimed that physical descent from Abraham and resulting participation in the Mosaic covenant did not automatically guarantee acceptance into the anticipated kingdom (Matt 3:7-10). He emphasized that there were two types of people: the worthy were like wheat to be welcomed into the kingdom, but those who were judged as unworthy would be like chaff and burned up instead of experiencing God’s promises (v. 12). He practiced water baptism so people could demonstrate in a visual way that they were ready for the Messiah to baptize them in His Spirit on the first day of His kingdom (v. 11). “I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8).

Outpouring of the Spirit during the Messianic kingdom (Joel 2:28-29)	=	Spirit baptism	=	Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33)	=	Spirit baptism
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The Holy Spirit will be poured out when Christ returns to earth,
in the same way that this outpouring began at Pentecost.

Figure 14. Same outpouring of the Spirit equals to Spirit baptism.

²⁹ Allison explains, “John the Baptist associates the Old Testament expectation of a fresh, unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the coming of the Messiah (who, as it turns out, is already in the midst of his people). As the one who would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33), the Messiah would inaugurate the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes.” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 72)

The identification of outpouring of the Spirit as Spirit baptism becomes important because baptism in the Spirit is how the recipient is placed into the body of Christ. “For also in one Spirit we all were baptized in one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and were all made to drink one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13).³⁰ As each believer receives the Holy Spirit, who is poured out like water from Christ, they are completely surrounded by the Spirit as in baptism, they are also indwelt by the Spirit as in drinking water. New covenant participants receive Spirit indwelling as they receive Spirit baptism; each one is sealed, inside and outside, by God’s Holy Spirit.

Allison defines the church as “the people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and have been incorporated into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit.”³¹ He explains,

Incorporation into this body takes place when Christ baptizes his followers with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13, John 1:33), but this baptism with the Spirit as part of his outpouring was (as we have seen) future with reference to Christ’s earthly ministry (Matt 3:11; John 7:37-39) and his post-resurrection appearances (Acts 1:4-5), being inaugurated at Pentecost (2:1-4).³²

The apostle Paul continued to teach on this theme in Galatians 3:26-28; “You are all God’s sons through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as were baptized into Christ have been clothed by Christ, neither is there Jew or Greek, neither is there slave or free, neither is there male or female, for all of you are one in Christ.” Water baptism is not in view in this passage, we have been made one in Christ by baptism in the Spirit. Paul refers to Joel’s prophecy of Spirit outpouring (2:28-30) upon each one whom the Lord will call, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free. In contrast to the Mosaic covenant community,

Distinctions of age, sex, and even social class would be swept away in this common spiritual endowment. Even slaves, who though they might be of foreign origin were

³⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). Fee writes, “The reception of the Spirit is the *sine qua non* of Christian life. The Spirit is what essentially distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever (1 Cor 2:10-14); the Spirit especially marks the beginning of Christian life (Gal 3:2-3); the Spirit above all is what makes a person a child of God (Rom 8:14-17).” (603)

³¹ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 61.

³² Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 80-81.

counted as part of the religious community and took part in Israel’s festivals, were to be included. The wideness of God’s endowment of his people prepares the way for Paul’s even greater declaration of blessing in Christ: ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female’ (Gal 3:28)³³

The new covenant community is the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which began at Pentecost. This outpouring is experienced as baptism, which places the recipient in the corporate body of new covenant participants. Paul further taught that new covenant recipients are the temple of God due to the fact that the Spirit of God indwells each one: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16).

Harold Hoehner comments that under the Mosaic covenant, God would dwell with His people in the tabernacle and subsequently in the temple, but now God dwells in new covenant recipients in two ways: The Holy Spirit dwells in the body of each believer individually, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you” (1 Cor 6:19); and He also indwells Christians corporately, “In whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:21-22).³⁴

Outpouring of the Spirit during the Messianic kingdom (Joel 2:28-29)	=	Spirit baptism into the body of Christ	=	Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33)	=	Spirit baptism into the body of Christ
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Spirit baptism places the believer into the body of Christ, this is true now and into the future.

Figure 15. Same outpouring of the Spirit is Spirit baptism into the body of Christ both at Pentecost and during the millennium.

Baptism in the Spirit clearly places each recipient in the body of Christ.

First Corinthians 12:13 states, “For also in one Spirit we all were baptized in one body.”

³³ Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 99.

³⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 414-15.

This is the one body of Christ, as Paul explained in v. 27, “You are now the body of Christ and members with a share.” Paul designated this body of Christ as the *ekklesia*. “He is the head of the body, the church” (Col 1:18). “For the sake of His body, the church” (Col 1:24). “He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body” (Eph 1:22-23). “No one ever hated his flesh, but nourishes and cares for it, just as also Christ does the church, for we are members of His body” (Eph 5:29-30). The body of Christ illustrates the intimacy of the personal relationship that every new covenant recipient shares with Christ Himself, both individually and corporately.³⁵

Outpouring of the Spirit during the Messianic Kingdom (Joel 2:28-29)	=	Spirit Baptism into the Body of Christ which is the Church	=	Outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33)	=	Spirit Baptism into the Body of Christ which is the Church
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Spirit baptism places the believer into the church, both now and into the future.

Figure 16. Same outpouring of the Spirit is Spirit baptism into the body of Christ as the church beginning at Pentecost and during the millennium.

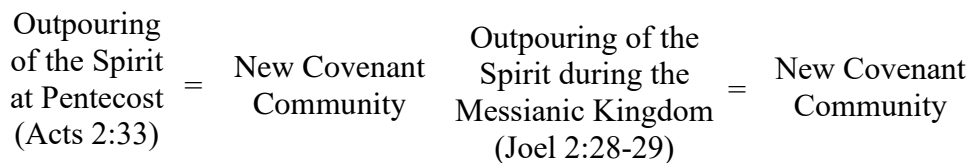
Outpouring/baptism of the Spirit and ratification in the new covenant began at the same time on the day of Pentecost. Dunn points out, “For Luke Pentecost was the beginning of the new covenant in the experience of the disciples, and that the Spirit is the essence of the new covenant without whom there is no new covenant and no entry into or participation in it.”³⁶ Paul taught that it is the Holy Spirit who ratifies the new covenant to believers by writing God’s law on our hearts (2 Cor 3:3, 6-8) as a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (31:33). In addition, Hebrews explains that it is the Holy Spirit who forgives the believer’s sins as He applies the blood of the new covenant to the hearts and lives of

³⁵ Fee comments, “Even though they are one body, made so by their common experience of the Spirit (v. 13), the body itself, though one, is not one ‘part’ but ‘many’ . . . ‘The body is one; the one body has many members.’ From here Paul proceeds to develop the imagery of the ‘body’ (referring always to the church).” (Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 607)

³⁶ Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit*, 49.

recipients, in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (Heb 10:14-18). Simply, the new covenant is ratified to recipients by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which results in the baptism and indwelling of believers. This new covenant work of the Holy Spirit was foretold by the prophets to occur during the millennial kingdom, and it was revealed by the apostles to have begun on the day of Pentecost. Dunn concludes, “Pentecost inaugurates the age of the Church. For Luke Pentecost the disciples as the new covenant people of God, and is the beginning of the period of the church.”³⁷

Since the outpouring of the Spirit as prophesied by OT prophets equates to Spirit baptism as revealed by John the Baptist and the apostles, any recipient of this Spirit baptism is placed into the body of Christ. Due to the fact that this baptism and indwelling of the Spirit places the one who believes in Christ into His body, as 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 2:21-22 point out, outpouring of the Spirit on millennial believers, as prophesied in Joel 2:28-29; and indwelling of the Spirit, as prophesied in Ezekiel 36:26-27, would result in new covenant participation, both individually and corporately. Millennial believers also become members of the new covenant community as they receive the baptism and indwelling of the Spirit.



New covenant recipients participate in its community
both now and into the future.

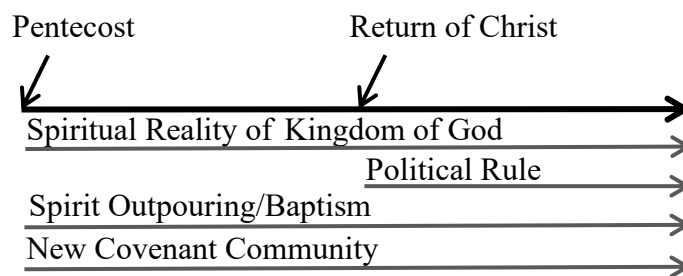
Figure 17. Same outpouring of the Spirit ratifies the new covenant.

The Hebrew prophets told of a time when the Messiah would pour out His Spirit upon those who would participate in His kingdom. Jeremiah prophesied that Yahweh would ratify a new covenant with Israel to enable recipients to participate in His Messianic

³⁷ Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit*, 49.

kingdom (31:31-34), while the book of Hebrews declared the new covenant is operational at this time, as the Holy Spirit applies the sacrifice of Christ to the hearts and lives of believers (8:7-13; 10:15-17). Ezekiel prophesied (36:24-33) that Yahweh would put His Spirit in the hearts of the people of Israel as He will bring them to their own land to resettle the towns and rebuild the ruins in His Messianic kingdom, while the apostle Paul proclaimed that believers have been indwelt by the Spirit to become new covenant temples of God (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). Joel prophesied (2:28-29) that Yahweh would pour out His Spirit to enable the recipients to participate in the Messianic kingdom, while the book of Acts shows that this outpouring began on the day of Pentecost, as first Jews and then Gentiles received the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:33; 10:45).

John the Baptist (Luke 3:16), the Lord Jesus (Acts 1:5) and the apostle Peter (Acts 11:16) equated this Spirit outpouring to baptism in the Spirit. The apostle Paul affirmed that recipients of Spirit baptism are placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13, 27). Paul understood this body of Christ to be the church, the *ekklesia* (Col 1:18, 24; Eph 1:22-23; 5:29-30). The OT prophets, including John the Baptist, focused on Spirit outpouring/baptism and the new covenant to be participation in the Messianic kingdom; while the NT apostles, including the apostle Paul, focused on Spirit baptism and the new covenant to be participation in the body of Christ, which is the new covenant community.



The kingdom era and new covenant ratification began with Spirit outpouring/baptism at Pentecost, and will continue into the future as Christ returns to rule the earth.

Figure 18. Correlation between the kingdom of God, Spirit outpouring/baptism and the new covenant community.

James Hamilton discusses the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in depth.³⁸ He explains that not every old covenant recipient was individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In the OT era, God was *with* His people by dwelling *among* them. God's presence was in His temple (1 Kgs 8:13). God did empower covenant mediators, such as prophets and kings, as He qualified individuals to serve as special advocates for His kingdom. The apostle Peter explained that OT prophets were inspired by the Spirit of God, so that what they revealed was God's very word (1 Pet 1:11).³⁹

Hamilton points God's Spirit would influence His people in the OT as they would listen to God's anointed messengers and meditate on God's authoritative Scriptures; in this way they would have everything they would need to live pleasing to Him. However, Yahweh revealed that in a future day, He would initiate another dimension of relationship with Him in a new covenant. Yahweh would be their God and they would be His people as each one would know Him in a personal way (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27). In the public ministry of Christ, this future indwelling of the Spirit was an important theme in His teaching. Jesus declared that the Spirit would be realized after His glorification (John 7:37-39). The Lord explained that the Holy Spirit was currently with His disciples, but the Spirit will be in them (John 14:17).⁴⁰

He affirms that this paradigm shift was accomplished on the day of Pentecost, as the Holy Spirit indwelt each believer bringing new covenant reality. Before this event, God's Spirit accomplished spiritual life in those who put their faith in Him, but without concurrent indwelling; however, since Pentecost, the Spirit now indwells every believer initiating the new covenant with each one personally. This new covenant indwelling results in the internalization of God's law, a personal knowledge of God and the

³⁸ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Indwelling Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Old & New Testaments* (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 25-26.

³⁹ Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Spirit*, 33-37.

⁴⁰ Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Spirit*, 41-44, 116-19, 134, 175.

forgiveness of all sin forever.⁴¹ Having said all that, Hamilton asserts that Spirit baptism has occurred only four times in history:

This baptism of the Spirit is not the same as or simultaneous with initial conversion or indwelling. Rather, baptism in the Spirit is God’s public mark of approval—first for the believers in Jesus who are in Jerusalem (Acts 2), then for the Samaritans (Acts 8), then for Gentiles (Acts 10), then for the followers of John the Baptist (Acts 19). The evidence from Acts indicates that the whole church was representatively baptized when these groups were baptized on these four occasions.⁴²

Joel’s prophesied outpouring of the Spirit, which John the Baptist understood to be Spirit baptism, presents a fifth, yet future baptism, that Hamilton did not address. If Spirit baptism is representational to the whole of the church as various groups were ratified to the new covenant step by step, the last representative group to be incorporated into the new covenant community would be millennial believers. However, John proclaimed that the Spirit baptism the Messiah will accomplish would be on each individual, so in preparation to receive this blessing each one as an individual must prepare their hearts by repenting of their sins (Matt 3:5-12).

Concerning 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,” Hamilton simply notes, “1 Cor 12:13 looks like a reference to water baptism, and the emphasis falls on the Spirit’s work in unifying the church.”⁴³ In response, the apostle Paul explains that we were all incorporated into one body by the Holy Spirit. This body is the result of two actions; first, we were baptized in the Spirit, and second, we drank the Spirit. God’s Spirit is commonly illustrated by water, we are placed in Him and He is placed in us. Baptism and indwelling are two sides of the same new covenant coin. Hamilton rightly argues for individual indwelling for all new covenant recipients beginning at Pentecost, however Paul described Spirit baptism as concurrent. We were baptized in one Spirit *and* we were given to drink one Spirit. One demands the other.

⁴¹ Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Spirit*, 164-65, 183-85.

⁴² Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Spirit*, 183.

⁴³ Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Spirit*, 187.

Did Paul understand that we as Gentiles are represented in Spirit baptism by Cornelius, but he as a Jew was represented by the Jewish believers on Pentecost? He wrote that the Spirit is one and the body is one, whether Jew or Greek. There is a unity and commonality as each believer is equally immersed by the Spirit as an individual, and in this way, we are incorporated as individual members into the body of Christ (v. 27).

Paul continued to teach on this theme in Galatians 3:27, “For as many as were baptized into Christ has put on Christ.” Paul explains that we are sons of God through our relationship with God through His Spirit. “Did you receive the Spirit by works of law or by hearing in faith?” (v. 2). This Spirit baptism/indwelling gives us sonship and new covenant promises (v. 29). This incorporation into Christ is equal to Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female; Paul uses the same categories in both 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Galatians 3:37.

The sacrifice of Christ and outpouring/baptism of the Spirit ratifies the new covenant and produces the new covenant community in the spiritual aspect of the kingdom today. The same sacrifice of Christ and the same Spirit outpouring/baptism will continue to ratify the same new covenant and produce the same new covenant community in the spiritual/physical aspect of the same kingdom in the future, due to the fact that the new covenant foundations are the same, both now and in the future, and what is the same cannot be different.

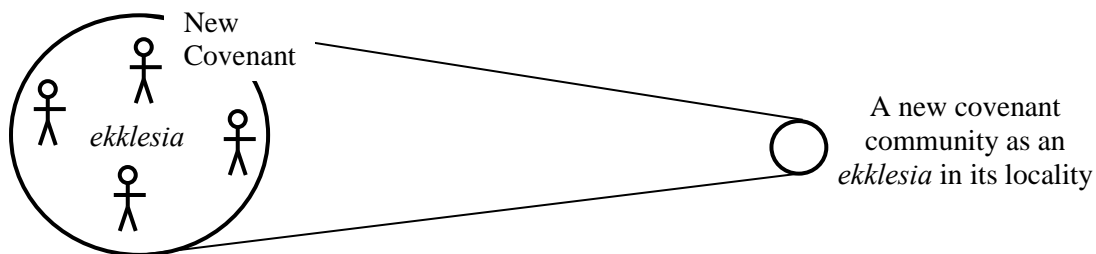
CHAPTER 4

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY IN ITS TOTAL AND LOCAL MANIFESTATIONS

The new covenant community as a whole is represented by local new covenant communities all around the world. New covenant recipients today gather to worship God, study His word, and evangelize others; where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, He is present in the Person of His Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Christ indwells new covenant recipients individually and also indwells new covenant communities corporately; this is true now, into the future and forever. The two foundations of the new covenant community are manifested by the two ordinances of these local communities; the Lord's Supper symbolizes the sacrifice of Christ, while water baptism symbolizes Spirit baptism. These local communities remain viable only to the extent that they continue to faithfully represent the new covenant.

Introduction

The new covenant community consists of all who have participated in the sacrificial atonement of Christ and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and this community also manifests itself in the localities where it is placed. Allison points out that the church



Both the entirety of the new covenant community and its representative communities are identified by the Greek word *ekklesia*.

Figure 19. The new covenant community in its locality.

relates to God through the new covenant, and points out that the church consists of two interrelated elements, the universal church and local churches.¹

The word *ekklesia* is found 114 times in the NT, only 3 times in the Gospels, in two passages in Matthew, but occurs 23 times in Acts, 62 times in Paul's epistles and 20 times in Revelation. Early Christian writers used *ekklesia* for fellowships that came into being only after the resurrection and ascension of Christ.² Luke used *ekklesia* frequently in Acts for the time after Pentecost, but consciously avoided it in his gospel account of the public ministry of Jesus. The gospels were written contemporaneous with the epistles, so the writers, specifically Luke, could have made a theological point by their omission of *ekklesia* in their gospels.³

The use of *ekklesia* in Acts and the epistles reveals a consciousness as a Christian community. Individual *ekklesia* are located in Jerusalem (11:22, 26), in Antioch (13:1) and in Ephesus (20:17). Luke speaks of the singular *ekklesia* throughout Judea, Samaria and Galilee (9:31), of the plural *ekklesiai* in Syria and Cilicia (15:41) and also *ekklesiai* in the plural in Derbe, Lystra and Iconium (16:5).⁴ The *ekklesia* is a particular flock over which the Holy Spirit appoints some as overseers, but it is at the same time the

¹ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 70.

² William Tyndale was first to translate the Greek NT into the English language in 1524. He insisted on translating *ekklesia* as "congregation" rather than the word "church." David Daniell, *Tyndale's New Testament* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Daniell explains, "It is a word most common in Acts and the Epistles, referring to the communities of Christians around the Mediterranean early in the second half of the first century. These were, of course, literally "congregations" of people, and the Greek sense of the word cannot be avoided. What [Thomas] More found heretical in the word "congregation" was the implication that there is not one hierarchical body, The Church, of which all churches are members, but rather, self-governing communities of Christians, led by the Spirit, with allegiance only to God through their experience of Christ: precisely the New Testament sense. (xxi)

³ Moisés Silva, ed., "ἐκκλησία," in NIDNTTE (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 2:137-38.

⁴ Allison points out, "By far the most common referent of the New Testament's presentation of the church is gatherings of Christians, or local churches. Specifically, these gatherings may be part of a church in a particular city that assembles regularly together in members' houses—for example, the house of Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19), the house of Nympha (Col 4:15), Philemon's house (Phlm 2), and Mary's house (Acts 12:12). These smaller gatherings were called churches, but so were the

totality of the new covenant community which God purchased with His own blood (20:28). He emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the *ekklesia* as He moves it (Acts 5:11), encourages it (9:31), directs it (13:1-2) and for whose sake it is persecuted (7:55-60). For Luke, the *ekklesia* is ultimately one. It “appears visibly only as it gathers in particular places, but the totality is always implied . . . It is one throughout the whole world and yet is at the same time fully present in every individual assembly. The singular and plural are qualitatively the same.”⁵ In Acts, Luke used the word *ekklesia* in the classical Greek definition as citizens gathering to discuss matters of local government (19:32, 39, 41), in the LXX understanding of the Mosaic covenant community (7:38), and also in the post-Pentecost realization of the new covenant community (11:26).

For the apostle Paul, the *ekklesia* manifests Christ, an important lesson that he learned first in his Christian experience. The Lord Jesus asked Paul why he was persecuting Him, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5). Paul recognized that the community that he was persecuting (Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:9) was the visible expression of Christ on the earth.⁶ He is the head (Col 1:18; Eph 5:23) and those who are joined to Him are members, both to Christ and to each other (1 Cor 12:27), as the singular body of Christ, which transcends the many local communities in various locations around the world.

Paul designates the *ekklesia* in its concrete existence as a local, geographical entity, such as in Cenchræe (Rom 16:1), in Corinth (1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 2:1), or in the plural as *ekklesiai* in Galatia (Gal 1:2) and “all the *ekklesiai* of Christ greet you” (Rom 16:16). These *ekklesiai* identify the body of Christ as a new community, separate from Jew and Gentile distinctions. He exhorted, “Do not offend the Jews, the Greeks or the *ekklesia* of

whole church gatherings (1 Cor 11:17, 18, 20, 33; e.g., the “whole church” that Gaius hosted, Rom 16:23), possibly a reference to the “city” churches from which these assemblies were distributed: “the church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thess 1:1, 2; 2 Thess. 1:1) or the church of God that is in Corinth (1 Cor 1:1-2; cf. 2 Cor 1:1). These assemblies constitute solid support for the concept of the church as “local churches.” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 61-62)

⁵ Silva, “ἐκκλησία,” 2:142.

⁶ Allison writes, “Paul referred to the church that he had once persecuted without any particular emphasis on its identity as the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6).” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 61-62)

God” (1 Cor 10:32). Participation in this body is accomplished by Spirit baptism, which results in the indwelling of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). Those who experience the indwelling Spirit of Christ are in Christ (Rom 8:9); the opposite is also true, those who do not have the Spirit do not belong to Him. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each one He indwells (1 Cor 12:4), these gifts allow each member to function in community life (Rom 12:4-5).

The first of these gifts which Christ placed in the *ekklesia* was apostles (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11) as foundational, with Christ Himself as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20). For Paul, the *ekklesia* began as the apostles received spiritual gifts first in the body of Christ.⁷ These spiritual gifts are not given to believers for service in the new covenant community during this brief lifetime alone, but during the millennial kingdom new covenant recipients will be able to use these powerful abilities in a fuller way. Service in the local congregation at this time is restricted by circumstances, opportunities and the frailty of life, but in the millennium these restrictions will be a thing of the past. During the visible kingdom on earth, new covenant community participants will have a thousand years to employ and enjoy these wonderful gifts that the Holy Spirit gave at our baptism/indwelling.

This body was initially Jewish only, Gentiles were not added until later as they were also Spirit-baptized at Caesarea (Acts 10:45). Paul explained that due to Spirit baptism into the body of Christ, ethnic distinctions are not a factor in the new covenant community, “For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks” (1 Cor 12:13), also “For as many of you as were baptized have put on Christ, neither is there Jew or Greek” (Gal 3:28). He pointed out that current Gentile members in the *ekklesia* were once separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in the covenant community of Israel and foreigners to the old covenants of kingdom promises (Eph 2:12).

Before the cross, Gentiles could receive citizenship in the Mosaic covenant community and participation in the covenants of promise, but they had to first become

⁷ Allison affirms, “Because both baptism with the Holy Spirit and distribution of spiritual gifts, as constitutive elements of the church, were inaugurated after Christ’s ascension by the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, the church did not come into existence until that event.” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 81)

Jews in the proselyte process to accomplish it. Now that Gentiles directly receive Spirit baptism, those who were distant have been directly included into His body by the blood of Christ (v. 13). Christ broke down the division between Jews and Gentiles through His cross, and made one new humanity out of the two (vv. 14-16). Gentiles are no longer foreigners and aliens, as under the Mosaic covenant economy, but they are fellow citizens in the new covenant (v. 19).⁸ Now believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they are added like stones into the new covenant temple and built on the foundation of the apostles, with Christ Himself as the cornerstone (vv. 20-21).

Christ as the chief cornerstone is a major theme in the NT.⁹ He is the stone that the Mosaic covenant community rejected, but every new covenant recipient has accepted in an individual way. Christ is building His Messianic community as the dwelling of the Spirit. First in this new covenant community were apostles and prophets; they received these foundational gifts for the building of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-12). They also provided in the pages of the NT an authoritative witness to the life of Christ and what He means to believers. New covenant recipients today continue to be built on this apostolic foundation that began on Pentecost.

There is one new covenant and only one new covenant community; the local communities represent the whole of the new covenant community, which in turn manifests the various communities in each locality. This relationship between the new covenant community and its local communities can be illustrated in the experience of Israel as the Mosaic covenant community from Sinai to the cross. This covenant community was represented in convocations on feast days as the people of Israel would assemble at the tabernacle, and later at the temple in Jerusalem. The entire covenant community and its convocations both consisted of Mosaic covenant recipients, both were designated as

⁸ Hoehner comments that God's purpose was to create one new person out of Jews and Gentiles. Now Gentiles do not become part of Israel as proselytes under the Mosaic covenant, nor do Jews lose their Hebrew distinctiveness, but both became one new corporate entity, as one body in Christ which is the church. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 378-79.

⁹ Ps 118:22; Isa 28:16; Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:4-8.

qahal in the Hebrew OT and by *ekklesia* in the LXX. There was only one Mosaic covenant and one Mosaic covenant community, the convocations would simply represent the whole of the covenant community.

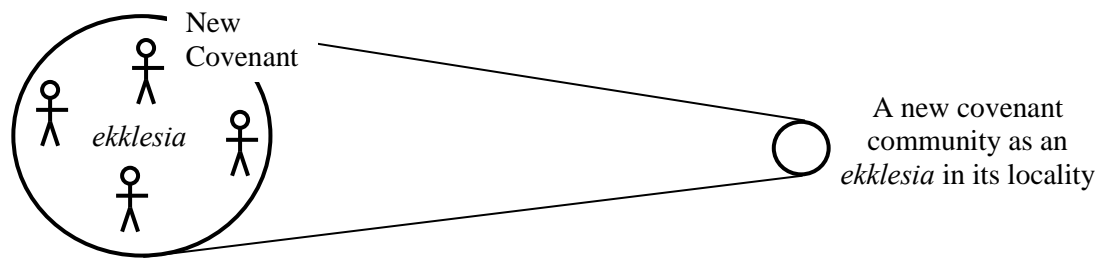
In the new covenant, Christ is the head of His body, which is His Messianic community. At the same time, He is walking through golden lampstands, which represent the various congregations in their localities (Rev 1:12, 20).¹⁰ The Lord is concerned about the new covenant body in its totality, and He is also concerned about each local body as well. Christian assemblies must faithfully represent the new covenant community to be considered as a representative congregation.¹¹ Many religious societies may consider themselves to be a true *ekklesia*, but Christ has taken away their lampstand. The church at Ephesus considered themselves to be strong, and it had many commendable qualities, but the Lord threatened to remove its lampstand, so that it would no longer represent the new covenant community, because they had lost their first love (Rev 2:4-5).

The foundations to the new covenant congregation are two—baptism in the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Christ; so the ordinances in the local congregation are also two—water baptism and the Lord’s Supper.¹²

¹⁰ Osborne comments on example of the lampstand of the temple. This single seven-branched lampstand, the menorah, represented Yahweh’s presence among His people and Israel as the Mosaic covenant community giving light to the world (Zech 4:2, 10). Seven separate NT lampstands (Rev 1:12, 20) represent the presence of Christ among His people through the agency of His Holy Spirit, and various churches as lights to the world as they represent Christ who is the light of the world. Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 86-87. See also G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 206-7.

¹¹ Tom Julien, *Inherited Wealth: Studies in Ephesians* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1976). Julien notes, “Each local church *must* be a true manifestation of the Universal Church, else it has no right to be called a ‘church.’” (56)

¹² Allison explains, “The new covenant involves two covenantal signs: baptism, the sign of entrance into new covenantal relationship with God and into the covenant community, the church; and the Lord’s Supper, the sign of ongoing new covenant relationship with God and the covenant community, the church.” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 78)



Foundations:

1. Baptism in the Spirit
2. The sacrifice of Christ

Ordinances:

1. Water Baptism
2. The Lord's Supper

The two ordinances of the local community symbolize the two foundations of the new covenant community.

Figure 20. New covenant foundations and its ordinances.

The Ordinance of Water Baptism

Water baptism represents baptism in the Holy Spirit. On six occasions, once in each of the Gospels and twice in the book of Acts, water baptism is described to symbolize Spirit baptism.¹³ Before His ascension, Jesus explained to His disciples, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5). Ten days later on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out as each one was baptized in Him in a personal way. As a result, three thousand Jewish believers were baptized in water to testify to the Spirit baptism that they had just experienced. Water immersion was the method by which they were added to the local community. “Then those who received the word with gladness were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). Sometime later, the apostle Peter, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, shared the message about salvation to Gentiles. To the surprise of the Jewish believers, the Holy Spirit was poured out on those Italians. Peter asked, “Can anyone forbid water that these should be baptized, who also received the Holy Spirit just as we did?” (Acts 10:47) When he returned to Jerusalem, he recounted the entire experience, “When I began

¹³ “I baptize you in water for repentance, but the One coming after me is stronger than I am; I am not worthy to carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt 3:11). “I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8). “I baptize you with water, but One will come who is stronger than me, whose sandal straps I am not worthy to unloose, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). “I did not know Him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on, He is the One baptizing with the Holy Spirit’” (John 1:33).

to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as He also did on us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John baptized in water, but you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15-16). In Peter’s understanding, baptism in water symbolized baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul clearly states that we are placed in the body of Christ by Spirit baptism. “For in one Spirit we all were baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). Just as Spirit baptism is our initiation into the new covenant community,¹⁴ so water baptism is our entrance into the local congregation. John Hammett concludes, “One way to relate the two is to see Spirit baptism as marking one’s entry in to the church universal, and water baptism marking one’s entry into a local church.”¹⁵

Following His resurrection, Jesus commanded His disciples to “go and make disciples of all the ethnic groups, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). On Pentecost, the church began to accomplish this mission, and three thousand Jewish residents, who received the message of Peter, were added to the church at Jerusalem through baptism (Acts 2:41). Throughout the NT, baptism in water was administered as a witness that the recipient had believed in the Lord Jesus; examples include the Samaritans (8:12), the Ethiopian eunuch (8:35-38), Paul (9:17-18), Cornelius (10:44-48), the Philippian jailer (16:30-33), the Ephesian men (19:4-6) and Corinthian believers (1 Cor 1:14-17).

It is clear that the Greek word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*), transliterated as *baptize*, meant “to dip” or “to immerse” in the New Testament. A. T. Robertson remarks, “If *baptizo* never occurred in connection with a disputed ordinance, there would be no controversy on the meaning of the word.”¹⁶ He comments, “The Greek language has had

¹⁴ Allison affirms, “Incorporation into this body takes place when Christ baptizes his followers with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13, John 1:33).” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 80)

¹⁵ John S. Hammett, “What Is Spirit Baptism and How Does It Relate to Water Baptism,” in *40 Questions about Baptism and the Lord’s Supper* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), 66.

¹⁶ A. T. Robertson, “Baptism,” in *ISBE*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:415.

a continuous history, and *baptizo* is used today in Greece for baptism. As is well known, not only in Greece, but wherever the Greek Church prevails, immersion is the unbroken and universal practice.”¹⁷

According to the *Didache*, which is dated at the beginning of the second century, pouring of water is allowed in the case that immersion became impractical:

And concerning baptism, thus baptize ye: Having first said all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if thou have not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm. But if thou have not either, pour out water thrice upon the head into the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit (*Didache* 7.1-3).¹⁸

Robertson notes that the word translated “pour” is *excheo*, clearly showing that *baptizo* never means “pour.” He comments that this use of pouring as early as the second century was due to an exaggerated value placed on baptism as essential for salvation, and the belief by some that those who died without baptism to be lost.¹⁹

Allison gives six purposes for baptism as understood by the early church: the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, deliverance from death, regeneration or the new birth, the renunciation of Satan and identification with Christ.²⁰ This link between baptism and forgiveness was stated early by Justin Martyr (AD 100-65) in his *First Apology*:

They are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, “Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (*First Apology*, 61).²¹

¹⁷ Robertson, “Baptism,” 1:416.

¹⁸ *The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations (Didache)*, 7.1-3, in *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1886), 7:380, Logos Software; see Robertson, “Baptism”; also see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 612.

¹⁹ Robertson, “Baptism.”

²⁰ Gregg R. Allison, “Baptism,” in *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, video series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

²¹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 61, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:183. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 613.

Cyprian (AD 210-258) stated, “In the baptism of water is received the forgiveness of sins.”²² Allison points out that this correlation between baptism and forgiveness was so common that it was codified in the Nicene Creed: “We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.”²³ Due to development of a belief that baptism cleanses the participant from previous sins, but not sins committed after baptism, churches began postponing baptism until the recipient could be given a period of instruction called *catechesis*. It was hoped that the discipleship received during this time, up to three years in length, would lessen the amount of sin committed after baptism.²⁴ Because of this belief, Emperor Constantine refrained from being baptized until he was about to die, in order to have as many sins as possible forgiven before he went into eternity.²⁵

Due to this doctrine that water baptism cleansed sins, infant baptism began to be practiced by the end of the second century. Tertullian was aware of this practice, but argued against it in his treatise *On Baptism*,

In the case of little children . . . the Lord does indeed say, “Forbid them not to come unto me.” Let them “come,” then, while they are growing up; let them “come” while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the “remission of sins?”²⁶

Cyprian was first to establish the relationship between original sin and infant baptism. He explained,

An infant, who, being lately born, has not sinned, except in that, being born after the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of the ancient death at its

²² Cyprian, *Treatise XI.4*, “Exhortation to Martyrdom,” in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 5:497. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 613.

²³ *Nicene Creed*, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 7:59. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 613.

²⁴ Allison, “Baptism”; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 616.

²⁵ D. F. Wright, “Constantine the Great,” in *NIDCC*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 255.

²⁶ Tertullian, *On Baptism* 8.4-8, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 3:678. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 619.

earliest birth, who approaches the more easily on this very account to the reception of the forgiveness of sins—that to him are remitted, not his own sins, but the sins of another.²⁷

Infant baptism became the universal practice in order to forgive the sin inherited from Adam through the fall. This position was codified by the Council of Carthage in 417.²⁸ Baptismal regeneration and infant baptism remained unchallenged during the medieval period, except in small separatist movements, such as the Waldenses. Catholic officials reported about them at that time, “They pretend that this sacrament cannot be conferred except upon those who demand it with their own lips; hence they infer the other error that baptism does not profit infants who receive it.”²⁹

Although, beginning in 1517, Martin Luther proclaimed the just would live by faith, he did not oppose the doctrine of infant baptism. He agreed, “It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe.”³⁰ However in distinction to Catholic doctrine, Lutherans do not believe that baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation, as faith is created in a person’s heart by God’s word.³¹

Huldrych Zwingli began a study of the Greek New Testament in 1517, and with the support of the Zurich city council set a course towards reformation. By 1522, he was joined by a group of young men, many had been former priests, and all were focused on biblical languages and theology. At one time Zwingli believed that only adults should be

²⁷ Cyprian, *Epistle 53.2*, “On the Baptism of Infants,” in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 5:353. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 619.

²⁸ Council of Carthage (417), “If anyone says that newborn children do not need to be baptized . . . that no original sin is derived from Adam to be washed away by the laver of regeneration . . . let him be anathema” (Canon 2). Allison, *Historical Theology*, 619.

²⁹ Thomas Armitage, *The History of the Baptists* (repr., Watertown, WI: Maranatha Baptist Press, 1976), 1:303.

³⁰ Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism*, “Part 4: Baptism,” Evangelical Lutheran Synod website, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://els.org/beliefs/luthers-small-catechism/part-4-baptism/>. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 623.

³¹ Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, “Frequently Asked Questions—Doctrine,” accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine>. “All true believers in the Old Testament era were saved without baptism. Mark 16:16 implies that it is not the absence of baptism that condemns a person but the absence of faith.” They assert that God’s Spirit can use baptism to confirm and strengthen one’s faith.

baptized. This belief was a logical extension of his view of the sacraments as external signs of internal grace. He had made a distinction between inner baptism, which was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and outer baptism, which involved water.³² These early beliefs were welcomed by this young group, who were convinced that only believers in Jesus Christ should be baptized. By 1525, they put their convictions into action and began to rebaptize themselves first, then others in the community. Zwingli needed protection from the city council, who had authority over both the church and the government. Infant baptism was both initiation into the state church and citizenship in the jurisdiction, so he returned to his original practice.³³

Zwingli defended infant baptism by stressing the covenantal unity of both testaments.³⁴ He declared that there was only one covenant, so there was only one people of God found in both the Old and New Testaments: “Since therefore there is one immutable God and one testament only, we who trust in Christ are under the same testament; consequently, God is as much our God as he was Abraham’s, and we are as much his people as was Israel.”³⁵ He found a correlation between the sign of circumcision in the OT and infant baptism. Just as Israel has two covenantal seals—circumcision and Passover—so the church has two covenantal seals—baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Circumcision was administered eight days after birth, so infants were to be baptized; but unlike circumcision to male children only, both boys and girls were to receive baptism.³⁶

³² William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 8-13; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 625-27.

³³ Zwingli wrote, “For some time I myself was deceived by the error and I thought it better not to baptize children until they came to the years of discretion.” Huldrych Zwingli, “On Baptism,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Library of Christian Classics 24, ed. G.W. Bromiley (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 139, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 331.

³⁴ Peter Golding, *Covenant Theology: The Key of Theology in Reformed Thought and Tradition* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor Books, 2004), 38.

³⁵ Huldrych Zwingli, *Refutation of the Tricks of the Catabaptists*, in *Ulrich Zwingli, Selected Works*, ed. S. M. Jackson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 135, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 331. See also Golding, *Covenant Theology*, 21.

³⁶ Zwingli, “On Baptism,” 132, quoted in Allison, *Strangers and Sojourners*, 331. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 627-29.

Anabaptists disagreed, they insisted that salvation came by faith alone, infants could not believe, so any water ritual performed on infants was clearly not scriptural baptism.³⁷ Balthasar Hübmaier summarized the Anabaptist understanding of baptism: “Which is baptism of the Spirit? It is the inward enlightenment of our hearts, given to us by the Holy Spirit, through the living Word of God. What is water baptism? It is an outward and public testimony to the inward baptism of the Spirit.”³⁸ In Anabaptist teaching, water baptism was a witness to the indwelling Holy Spirit, which disqualified innocents from this experience. “Baptism is to be administered only after receiving the Holy Spirit; and children, though they are not necessarily condemned, do not have the Spirit.”³⁹

Hübmaier affirmed water baptism to be entrance into the local church. “Where baptism in water does not exist, there is no church, no brother, no sister, no fraternal discipline, exclusion or restoration.”⁴⁰ He explained that regeneration was the mark of the true church and must be realized before church membership. “There can be no scriptural baptism without the prior experience of regeneration, and no church membership without baptism. It therefore follows that regeneration must be an accomplished fact before one is enrolled in the visible church.”⁴¹ Due to their practice of believer’s baptism and their insistence on the church as a voluntary community of believers, the Anabaptists were severely persecuted and countless numbers were martyred by Roman Catholics and Reformers alike.⁴²

³⁷ Jonathan Hill, *Zondervan Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 255.

³⁸ Balthasar Hübmaier, *Von der christlichen Taufe der Glaubigen*, trans. by George Davidson as *Concerning Christian Baptism*, unpublished work (1939), 111, quoted in Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 164.

³⁹ Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 154.

⁴⁰ Hübmaier, *Concerning Christian Baptism*, 281-83, quoted in Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 164. Also quoted in H. Wayne Pipkin and John Yoder, *Balthasar Hübmaier, Theologian of Anabaptism*, Classics of the Radical Reformation (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 127.

⁴¹ Hübmaier, *Concerning Christian Baptism*, quoted in Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 185.

⁴² Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1985), 2:56-57; Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 14, 22-36; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 627-29.

A century later, Puritans were English Protestants who desired to purify the Church of England of what they considered to be unacceptable residues of Roman Catholicism. In the 1620s, government and church leadership became increasingly unsympathetic to Puritan demands, as a result, many came to the conclusion that it would be best to separate.⁴³ Particular Baptists emerged from these separatists in the 1640s. They used the regulative principle of worship, that is, only what is found in the pages of Scripture could be included in public worship. Because infant baptism was not in the Bible, the practice was abandoned; and because believer's baptism was commanded, it was incorporated into the worship services.⁴⁴

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 states that believers' baptism by immersion symbolizes the salvation that we have received in Christ:

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.⁴⁵

Over the course of many centuries, the ordinance of baptism has come full circle back to the command of the Lord Jesus and the practice of local congregations as found in the pages of the NT; that those who have put their faith in the Lord Jesus give testimony to their new life in Him by this simple ceremony.

The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper represents the sacrifice of Christ in His cross. On the night He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:15).⁴⁶

⁴³ The Library of Congress, "America as a Religious Refuge," accessed December 10, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html>.

⁴⁴ Founders Ministries, "What is a Reformed Baptist?" accessed January 26, 2018, <https://founders.org/2017/03/30/what-is-a-reformed-baptist/>.

⁴⁵ *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, accessed January 26, 2018, <http://www.1689.com/confession.html>

⁴⁶ Jonathan T. Pennington, "The Lord's Supper in the Fourfold Witness of the Gospels," in *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ until He Comes*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and

As the leader at the meal, Jesus gave the traditional Jewish blessing for unleavened bread, then He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: “Take, eat, this is My body.” The Lord Jesus took the final cup of wine associated with blessing,⁴⁷ gave thanks and said: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is being poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20). In this way, He signified the end of the Mosaic covenant and anticipated the establishment of the new covenant.⁴⁸

The Passover sacrifice was eaten to celebrate the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Joseph Telushkin explains that worshipers would bring a lamb to the temple in Jerusalem as a sacrifice. The lamb was killed by a priest, which would then be returned to the family to be eaten in a celebratory meal. During this feast, extended families retell the story of how God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt, according the command of Exodus 13:8, 14-15.⁴⁹

God initiated the annual feasts of *Pesach* or Passover and *Shavuot* or Pentecost to commemorate the defining events for the giving of the Mosaic covenant, and it is altogether fitting that the Lord Jesus should use the occasion of the Passover festival to celebrate the defining events for the giving of the new covenant. The apostle Paul explained that Christ is our Passover (1 Cor 5:7); through the death of the Passover lamb in Egypt, the lives of the firstborn of Israel were spared; so through the death of Christ on the cross, we are spared from eternal death.

Matthew R. Crawford (Nashville: B & H, 2010). Pennington concludes that Jesus participated in a Passover meal with His disciples one day earlier than the official Jerusalem celebration, and without a lamb, because Passover lambs were being offered at the temple at the same time that Christ was sacrificed on the cross (34). Frederic Godet references the Mishnah to show that it is possible to eat a Passover meal without a lamb, but unleavened bread was a requirement. Frederic Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1881), 464, quoted in Pennington, “In the Fourfold Witness of the Gospels,” 34. Andreas Köstenberger reports that wine was also required at the Passover meal. Andreas Köstenberger, “Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?” in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord’s Supper*, 27.

⁴⁷ Beginning around 1850, Baptists in America began replacing the wine of the Lord’s Supper with unfermented grape juice. The American temperance movement strongly influenced this change, which resulted in the complete prohibition of alcoholic beverages by 1920. Prior to that time, fermentation of wine was unavoidable, but now with refrigeration and modern vacuum seal packaging, the use of intoxicating beverages is no longer necessary. Allison, *Historical Theology*, 657.

⁴⁸ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 387.

⁴⁹ Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 582.

Israel remembers its redemption from slavery at Passover, which begins a week-long festival of unleavened bread. There are fifty days from the second day of Passover to *Shavuot* or Pentecost. Synagogues count the forty-nine days of *Omer* to Pentecost. An *omer* is a sheaf of a harvested grain. In the time of Christ, priests at the temple would offer newly harvested barley as first fruits on the second day of Passover (the day of the resurrection), signaling the harvest season, which lasted seven weeks. Pentecost is the holiday for celebrating the end of harvest.⁵⁰

The Talmud teaches that *Shavuot* commemorates the most important event in Jewish history: the giving of the Revelation, when God's will was revealed to Israel. Seven weeks after Passover, as the people of Israel camped at Sinai, God wrote ten foundational commandments on stone tablets, which began "the season for receiving our Torah." Donin emphasizes, "The lesson of *Shavuot* is that release from bondage at Passover does not constitute complete freedom unless it culminates with the spiritual restraints and discipline revealed in God's covenant and our acceptance of God's law."⁵¹

The apostle Paul explained that Christ is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of God's harvest (1 Cor 15:23). At Pentecost, Christ sent the Holy Spirit who revealed God's will in the new covenant. Paul taught that the Holy Spirit writes His law on our hearts and minds, not an external set of commandments engraved on cold stone as for the Mosaic covenant, but an internal law written on warm hearts for the new covenant (2 Cor 3:3, 6). As in the experience of Israel, Passover was the beginning as they were released from slavery and Pentecost was the culmination as they received God's revelation for the Mosaic covenant; so in our experience, new covenant recipients are redeemed from bondage of sin in the cross of Christ, and we receive the spiritual restraint and discipline revealed in God's law as the Holy Spirit in His baptism and indwelling applies the sacrifice of Christ to the hearts and lives of every believer.

⁵⁰ Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, 592.

⁵¹ Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), 339-40.

The apostle Paul taught concerning the Lord's Supper in order to correct abuses in the church at Corinth. He cautioned the believers to flee idolatry (1 Cor 10:14); the worship of patron deities was so pervasive in the ancient Greek culture that participation in cultic festivals was expected for community life. Paul wanted Christians to realize that it was not mythic gods and goddesses that was the issue, but demons were worshiped in those pagan sacrifices.⁵² Gordon Fee explains that the focus of 1 Corinthians 10:16-22 is the inherent incompatibility of participating in both worship of Christ and worship of fallen angels, who are His and our spiritual enemies. Fee points out that Paul emphasized a bonding relationship develops between the worshipers with one another and with the deity that they are honoring.⁵³

Paul discussed sacrificial meals in the context of Christians, Jews and pagans. Using Mosaic covenant worship as an illustration, the people of Israel were commanded to sacrifice to God only at the temple; the animal was offered to God on the altar, while the worshipers would participate (*κοινωνοί, koinonoi*) in the benefits of the sacrifice as they ate in the presence of Yahweh (1 Cor 10:18). Part of the worship experience for the Levitical system was eating the sacrifice, "The meat for the thanksgiving sacrifice, his peace offering shall be eaten the same day it is offered" (Lev 7:15). In the case of peace offerings, parts of the sacrifice were offered to God, and the priests received portions of the animal, while the main part was returned to the worshipper and his family to be eaten in the temple courts.⁵⁴ Jewish worshipers would participate in the sacrificial process and celebrate the relationship with God as the result. It was as if they were personally invited to share a holiday meal with Yahweh Himself in His house. Abuse of sacrificial meals were part of the corruption practiced by the sons of Eli, the high priest. While worshippers would boil meat for the sacrificial meal, priests would take raw meat for roasting (1 Sam 2:12-17).

⁵² Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 389-90.

⁵³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 472.

⁵⁴ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 123.

Concerning pagan worship, Paul pointed out that these sacrificial meals involved participation (κοινωνοὺς, *koinonous*) with demons (1 Cor 10:20). A sacrificial meal was the experience of the non-Jewish world as covenants were confirmed by eating the covenant sacrifice. The parties of the covenant would acknowledge their particular deity as the impartial witness to the covenant promises, and that their god could sacrifice them as they are doing to the animal, if they would fail to keep their part of the covenant stipulations. This sacrifice would result in an occasion for feasting as the community would celebrate the benefits of the covenant.⁵⁵ In the ancient Greek society, local communities would hold festivals on significant days to feast on animals sacrificed in honor to patron deities.⁵⁶ The priest of Zeus in Lystra was organizing an impromptu festival to Paul and Barnabas as Hermes and Zeus, who stopped the sacrifice to them (Acts 14:8-18).

The apostle Paul warned Christians concerning eating meat offered at these demon worship services, as it was impossible to both engage in worship of Christ and false worship of demons. However, leftover meat from these festivals would be sold at a discount in the marketplace. If someone from the community would invite a Christian to dinner and serve them meat, the believer should eat without questions (1 Cor 10:27). It would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the origin of the meat at that later time, and any connection between an act of worship was broken in the case of second-hand meat. However, if someone at the meal should say that the meat had been previously offered in pagan worship, the child of God should refrain from eating it, because of the conscience of the one who revealed that fact to him (v. 28).

Paul explained that drinking the cup and eating the bread is participation (κοινωνία, *koinonia*) in the blood and body of Christ (v. 16). This representational meal celebrates the relationship that the new covenant recipient enjoys with God Himself. It is

⁵⁵ J. Arthur Thompson, "Covenant," in Bromiley, *ISBE* 1:790-91.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 54.7, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

not enough to accept the historicity of the crucifixion; a fact universally recognized throughout the world even among those who refuse to value the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord must be appropriated by faith; the believer must personalize the sacrifice of Christ, as the apostle Paul explained, “I am crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; the life that I now live in the flesh, I live through faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Salvation is identification in the sacrifice of Christ, as the Lord Jesus taught in John 6:51, “I am the living bread . . . and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:32-58). Just as physical bread sustains physical life for physical bodies, so Jesus gives Himself as spiritual bread which sustains spiritual life to all who come to Him (v. 35). Manna was bread from heaven through which God sustained the Mosaic covenant community throughout its wilderness wanderings, and as such it was an illustration of Christ, who is the true bread. This manna was digested to become a part of the bodies of the people of Israel, so Christ for who He is must be incorporated into who we are spiritually (vv. 47-51). Most of those who ate manna on a daily basis for years died in unbelief and never experienced spiritual life (v. 49), but Jesus declared that all who eat His flesh and drink His blood will have eternal life and experience resurrection (v. 54). The Lord pointed out that those who participate in a relationship with Him passes from death to life (vv. 56, 5:24). He explained that true worshipers must come to Him by faith; these believers come because the Father gives them to Christ (vv. 37, 39, 44, 65). This identification to Christ’s vicarious sacrifice produces spiritual life, which is eternal and results in resurrection (vv. 57-58).

The book of Hebrews reveals that as new covenant priests, believers today eat from an altar that Levitical priests serving in the Mosaic covenant tabernacle had no authority to eat from (Heb 13:10). The writer teaches that new covenant participants receive spiritual nourishment available in the sacrifice of Christ, and not physical food that had no spiritual benefit for those who ate it. The tribe of Levi was not given an inheritance with the other tribes in the land of promise, because the sacrifices of the altar

were their portion. The priests and their families ate the offerings that the people of Israel brought in worship to God. This food included the bread of presence⁵⁷ (Exod 25:30, Lev 24:5-7), which provided daily strength and nourishment for the priests as they ministered among the sacrifices. Ahimelech the high priest gave David this bread, although he and those with him were not permitted to eat the priests' food (1 Sam 21:1-6). The Lord Jesus commented on this occasion to teach that a relationship with God is more important than merely observing the letter of the law (Matt 12:1-8).

Ellingworth points out that this change from physical food to spiritual food reveals a complete break between the Mosaic covenant and new covenant sacrifices. He surveys various interpretations of Hebrews 13:10, Roman Catholic scholars generally understand a reference to the Eucharist; however, Thomas Aquinas commented that this verse spoke either of Christ or to His cross. The Jerusalem Bible notes that this passage does not refer to the Eucharist, but either the cross or Christ Himself is in view. Protestants interpret the altar as either Christ Himself, the cross or to the heavenly altar.⁵⁸

B. F. Westcott states that the “altar is the cross on which Christ offered Himself: Christ is the offering: He is Himself the feast of the believer.”⁵⁹ Just as Levitical priests ate of the sacrifices from the altar at the tabernacle for physical strength, so new covenant priests receive spiritual nutrition from the sacrifice of Christ.

The Lord's Supper is a testimony that the participant has appropriated the sacrifice of Christ for themselves in a spiritual way. Eating the bread and drinking the cup becomes an outward demonstration of the inward reality already accomplished in the heart and life of the believer. As a church participates together in this representational meal,

⁵⁷ Literally “bread of the face (of God),” also translated as *showbread*, a word coined by William Tyndale in his 1524 translation of the Greek New Testament (Matt 12:4, Mark 2:26, Luke 6:4, Heb 9:2), from the Greek ἄρτους τῆς προθέσεως (*artous tes protheseos*), or bread of presentation. BDB, “פַּנֶּה,” 815; BDAG, “πρόθεσις,” 706.

⁵⁸ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 709-12.

⁵⁹ Brooke F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 438. See also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 712.

Jesus Himself is the host through His Spirit who is ever present in their midst. The Lord Supper not only celebrates the vertical relationship that the believer enjoys with God, but it also celebrates horizontal relationships shared among other children of God, who have the same heavenly Father. As the Christian community in each locality participates in this bread and cup, it recognizes that the blood and broken body of the Lord Jesus is the sacrifice which provides salvation for the entire new covenant community. This sharing of the one cup and the one bread becomes a witness that the many members of the new covenant community are one body of Christ. Fee explains that the *koinonia* was “a celebration of their common life in Christ, based on the new covenant in his blood that had previously bound them together in union by Christ in his Spirit.”⁶⁰

Ray Van Neste discusses the observance of the Lord’s Supper as a church ordinance. “When you come together as an *ekklesia*” (1 Cor 11:18, 20).

To describe the Lord’s Supper as a church ordinance is to assert that this rite was given to the church to practice and not simply to individual Christians. This is the understanding of the great majority of Christians across the history of the church. The Supper assumes a gathered community each time it is mentioned in the NT.⁶¹

Pennington points out that the new covenant community was the necessary result of inaugurating the new covenant:

To inaugurate a covenant is to form a community. There is no such thing as an “empty covenant,” that is, one devoid of participants. Rather, a covenant is the formation or the re-formation of the people in their relationship to God, making them into a community and indelibly forming their identity.⁶²

He quotes R. T. France, who describes the death of Jesus:

In terms of a “covenant,” a relationship between God and his people, Jesus has directed attention to the new community which is to result from his redemptive death . . . It is as people are associated with him and the benefits of his saving death that they are confirmed as members of the newly reconstituted people of God.⁶³

⁶⁰ Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 469-70.

⁶¹ Ray Van Neste, “The Lord’s Supper in the Context of the Local Church,” in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord’s Supper*, 369.

⁶² Pennington, “The Fourfold Witness of the Gospels,” 53.

⁶³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 994. See also Pennington, “The Fourfold Witness of the Gospels,” 53-54.

We participate in the Lord's Supper
as a new covenant community today

We will participate in the Lord's Supper
as the new covenant community during the
millennium with Christ

The Lord's Supper is a new covenant ordinance to symbolize the sacrifice of Christ. We celebrate this new covenant reality both now and in the future.

Figure 21. The Lord's Supper is celebrated in a church context.

The Lord Jesus promised that He would participate in the Lord's Supper with the entire new covenant community in the millennial kingdom context. "I will no longer eat of it, until the time that it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). "I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (v. 18). As the new covenant is a millennial reality, the new covenant community will be present at that time as well. The sacrifice of Christ will provide for the salvation of believers, who will reside throughout the world. These local communities will participate in the Lord's Supper in the same way that new covenant churches today celebrate the atoning sacrifice of Christ on their behalf. In addition, once a year the global new covenant community will gather together, as Christ Himself will partake in this bread and cup with us. The Lord Jesus promised that He would participate with His Messianic community in His kingdom (Matt 26:29). Paul reminds us that "when He comes" (1 Cor 11:26) to establish His global kingdom, new covenant recipients will gather around Christ for this ultimate celebration.

There are three basic positions concerning eating of Christ's body and drinking His blood: (1) the body of Christ becomes physical food, which believers must physically eat to receive spiritual benefit. In this sacramental view, the bread about which Jesus speaks is distributed to Christians as the Lord's Supper. (2) Christ is our sacrifice, which believers personally receive for salvation. This is a symbolic understanding, which realizes that the Lord used bread and fruit of the vine as a metaphor from everyday life to explain the substitutionary atonement in the sacrifice of His body and blood. (3) Most commentators understand a mediating view, which rejects a sacramental interpretation of eating the

body and drinking the blood of Christ, but recognizes sacramental language in participation of bread and cup.⁶⁴

“The Catholic Church celebrates the Eucharist according to a view called *transubstantiation*, which contends that the elements of bread and wine are changed in substance into Christ’s body and blood.”⁶⁵ The concept of the Eucharist as a sacrifice is found early in church history. Justin Martyr explained the relationship of the bread and cup to the body and blood of Christ: “As Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”⁶⁶ Michael Haykin explains that Justin appears to understand spiritual blessings without specifying how participants receive these benefits from the elements. Justin emphasizes that only baptized believers living in obedience can partake, so to the faithful, these elements become special, more than just ordinary bread and wine.⁶⁷

Ignatius in writing against the heresy of the Docetists explained that they denied the reality of Christ’s body in the Eucharist because they denied the reality of the body of Christ in the incarnation: “They abstain from the Eucharist and prayer, because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by his goodness raised up.”⁶⁸ He equated the elements of bread and cup to the body and blood of Christ: “I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became

⁶⁴ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 236-37.

⁶⁵ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 635.

⁶⁶ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 66, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:185. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 636.

⁶⁷ Michael A. G. Haykin, “‘A Glorious Inebriation’: Eucharistic Thought and Piety in the Patristic Era,” in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord’s Supper*, 107-8.

⁶⁸ Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 7.7-8, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:89. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 638.

afterwards of the seed of David and Abraham; and I desire the drink, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life.”⁶⁹

Tertullian affirmed the bread as symbolic of Christ’s body. He argued against Marcion’s heresy, who also denied the real body of Christ: Jesus “declared plainly enough what He meant by the bread, when He called the bread His own body. He likewise, when mentioning the cup and making the new testament to be sealed ‘in His blood,’ affirms the reality of His body. For no blood can belong to a body which is not a body of flesh.”⁷⁰ Having said that, he understood what affects the body also impacts the soul, “the flesh feeds on the body and blood of Christ, that the soul likewise may fatten on its God.”⁷¹

Augustine taught that Christ was truly present in the bread and cup: “That bread that you see on the altar, sanctified by the Word of God, is Christ’s body. That cup, or rather the contents of the cup, sanctified by the Word of God, is Christ’s blood. By these elements the Lord Jesus willed to convey his body and his blood, which he shed for us.”⁷² However, he also maintained that the bread and cup are symbolic due to the principle of a sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an invisible yet genuine grace. Augustine denied that the bread and blood of Eucharist is identical to the historical body of Christ, but must be spiritually received, that it is “to eat His body and to drink His blood. ‘He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.’ This it is, therefore, for a man to eat that meat and to drink that drink, to dwell in Christ, and to have Christ dwelling in him.”⁷³

He further explained that the Eucharist communicated the unity of the body of Christ:

⁶⁹ Ignatius, *Letter to the Romans*, 7.3, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:77. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 638.

⁷⁰ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 4.40.16-17, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 3:418. See also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 369-70; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 639.

⁷¹ Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, 8, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 3:551. See also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 370; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 639.

⁷² Augustine, *Sermon 227*, in J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1978), 447, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 370; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 640.

Bread is not made from one grain, but from many . . . so too is the wine . . . many grapes hang in a bunch, but the juice of the grapes is poured together in one vessel. That too is how the Lord Christ signified us, how he wished us to belong to him, how he consecrated the sacrament of our peace and unity on his table.⁷⁴

A controversy took place between Radbertus and Ratramnus beginning in 831. Radbertus wrote an essay where he affirmed that the bread and cup “to be clearly the very flesh which was born of Mary, suffered on the cross and rose from the tomb.” He distinguished from the reality the body and blood of Christ, with the figure of the bread and wine. While these elements were not changed during the Eucharist, they still look and taste like bread and wine, yet in reality they are efficaciously changed in consecration to become Christ’s true body and blood.⁷⁵ Ratramnus replied that the body born to Mary currently sits at the Father’s right hand in heaven and that the historical body of Christ and the eucharistic body is not the same. He wrote that the body of Christ in heaven is the reality, but the sacramental body in the Eucharist is a mystery.⁷⁶ The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 officially affirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation for the church, concerning the eucharistic presence of Christ, “His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, having been changed in substance, by God’s power, into his body and blood, so that in order to achieve this mystery of unity we receive from God what he received from us.”⁷⁷

In the 1200s, the Catholic Church began to give only the bread to the laity, while reserving the wine for priests. In handling the cup among the many recipients, the

⁷³Augustine, *Tractates in the Gospel of John, John 6:41-59, Tractate 26.18*, in *NPNF*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature, 1888), 7:173, Logos Software; see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 371; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 641.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Sermon 272*, in vol. 7 of *Works of St. Augustine*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1993), 300-301, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 371; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 641.

⁷⁵ David S. Hogg, “Carolingian Conflict: Two Monks on the Mass,” in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord’s Supper*, 130-35; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 641-42.

⁷⁶ Hogg, “Carolingian Conflict,” 137-43; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 642.

⁷⁷ *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, “Fourth Lateran Council (1215): Canon 1,” ed. Norman P. Tanner, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum12-2.htm>; Gregg R. Allison, “The Theology of the Eucharist according to the Catholic Church,” in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord’s Supper*, 169.

wine could be easily spilled, resulting in desecrating the blood of Christ. The reason given for this practice was that Christ was entirely present in each of the elements, so in taking only the bread the faithful was still provided with all of Christ. John Hus called for both the elements to be given to the members, based on the example of Christ.⁷⁸

John Wycliffe was a strong critic of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. He argued against the bread and wine becoming the actual body and blood of Christ due to the lack of biblical support, as well as the weak support from church history. He proclaimed that the people's worship of the bread was idolatry.

I maintain that among all the heresies which have ever appeared in the church, there was never one that was more cunningly smuggled in by hypocrites than this [transubstantiation], or which in more ways deceives the people; for it plunders them, leads them astray into idolatry, denies the teaching of Scripture, and by this unbelief provokes the Truth himself oftentimes to anger.⁷⁹

Martin Luther rejected the Catholic practice of the Mass and proposed a view of consubstantiation, or sacramental union. Instead of the Catholic doctrine that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ, he taught that that the bread and the body, as well as the wine and the blood remained distinct substances. He held that the body of Christ was present *in, with* and *under* the bread. An illustration could be a sponge: The sponge is not the water, but wherever the sponge is, there is the water too.⁸⁰ The Lutheran position is stated in the Formula of Concord, "We believe, teach and confess that in the Holy Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and essentially present, and are truly distributed and received with the bread and wine."⁸¹

Huldrych Zwingli was influenced by Augustine's teaching that sacraments are external signs of internal grace. He understood that the resurrected body of Christ was in

⁷⁸ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 645-46; Allison, "Theology of the Eucharist," 170-71.

⁷⁹ John Wycliffe, *Trialog*, 4.2.248, in Gotthard Lechler, *John Wycliffe and His English Precursors* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1878), 343, quoted in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 646n.

⁸⁰ Matthew R. Crawford, "On Faith, Signs and Fruits: Martin Luther's Theology of the Lord's Supper," in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord's Supper*, 208-9; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 378; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 647-49.

⁸¹ *Formula of Concord*, "The Lord's Supper," 7.6, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, accessed April 4, 2020, <http://bookofconcord.org/fc-ep.php>; also see Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 379-80.

heaven at the right hand of God, and was necessarily in one place, so the body and blood of Christ could not be also present in various other locations. To Zwingli the statement of Christ was not to be taken literally, “this is My body” meant “this signifies My body.” He stated that the words of Jesus to “do this in remembrance of Me” could only be understood as a symbol or as a memorial. Zwingli commented, “This is one of the clear places which teach us that by eating his flesh and blood Christ simply means believing in one who gave his flesh and blood we might live. It is not eating or seeing or perceiving him who saves, but believing on Him.”⁸²

This view was more than bare memorialism, while Zwingli rejected any teaching that the body and blood of Christ was physically present in the bread and cup, he understood that Christ was spiritually present at the Lord’s Supper. He maintained that the Supper could not be commemorative unless the One being commemorated was present Himself at the feast. Zwingli believed that this spiritual presence was not experienced only at the Lord’s Supper, but was realized whenever a believer practiced communion with Christ at any time. We enter into Christ at salvation, as we look to Christ as our Lord and Savior, and we continue in this spiritual presence, by His Spirit, in our hearts by faith.⁸³

Like Luther and Zwingli, John Calvin denounced the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, and while Lutherans emphasized the objective gift of God in the Eucharist, Zwingli stressed the Lord’s Supper as a memorial to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, now that Jesus was in heaven. Calvin tried to reconcile these two views and was closer in his doctrine to Luther than to Zwingli. In Calvin’s understanding, the Lord’s Supper as a sacrament was a means of grace.⁸⁴

Concerning the Lord’s Supper according to Calvin, Shawn Wright notes three important distinctions that involve the church. First, the church has an important role in

⁸² Huldrych Zwingli, “An Exposition of Faith,” in Bromiley, *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 203, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 379-80.

⁸³ Bruce A. Ware, “The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper in the Theology of Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531),” in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord’s Supper*, 241.

⁸⁴ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 381-83; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 652-54.

nourishing and supporting Christians during this earthly life. The church is the agent that God uses, through Christ's efficacious work and the ministry of the Spirit, to communicate His presence to believers. In Reformed thought, the mission of the church is to proclaim the word and to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper for perfecting God's people.⁸⁵ Second, the Lord's Supper is a means of grace. Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit communicates grace His people by means of the Lord's Supper, along with baptism and the Word.

Strictly speaking, only the Word and the sacraments can be regarded a means of grace, that is, as objective channels which Christ has instituted in the Church . . . these may never be dissociated from Christ, nor from the powerful operation of Holy Spirit, nor from the Church which is the appointed organ for the distribution of the blessings of divine grace.⁸⁶

Third is that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament, an outward sign which can be experienced. There is a sacramental union between the sign and the spiritual reality that is used by the Holy Spirit, and Christians must respond to this union in faith. Sacraments are empty in themselves, but through the Spirit they represent Christ and His benefits to us, as they seal the promise of the gospel to believers. Sacraments cannot seal apart from God's Word; they confirm faith in God as His people hear the Word and see the sacraments.⁸⁷

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is a celebration of two symbolic elements, bread and the fruit of the vine, and the distribution of these elements in the context of the new covenant community. The bread represents the sacrifice of the body of the Lord Jesus on the cross, and the cup commemorates the blood of the new covenant. Allison explains that this ordinance is more than a mere remembrance, the new covenant community participates in

⁸⁵ Shawn D. Wright, "The Reformed View of the Lord's Supper," in Schreiner and Crawford, *The Lord's Supper*, 254.

⁸⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 604-5. See also Wright, "Reformed View of the Lord's Supper," 255.

⁸⁷ Wright, "Reformed View of the Lord's Supper," 254-59.

the body and blood of the Lord, as it celebrates the salvation provided by the vicarious atonement of Christ.⁸⁸

The people of Israel would eat sacrificial animals as they participated in temple worship, so new covenant recipients participate in the sacrifice of Christ for spiritual life, a process that Jesus likened to “eating His body and drinking His blood.” The believer in faith receives God for who He is, as they give themselves to God in exchange; this is our salvation and it is also our spiritual growth. As a community of new covenant priests, Christians receive spiritual nutrition for spiritual life from Christ, just as Levitical priests and the Mosaic covenant community received physical food from the physical altar. At this time, new covenant priests offer spiritual sacrifices through Christ (1 Pet 2:5). The book of Hebrews reminds us to offer the sacrifice of praise to God through Jesus (Heb 13:15). The word translated *praise* is αἰνέσεως (*aineseos*), used only in this verse in the NT; however, the phrase *sacrifice of praise* θυσίαν αἰνέσεως (*thusian aineseos*) is common in the LXX to translate the thanksgiving sacrifice (Lev 7:12-15). We follow the example of our great High Priest who offered a thanksgiving offering as He broke the bread and offered the cup (Luke 22:17-18). Under the Mosaic covenant, the thanksgiving offering was brought with loaves of bread for the Levitical priests to eat, and meat to be eaten in a sacrificial meal. “I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to You and call on the name of Yahweh” (Ps 116:17).

Just as it was the task of the Levitical priests to never allow the fire to die out on the altar (Lev 6:9-13), now new covenant priests continually sacrifice praise to God by confessing His name (Heb 13:15). This worship is ongoing, believers must always be thankful for the forgiveness of sins in the sacrifice of Christ. This sacrifice of praise does not begin or end with the bread and cup, but it is especially appropriate to celebrate together as the new covenant priesthood in sacrifice of thanksgiving at the Lord’s table.

⁸⁸ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 395.

It is important to examine ourselves, so that we do not serve God with defiling sin in our hearts and lives. During the Mosaic covenant, Levitical priests who served with defilement perished before the altar of God (Lev 10:1-2); and in the new covenant, some who participated in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner had perished under God's judgment (1 Cor 11:27-30). God takes His work of redemption seriously and His people must not be careless in our priestly service of worship in response.

The Lord's Supper and water baptism are important to local new covenant communities because the sacrifice of Christ and Spirit baptism are foundational to the new covenant. These ordinances in the local *ekklesia* context are a source of celebration for the reception of the new covenant at this time in the kingdom's spiritual aspect. As the eternal new covenant continues into the future, its new covenant community will continue as well. In the future spiritual/physical aspect of the kingdom of Christ, the new covenant community will continue to celebrate the two foundations of the new covenant with these two ordinances, both in its global and local contexts. Christ Himself will participate in the bread and cup with us in the future aspect of His kingdom (Matt 26:29, Luke 22:18).

CHAPTER 5

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY AND ITS GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY

The new covenant community as an *ekklesia* is primarily a participatory form of government. Although there are religious implications for the *ekklesia* in each of its various contexts, its primary purpose is to discuss issues that concern the citizen body and make decisions binding on the populace it represents. The kingdom of God is a theocracy as God reveals His will through divine laws, and the kingdom is also a democracy as the *ekklesia* determines the best course of action through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This is true today in the spiritual aspect of the kingdom, and it will also be true in the future spiritual/physical aspect of the kingdom. During the millennium, local new covenant communities will govern themselves under the laws of Christ the King, and under the guidance of subordinate new covenant kings.

At the same time that God revealed future glories of the new covenant through the Hebrew prophets, He was beginning to work among the Greek culture, so they would be able to understand and receive new covenant truth that He would reveal to them. God would not reveal His new covenant in Hebrew to Jewish recipients in the land of Israel, but apostles wrote to Christian communities around the Mediterranean Sea using the Greek language. These new covenant communities referred to themselves as *ekklesia*, a common word in the Greek culture for an assembly of citizens to discuss and vote on issues concerning the government of their city.¹

¹ Christopher W. Blackwell, "The Assembly," in *Dēmos: Classical Athenian Democracy*, 2, accessed April 18, 2018, http://www.stoa.org/projects/demos/article_assembly.

Greek City-State *Ekklesia*

Policies of the Greek Civic *Ekklesia*

Greek city-states would muster its citizens to form an army to defend their population. This process would be ἐκ (*ek*, out of) and καλέω (*kaleo*, to call).² By the year 700 BC, city-states were ruled by local kings, who were advised by councils made up of male landowners. These advisory groups were called *ekklesia*, which would meet in the *agora*, an open forum near the market, or a local temple. The authority of these councils slowly increased, so over time they were able to select their rulers and enact laws.³

The development of the *ekklesia* and its accompanying democracy (*demos*, people; *kratia*, rule) was best documented in Athens. Several names became important in the evolution of this system of government; first was Draco (around 621 BC) who allowed all free Athenian men the opportunity to participate in the *ekklesia*, only if they could afford to purchase a set of military armor. Solon (594 BC) opened the *ekklesia* to all Athenian male citizens, regardless of economic status. Cleisthenes (508 BC) established equal rights for all Athenian men and is known as the father of Athenian democracy.⁴

Young men, whose parents were both Athenian citizens, were enrolled at age eighteen, and would be welcome to participate in the *ekklesia* after two years of military duty. The number of Athenian citizens is estimated to be about 30,000 males in 400 BC; women were also citizens, but without political status. The entire population of Athens at that time was around 250,000, but foreigners and slaves had no citizenship rights. The entire citizen body was called the δῆμος (*demos*, people). Due to the number of Athenian citizens, it was impossible for the *demos* to gather in one place at one time, so an *ekklesia* represented the will of the citizen-body.⁵

² Lothar Coenen, "Church," in *NIDNTT*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1:291.

³ John Thorley, *Athenian Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

⁴ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 4.2, 7.3, 21.2, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

⁵ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 42.1; Thorley, *Athenian Democracy*, 71.

The normal location of *ekklesiai* were the *Pnyx*, a prominent hilltop near the Areopagus. The schedule was a forty-day period called a *prytany*; regular *ekklesiai* were held every ten days and a *kuria* (lady) *ekklesia* was held on the fortieth day. An emergency *ekklesia* could be called at any time, especially for news of military victories or defeats. Demosthenes reported that the minimum number necessary for an *ekklesia* to conduct the city's business was six thousand citizens, and according to Aristophanes the first to arrive received three obols (half a day's pay for a laborer) to ensure that even the poor could take time off from work to attend.⁶

The agenda for an *ekklesia* was set by the *boule*, a council of five hundred, which was selected by lot so that each tribe received equal representation. Officials of the *boule* would post the agenda for the assembly ahead of time. This agenda would include confirmation of magistrates, matters of defense, issues of food supply, confiscation of private property and lawsuits involving inheritance rights. The *epistates*, or the leader of the *boule*, would call the *ekklesia* to order and preside over the session. The council would announce the *probouleuma* or resolution, manage the discussion and call for the vote.⁷ Most of the voting would be by a show of hands, but a ballot was reserved for issues which required a quorum of six thousand citizens to pass, such as revoking or restoring citizenship. A white pebble would be used to vote for citizenship, and a black pebble would be a vote against it.⁸

The assembly would open with a religious ritual, such as a sacrifice of small pigs and prayers to honor patron gods and goddesses. Any male citizen could speak at an *ekklesia*; however, due to the number of those wishing to address the assembly, a *kerux* or herald would screen the candidates beforehand. Participants fifty years and older would

⁶ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 43.3; Blackwell, "The Assembly," 6, 7; Thorley, *Athenian Democracy*, 29.

⁷ Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates*, 24.45, trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939); Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae*, 302, in *The Complete Greek Drama*, trans. Eugene O'Neill Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938).

⁸ Thorley, *Athenian Democracy*, 28, 30; Blackwell, "The Assembly," 9.

speak first.⁹ Aeschines lists four disqualifications for a speaker at an *ekklesia*: (1) those that did not support their aged parents, (2) those who proved cowardly in battle, (3) those who had been convicted of prostituting themselves, and (4) those who squandered their inheritance. Any citizen judged unworthy to speak would be labeled *adokimasia* or “unqualified.”¹⁰

Some would be better qualified than others to speak on the various subjects of interest before the assembly. Plato explained that Athenians did not care how handsome or wealthy the speaker might be, they only cared for his expertise. When the resolution concerned construction, they called for a builder; when shipping was the issue, they called for shipwrights or sea captains. Those who spoke outside their expertise were laughed to scorn or shouted down.¹¹

The *ekklesia* conducted foreign policy as it appointed ambassadors, sent out them on missions and received their report when they returned. The assembly also served as the forum to receive ambassadors from elsewhere. In addition, the *ekklesia* made decisions on fiscal matters, such as how to spend surplus funds, whether on military preparations or public festivals. The assembly was careful to investigate accusations of financial irresponsibility. Unpaid debts to the city and defrauding the treasury were common charges which resulted in the loss of citizenship.¹²

One of the greatest honors an *ekklesia* could bestow was a στέφανος (*stephanos*) or a crown. The assembly would vote to award crowns as a reward for some great service to the city. Demosthenes wrote extensively on crowns, because he had received two, one

⁹ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 41.3; Demosthenes, *Against Neaera*, 59, trans. Norman W. DeWitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 89-90.

¹⁰ Aeschines, *Against Timarches*, 1.23, trans. Charles D. Adams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 1.27-32. See also Blackwell, “The Assembly,” 3, 8.

¹¹ Plato, *Protagoras*, 3:319, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Blackwell, “The Assembly,” 2.

¹² Demosthenes, *Against Midias*, 21.173, trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939); *Against Neaera*, 59.4; *Against Timocrates*, 24.45.

for overseeing repairs on fortifications, and another for excellence in managing the public fund. He stated that the location for awarding a crown was the bema located at the *Pnyx*.¹³

The Greek civic assembly provides the context for the use of *ekklesia* in Acts 19:34-41. A group of disorderly silversmiths gathered in the amphitheater to protest the effects of the apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus. The γραμματεὺς (*grammateus*, clerk), whose job was to read all documents during the city *ekklesia*,¹⁴ informed the mob that they were not a lawful assembly, and if they had any legitimate grievance, they had to wait to present their case at the proper *ekklesia* the next time it was in session.

Parallels between the Greek Civic *Ekklesia* and the Christian *Ekklesia*

There seems to be a correlation between the Greek civic *ekklesia* and the apostle Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. It would have been improbable for Greek converts not to understand parallels between the city governmental assembly and the Christian church, due to the fact that the same word was used to designate them both. One of the responsibilities of the city assembly was to determine if there was wrong doing, and should an investigation show that a citizen was guilty of misconduct, his citizenship could be removed by the vote of the *ekklesia*. Paul pointed out the example of the man who was guilty of immorality (1 Cor 5). His judgment was clear, revoke the guilty person's citizenship from the new covenant community (v. 5); however, once he had repented of his sin and requested forgiveness, it was the duty of the *ekklesia* to vote to restore his citizenship rights (2 Cor 2:10).

The apostle Paul stated that it was improper for members of the Christian *ekklesia* to go to the civic *ekklesia* for judgment (1 Cor 6:1-7). God's people are fully qualified to render the proper verdict, and at a future Messianic time, the new covenant *ekklesia* will judge the world, to include evil angels (vv. 2-3). In the Greek city, jurors

¹³ Demosthenes, *On the Crown*, 18.118, trans. C. A. Vince (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926); Blackwell, "The Assembly," 16.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 54.3-5; Blackwell, "The Assembly," 12.

were chosen by lot from the *ekklesia* to form a *δικαστερίων* (*dikasterion*) or a court for a specific case. The decision of the *dikasterion* would have the force of the *demos*, the entire citizen-body.¹⁵ Paul counseled that the new covenant *ekklesia* should appoint jurors from among its members to judge cases among believers (v. 4).

A Greek city assembly began with religious ceremonies, which would include sacrifices and prayers to various gods and goddesses. Aristotle reported that the Athenian assembly considered these sacrifices at the *ekklesiai*, as well as annual festivals, which centered on feasting on the sacrifices, to be important social and cultural occasions.¹⁶ Paul explained that this worship at the civic *ekklesia* and its festivals, sacrificed to demons, and not to God (1 Cor 10:20); however, worship in the new covenant community included the Lord's Supper, which celebrated the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus for them (1 Cor 11:23-28). These first-generation believers had a stark choice, they could either worship demons at the city *ekklesia*, or they could worship God at the Christian *ekklesia* (v. 21).

The Greek civic assembly extended an opportunity to all male citizens to speak their minds. An invitation to address the civic *ekklesia* would be given to those who were qualified and had expertise necessary to discuss the subject matter on the agenda. In the same way, members of the Christian *ekklesia* at Corinth gathered together with something to share (1 Cor 14:26). Each had a psalm, teaching, revelation, language or a translation to speak to the assembly. Paul did not discourage them but gave guidelines so the believers would be encouraged by what was presented. He counseled that there should be only two or three speakers, who would take their turn in order to eliminate confusion in the meeting. If anyone spoke in a language that the assembly did not understand, it must be translated (v. 27). Only men with citizenship could attend the city assembly, but all were welcome to attend the Christian *ekklesia* in equality, both Jews and Gentiles, free and slave, male

¹⁵ Mogens H. Hansen, "The Concepts of *Demos*, *Ekklesia* and *Diakasterion* in Classical Athens," in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 50 (2010): 521.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 54.6; Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 1.23; Blackwell, "The Assembly," 8, 12.

and female (1 Cor 12:13, Gal 3:28); however, women were not allowed to present a message to men in the new covenant assembly (1 Cor 14:34, 35).

Those who wished to discuss the various issues at the civic *ekklesia* were disqualified (*adokimasia*) if they were guilty of scandalous offences. The same was true in the new covenant *ekklesia*, as the apostle Paul explained that he lived a life of discipline, because he did not want to become ἀδόκιμος (*adokimos*, disqualified) after he had proclaimed the truth to others (1 Cor 9:27).

The *bema* of the Athenian *ekklesia* was where speeches were given and the decisions of the assembly were announced. One of the greatest honors the city could bestow was the presentation of a *stephanos* or a crown on this bema. The Christian *ekklesia* has a bema as well, Paul taught that every believer will stand before Christ's bema to receive the results of their life on this earth (2 Cor 5:10). The apostle Paul explained those in the society would compete for a crown that would perish, but those who will receive that honor in the new covenant *ekklesia* would receive an eternal *stephanos* (1 Cor 9:25).

The city state *ekklesia* held the authority for war and peace. This was appropriate because those who voted for war would be called to fight in the military campaign. Two years of military service was prerequisite to participate in the Athenian *ekklesia*. Concerning the Corinthian *ekklesia*, the apostle Paul reminded them that they were engaged in warfare (στρατεύομαι, *strateuomai*, fight in battle); however, the tactics and weapons for Christians are not physical, but spiritual, able to defeat defensive strongholds (2 Cor 10:3-4).

Financial decisions were very important to the city assembly; all matters concerning the treasury, such as taxation and expenditures, required the vote of the city *ekklesia*. Public debt to the treasury was a common reason to lose one's citizenship, and paying for a public works project out of personal funds was often rewarded with a crown. The Christian *ekklesia* was concerned about finances as well. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had made a pledge to help poor believers in Jerusalem a year earlier, and he wanted

the new covenant community to collect the money in the meantime so that everything would be ready when he arrived (2 Cor 8:11, 9:2-8).

The apostle Paul explained that an unnamed brother was chosen by the assemblies to travel with Paul and Titus in order to bring the gift to its destination (2 Cor 8:19). The word “chosen” is χειροτονηθεὶς (*cheirotoneis*, a show of hands), it is also used in Acts 14:23 as Barnabas and Paul appointed elders in every *ekklesia*. This same word described the voting in the civic *ekklesia* as Aristotle wrote that in Athens “people were not attending the assembly, so the officials kept contriving a number of devices to get the multitude to attend for the passing of the resolution by show of hands (*cheirotonias*).”¹⁷

The city *ekklesia* was an important institution in its culture, and Greek ethnic believers would be sure to realize many parallels with the Christian *ekklesia* planted in the same locality. Both had a legal basis for existing, the Athenian *ekklesia* had an extensive constitution as recorded by Aristotle, and the constitution for the Christian *ekklesia* is the new covenant. Both were governmental bodies that welcomed discussion, and participants had an equal vote in the decision-making process. However, because the Greek city *ekklesia* was not understood to be an enduring institution, it becomes problematic to claim that the NT took this word directly from the Greek culture to refer to the church as a permanent, even global group identity. Between the development of the Greek *ekklesia* and the Christian *ekklesia*, Jewish sources expanded the meaning of the word to include a broader semantic range. The LXX and Philo presented *ekklesia* as the entire ethno-religious nation of Israel. First generation Christians would naturally understand *ekklesia* from a Jewish context, rather than directly from the Greek culture alone.¹⁸

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 41.3.

¹⁸ Ralph J. Korner, *The Origin and Meaning of Ekklesia in the Early Jesus Movement* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2017), 8. Korner states, Jewish sources use *ekklesia* with a broader semantic range than Greek sources. Some writers use *ekklesia* for public civic-style assemblies, while at least two Jewish literary works expand the concept of *ekklesia* to include a permanent group identity. The LXX presents *ekklesia* as the entire ethno-religious nation of Israel. Philo identifies *ekklesia* as a semi-public association of diasporic Jews in Egypt. (2)

Mosaic Covenant *Ekklesia*

Qahal as a Covenant Community

The word קָהָל (*qahal*) is found in the Hebrew Scriptures to mean an “assembly, assembled group of people.”¹⁹ This word is often used with a generic meaning; for example, a company of nations (Gen 35:11), a group of evil doers (Ps 26:15), a formation of angels (Ps 89:5), or a gathering of dead people (Prov 21:16).²⁰ In the Pentateuch, *qahal* often refers to the entire population of Israel as they were gathered together in the wilderness. “Why have you brought us into this wilderness to kill this entire *qahal* with hunger?” (Exod 16:3).

In Leviticus, this word took on a heightened sense as the *qahal* was the focus of the sacrificial system. The *qahal* was the Mosaic covenant community as it would offer sacrificial offerings, and these animal sacrifices would provide atonement for the entirety of the covenant participants. “No one will be in the tabernacle from the time Aaron goes into the Holy Place until he comes out, and he has made an atonement for himself, his household and the entire *qahal* of Israel [the whole community of Israel—NIV]” (Lev 16:17, also see 4:13,14, 21; 16:33).

It is easy to visualize the gathering of people around the tabernacle in the wilderness, as the high priest sprinkled blood on the ark of the covenant on the Day of Atonement; however, everyone in the Mosaic covenant community would benefit in the atonement whether they were gathered around the tabernacle or not. In the land, Jews would gather around the tabernacle at Shiloh or later at the temple in Jerusalem as the *qahal*, which would represent the entire covenant community. Even Jews of diaspora scattered around the Mediterranean and in Mesopotamia at a future time would receive spiritual benefit from the atonement provided to the covenant community through these ritual sacrifices.

¹⁹ H.P. Muller, “קָהָל *qahal*,” in *TLOT*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 2:1118-19, 1125.

²⁰ BDB, “קָהָל,” 874-75.

In Deuteronomy, Moses linked the “the day of the *qahal*” with the ratification of the covenant at Sinai (Deut 9:10; also 10:4; 18:16). He recounted the occasion when he read the stone tablets of the covenant, to which the people of God responded, “All that Yahweh has said we will do!” Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant on the tablets and all the people, and the covenant became official (Exod 24:7-8).

Israel became the community which Yahweh had established, bound by the laws He had commanded and recipients of the covenant He had ratified. Israel became a covenant community with two foundations: the book of the covenant and the blood of the covenant. The book of the covenant (Torah) was necessary to explain God’s standard of holiness, and a system of animal sacrifices was needed as a means of ceremonial cleansing to restore their relationship with God when His standards were not met.²¹



Foundations:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. The book of the covenant (Torah) | Outside of the Mosaic covenant |
| 2. The blood of the covenant (Animal sacrifices) | and not a part of its community |

The Mosaic covenant from Sinai to the cross had a covenant community identified by the Hebrew word *qahal*.

Figure 22. The Mosaic covenant community.

Of special interest is the Hebrew phrase *בְּקַהֲלֵי יְהוָה* (*biqhal YHWH*) (Deut 23:1-9).²² The *qahal* of Yahweh had a restricted membership; men who were emasculated, those of illegitimate birth and descendants of Lot (Ammonites and Moabites) were

²¹ Coenen, “Church,” 1:291.

²² The phrase *biqhal YHWH* is used 13 times in the OT (Num 16:3; 20:4; Deut 23:2-4; 1 Chr 28:8; Mic 2:5). Jack Lewis, “קָהָל,” in *TWOT*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:790.

never allowed to become part of the covenant people. Descendants of Esau and Egyptians could be accepted in their third generation. Peter Craigie comments that this *qahal* of Yahweh “refers to the covenant people of God, particularly when they are gathered in his presence.” He further comments that God instructed Moses concerning resident aliens living among the people of Israel, that they could receive full citizenship rights, under specified conditions.²³

Deuteronomy 23:1-9 is used as a basis to prohibit marriage to Jewish people. Rabbis did not permit *spadones* (emasculated persons), *mamzers* (persons born of illicit unions), Ammonites or Moabites to marry women of Israel, as well as Egyptians or people of Edom to the third generation. Rabbis would permit any proselyte to marry an Israelite, if they did not suspect that they were descendants of any nation forbidden in the Bible.²⁴

All descendants of Jacob were placed in this covenant relationship due to physical birth. This was a national covenant to an ethnic community based on a common ancestry. People from other ethnic groups could become part of this community as they would accept for themselves the provisions of the Mosaic covenant. Although proselytes would not share the physical ancestry from Jacob and Abraham, they would receive full participation in the covenant as they would identify with Israel as the people of God.

Hayim Donin explains that this covenant with God is what sets Israel apart from other people. He emphasizes that Jewish people have never been able to fit into convenient social groupings, such as nation, race or religion used to categorize others. Jews are all these and more, they are unique because of covenant, and the Torah is their Divine constitution.²⁵ Donin points out that “a child born to a non-Jewish mother, regardless of who the father is, has the status of a non-Jew according to Jewish law.”²⁶

²³ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 296.

²⁴ Solomon Schechter and Julius H. Greenstone, “Marriage Laws,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1906), 8:348.

²⁵ Donin, *To Be a Jew*, 8-9.

²⁶ Donin, *To Be a Jew*, 281-84.

A person born to a Jewish mother is a Jew regardless of belief or manner of life; but a non-Jew can receive the process of conversion, which is to accept the yoke of the commandments. At that time, the proselyte is adopted into the Jewish family and becomes indistinguishable from others of the people of Israel.

An individual's spiritual destiny was not a condition of the Mosaic covenant. Those inside the Mosaic covenant and its community, but remained unconverted, included King Saul (1 Sam 15:23), King Ahab (1 Kgs 16:30), Judas Iscariot (Mark 14:21), as well as the entire unbelieving generation who died in the wilderness (Heb 3:7-17). Believers in OT times who remained outside the Mosaic covenant community included the men of Nineveh (Matt 12:41), the queen of Sheba (Matt 12:42), the widow of Zarephath (Luke 4:26), Naaman (Luke 4:27) and the magi (Matt 2:1-2). Participation in the Mosaic covenant and its covenant community did not equate to spiritual life, and various people of other ethnicities manifested a love for God while remaining outside the Mosaic covenant community. A relationship with Israel did not equal a relationship with God.

The people of Israel continued as the *qahal* as they settled in the promised land. The covenant community was represented by the *qahal* as they gathered for annual feasts, and the *qahal* would also be summoned for special situations and emergencies to receive the latest news, discuss options and decide on the way ahead. Jack Lewis notes, "In these cases *qahal* designates a gathering less than the totality of the people of God."²⁷ That may be true, but the decisions of this representative *qahal* were binding on the whole of the covenant community.

Joshua read the scroll of Moses to the *qahal* of Israel (Josh 8:35). In the time of the Judges, the *qahal* of the people of God decided to declare war on the tribe of Benjamin. The *qahal* also decided not to give their daughters as wives to the men of Benjamin. Because of this, the leaders of Israel had to resort to creative maneuvering to undo their ill-advised, but irrevocable decision (Judg 20:2; 21:5, 8).

²⁷ Lewis, "קהל," 2:1991.

David consulted the *qahal* of Israel when he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chr 13:2, 4). He also included the *qahal* of Yahweh in the planning process to prepare for building the temple (1 Chr 28:8, 29:1; 1 Kgs 8:14). When the construction was finished, Solomon blessed the *qahal* of Israel at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 6:3; 1 Kgs 8:22). Jereboam and the *qahal* of Israel decided to separate from Judah and its king Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12:3). Jehoshaphat with the *qahal* of Judah sought God's will when they were threatened by armies from Ammon and Moab (2 Chr 20:5). The *qahal* determined that Joash would reign because he was of David's dynasty (2 Chr 23:3). Hezekiah with the *qahal* restored temple worship after the disastrous reign of Ahaz (2 Chr 29:23).

Following the return from the exile under the leadership of Ezra, the *qahal* numbered 42,360 (Ezra 2:64) and decided that Jewish men would divorce their unbelieving, non-Israelite wives (10:1-14). Nehemiah read the scroll of Moses to the people, who learned that Ammonites and Moabites were restricted from the *qahal* of God, so they separated the foreigners from Israel (Neh 13:1-3). This important reference equates the *qahal* of Nehemiah's day with Deuteronomy 23:1-9 as the Mosaic covenant community. F. Charles Fensham understands the congregation of God, *qahal haelohim* (the only time *qahal* is connected with *Elohim* in the OT), to refer to public worship; however, he also sees a wider sense which would exclude foreigners from the community of Israel.²⁸

In the OT, *qahal* was used for the entire Mosaic covenant community and it also designated a legislative or judicial assembly, where participants were able to discuss issues of importance to the covenant community, and make decisions binding on the entire population that they represented.

²⁸ F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 259-60.

LXX Use of *Ekklesia*

About one hundred fifty years before Christ, Jewish scholars in Egypt began translating the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language. This translation was called the *Septuagint*, or “seventy” in Greek for the number of translators who were reported to have accomplished this effort. By the time of Christ and the apostles, this translation was universally used among Greek-speaking Jews dispersed throughout the Roman Empire.²⁹

In the LXX, the word *ekklesia* is found 73 times in canonical books and 13 times in the Apocrypha, always to translate *qahal* (except in 1 Sam 1:20 where the translator apparently misread the Hebrew). In Genesis through Numbers, the noun *ekklesia* is not found at all,³⁰ and the parallel between the *qahal* of Israel and the Greek city-state *ekklesia* as a legislative or judicial assembly was apparently first noticed by the LXX translator of the book of Deuteronomy.³¹

Both the Hebrew *qahal* and the Greek civic *ekklesia* were governmental assemblies where citizens were summoned to discuss issues of importance to the citizen body and make decisions binding on the populace they represented. By translating *qahal* as *ekklesia*, the LXX translators understood that democratic principles pioneered by Greek city-states in 700-600 BC were firmly established in Israel seven hundred years earlier. In about 1400 BC, the people of Israel, under the Mosaic covenant, made their own decisions under the rule of God; also by translating *qahal* as *ekklesia*, beginning with the translator of Deuteronomy, the LXX expanded the use of the word *ekklesia* into more than just a public gathering of citizens for city government, which was the classical Greek meaning. The *ekklesia* of Israel was its covenant community as an ethno-religious nation, with clearly defined citizenship restrictions and a representative assembly, where

²⁹ S. K. Soderlund, “Septuagint,” in *ISBE*, rev. ed., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 4:400.

³⁰ Moisés Silva, ed., “ἐκκλησία,” in *NIDNTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 2:135.

³¹ Fenton J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897). Hort discusses, “The word itself (*ekklesia*) is a common one in classical Greek, and was adopted by the LXX translators from Deuteronomy onwards (not in the earlier books of the Pentateuch) as their usual rendering of *qahal*.” (3-4)

its leadership would deliberate on various options and decide on the best course of action for entire populace.³²

The Hebrew title קֹהֵלֶת (*qohelet*) comes from the word *qahal*; the LXX translates this word as *ekklesiasties*.³³ The *Qohelet* teaches the *qahal* (LXX *ekklesia*). A key verse equates this covenant community with הָאָמ (*ha-am*, the people), “because Qohelet was still wise, he taught knowledge to *the people*” (Eccl 12:9).

The Hebrew uses two words for the gathering of the people of Israel or their representatives; עֵדָה (*edah*, 149 occurrences) and קָהָל (*qahal*, 123 occurrences).³⁴ The word *edah* is often a synonym of *qahal*; and both *edah* and *qahal* are usually translated by *assembly* and *congregation* interchangeably in English versions. The word *edah* is more common than *qahal* in the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges, except that it is totally absent from Deuteronomy. In the latter books, *edah* almost goes out of use; in contrast, *qahal* is often found in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and the Prophets.³⁵ The word *edah* is used once in the LXX as $\sigma\upsilon\sigma\tau\rho\omicron\phi\eta$ (*sustrophe*, a swarm [of bees]) (Judg 14:8), otherwise it is translated by $\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\eta$ (*sunagoge*).³⁶ In classical Greek, a *sunagoge* was a gathering with a religious sense, usually a society to worship heroes, such as Hercules. It could also be a guild or a festal gathering, such as a community feast, which always included sacrifices and worship to patron gods and goddesses.³⁷

In summary, the Hebrew word *edah*, as a community defined in religious terms, was translated by *sunagoge*, a gathering with a religious sense; however, *qahal* as a

³² Korner, *Origin and Meaning of Ekklesia*, 8-11.

³³ This word occurs 7 times in Eccl (1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10). Craig G. Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 103.

³⁴ “Statistical Appendix,” in Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT*, 3:1441-42.

³⁵ Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, 6-7.

³⁶ Sauer, “*edah*,” in Jenni and Westermann, *TLOT*, 2:552-53.

³⁷ Wolfgang Schrage, “ $\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\omega\gamma\eta$,” *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittle, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7:800-801.

community defined in governmental or judicial terms³⁸ was most often translated in both classical Greek and the LXX by *ekklesia*, as a constitutional assembly of citizens with voting rights.

John Hammett points out that both words, *edah* and *qahal*, refer to the people of God in the Hebrew Bible. He comments that early Christians identified with the term *ekklesia*, which the Greek-speaking Jews used to designate God's OT people. The alternative was *sunagoge*, which was already associated with Jewish worship and study of the law, although this word was used once in James 2:2 referring to Christian worship.³⁹

Philo's Use of *Ekklesia*

Philo was a Jew of Alexandria, Egypt, born in 20 BC and died in AD 50, who lived during the public ministry of the Lord Jesus. He used the word *ekklesia* 23 times in his writings;⁴⁰ of these occurrences, 14 are a commentary on Deuteronomy 23.⁴¹ The *ekklesia* of God (ἐκκλησίαν θεοῦ) in Philo's writing was the covenant community of Israel, not the representative gathering at the temple in Jerusalem. He used the word *πανήγυρις* (*paneguris*) to describe worship gatherings at Jewish festivals. He understood himself to be a member of the *ekklesia*, although he never visited Jerusalem (*On Joseph*.73). During a discussion on Melchizedek, who willingly brought bread and wine to Abraham, in distinction to Ammon and Moab, who refused to give bread and water to Israel during

³⁸ Coenen, "Church," 1:295.

³⁹ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 26-27.

⁴⁰ "Works of Philo," accessed August 18, 2018, <http://khazarzar.skeptik.net/books/philo/>; "Philo of Alexandria," trans. Charles Yonge, accessed August 18, 2018, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com>.

⁴¹ Philo discussed Deut 23 in 14 occurrences; *Allegorical Interpretation*, III.8, 81(2x); *On the Posterity of Cain*.177; *On the Unchangeableness of God*.111; *On Drunkenness*.213 (2x); *On the Confusion of Languages*.144 (2x); *On the Migration of Abraham*.69 (2x); *On the Change of Names*.204; *On Dreams*.2.184; *On Virtues*.106; other uses of *ekklesia*, *On Dreams*.2.187 (God is the Guide and Father of men in the *ekklesia*); *On Joseph*.73 (Philo understood himself to be a member of the *ekklesia*); *On the Decalogue*.45 (Moses summoned the *ekklesia* at Sinai to declare to Israel the commandments of God); *Special Laws* 2.44 (the Greek civic *ekklesia*); *On the Eternity of the World*.13 (the gathering of Greek gods on Olympus).

the wilderness wanderings, Philo wrote that the people of Ammon and Moab are of a negative disposition. They took no notice of God because of a focus on the outward sense of existing things, and due to this hostile mindset, they are excluded from *ekklesia* (*Allegorical Interpretation* III.81). He commented that many are like spiritual eunuchs, barren in virtue and unproductive in wisdom. They are destitute of faith, and as the result are restricted from *ekklesia* of the Lord (*On Drunkenness*.213).

Philo contrasted true children of God with the offspring of other gods. Just as Moses expelled illegitimate children from the *ekklesia* of God, so those who are false and do not know the Creator Father are outside the city that God is building (*On the Confusion of Languages*.144). He compared unclean reptiles with those who worship a multitude of gods in rejection of the one, true God. These unbelievers are a race of unclean reptiles, spiritually speaking, and as the law of Moses rejected physical reptiles as unclean, it also banished spiritually unclean people from the holy *ekklesia*. He equated those who worship no God as spiritual eunuchs, those who worship many gods as spiritually illegitimate, and the *ekklesia* as those who worship the one true God as Father (*Migration of Abraham*.69).

He welcomed Egyptians to the Jewish worship of God, based on Deuteronomy 23:8. If any were willing to forsake their customs and to accept the constitution of the Jews, they would be admitted in the third generation into the *ekklesia*, and equality with God's chosen people (*On Virtues*.106). In Philo's understanding, the *ekklesia* is the covenant community of Israel, which includes all who worship God in truth.⁴²

Josephus' Use of *Ekklesia*

Josephus related the history of Israel in his *Antiquities of the Jews*. He became important due to the fact that he was born in Jerusalem AD 37, and died in Rome AD 100.

⁴² Paul Trebilco, "Why Did the Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία?" *New Testament Studies*, 57, no. 3 (July 2011): 440-60. Trebilco notes that Philo used ἐκκλησία 23 times, with 19 references to Israel. He focused on Deut 23 and understood the community of Israel to be an ἐκκλησία, to which he identified personally. (448)

He explained Jewish history and customs to the Romans, written in Greek,⁴³ during the lifetime of the apostles.

Josephus related that the people of Israel would come together as an *ekklesia* at important occasions in its history. Moses called an *ekklesia* to present the covenant of God to Israel (III.5.3). He called an *ekklesia* to select twelve spies to search out the land (III.14.1), who gave a bad report to the *ekklesia* upon their return (III.14.3). He confronted Korah while in an *ekklesia* (IV.2.4). Moses also gathered the *ekklesia* to rehearse the covenant before his death (IV.8.1). Joshua gathered Israel together as an *ekklesia* at Shiloh when he was old to encourage the people to remain faithful to God (V.1.20). He also called an *ekklesia* to respond to the altar that the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh set up on the opposite side of the Jordan (V.1.25).

Samuel called an *ekklesia* when Israel demanded a king, to determine if this was due to misconduct on his part (VI.5.5). When Saul came to Naioth to arrest David for meeting with Samuel, he found an *ekklesia* of prophets, and prophesied himself at that time (VI.11.5). Solomon dedicated the temple with the *ekklesia* by a great feast (VIII.4.5). Rehoboam assembled an *ekklesia* to respond to the mutiny of the ten northern tribes (VIII.8.3). Jezebel called an *ekklesia* in Ahab's name to falsely accuse Naboth (VIII.13.8). Ahab also called an *ekklesia* to respond to the harsh demands of the king of Syria (VIII.14.1). Jehoshaphat called an *ekklesia* when he learned that an army from Moab and Ammon was attacking across the Dead Sea (XI.1.2). When the army of the northern kingdom of Israel defeated Ahaz, a prophet warned the *ekklesia* in Samaria, who released the captives from Judah and returned the spoils that had been taken (IX.12.2). Nehemiah called an *ekklesia* in Jerusalem to discuss his plans to rebuild the walls (XI.5.7). Esther sent a message to Mordecai requesting him to call an *ekklesia* of the Jews to pray and fast for her (XI.6.7). Herod gathered an *ekklesia* at Jerusalem to announce he would cancel a

⁴³ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, ed. B. Niese, accessed August 21, 2018, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0145>; *Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.

fourth of their taxes for the year. The people responded with gladness and wished the king great happiness (XVI.2.4).

Josephus understood *ekklesia* in the definition of the Greek city-state as a designated leader would call an official meeting to announce news, discuss the issues and make a decision. Once its purpose was fulfilled, the *ekklesia* was disbanded, dissolved or dismissed. He based the *ekklesia* on a legal foundation and wrote that the law of Moses was the constitution of Israel,⁴⁴ “This was the form of political government which was left us by Moses . . . These are the constitutions of Moses, and the Hebrew nation still live according to them” (IV.8.44).

Stephen’s Use of *Ekklesia*

Stephen used the LXX as his Bible as a Greek-speaking Jew, so it was natural for him to refer to the people of Israel as the *ekklesia*. “This is he [Moses] who was with the *ekklesia* in the wilderness, as the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai” (Acts 7:38). He was referring to the occasion when God sent His angel to guide Israel along their journey (Exod 23:20-23). The covenant community was not obedient following the ratification of the covenant in Exodus 24:7-8, and a covenant meal before Yahweh in Exodus 24:11, but made a golden calf in Exodus 32, as Stephen explained in verses 39-40. The LXX translated this use of *qahal* as *sunagoge* (Exod 23:20); however, Stephen understood this community to be an *ekklesia*. Schrage comments, “It is of interest that though ἐκκλησία is not used in Exod—Num, the wilderness community is an ἐκκλησία Acts 7:38.”⁴⁵ He explains that in

⁴⁴ Trebilco notes that Josephus used *ekklesia* 48 times in his writings, but *sunagoge* only 8 times, with 6 of those occurrences referring to a building (*Ant* 19.300, 305 (x2); *Jewish Wars* 2.285, 289, 7.44). He further notes that Josephus used *ekklesia* in passages where the LXX used *sunagoge*, thereby completely avoiding the mention of *sunagoge* as the community of Israel. Examples include Lev 8:3 with *Ant* 3.188; Num 10:2 with *Ant* 3.292; Num 16:2 with *Ant* 4.22; in Num 16, the LXX used *sunagoge* 17 times, but in Josephus’ account (*Ant* 4.14-58), he used *ekklesia* 4 times and never used the word *sunagoge*. Trebilco concludes that Josephus only used *sunagoge* as a Jewish location for worship, he then reserved *ekklesia* for the context of the political language of Israel and its constitution. “It would be logical for Josephus to use the political term ἐκκλησία of Israel then and to avoid using συναγωγή which was not used for a political assembly.” (Trebilco, “Early Christians Call Themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία,” 448)

⁴⁵ Schrage, “συναγωγή,” 7:829.

the time of primitive Christianity, the word *sunagoge* had become restricted to a building for Jewish worship and study of the Mosaic law, while *ekklesia* could be used of both a local congregation and the entire community.⁴⁶

	Greek civic <i>Ekklesia</i>	Mosaic covenant <i>Ekklesia</i>	New covenant <i>Ekklesia</i>
Governmental Authority	X	X	X
Discussion of Issues	X	X	X
Decisions Binding on Populace	X	X	X
Representative Assembly	X	X	X
Covenant Community		X	X

The *ekklesia* has the function of representative government in various contexts.

Figure 23. Comparison of Greek, Mosaic and New Covenant *Ekklesiai*.

The New Covenant *Ekklesia*

The mission of the new covenant community is to provide authority for the kingdom of God through a participatory form of government in the current spiritual aspect of the kingdom and in the future millennial aspect of the kingdom as well.

Kingdom Announcement

John the Baptist came to prepare Israel for the coming of the Messiah. He understood the many prophecies that the Messiah would bring the Spirit and fire at the beginning of the kingdom age, so he emphasized that the people of Israel must prepare themselves for that day.⁴⁷ Physical descent from Abraham and resulting participation in the Mosaic covenant did not automatically guarantee acceptance into the coming kingdom (Matt 3:7-10). He proclaimed that there were two types of people: the worthy were like

⁴⁶ Schrage, “συναγωγῆ,” 7:829; also see Karl Schmidt, “ἐκκλησία,” in Kittle, *TDNT*, 3:518.

⁴⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959). Ladd states, “John the Baptist had announced the coming of the Kingdom of God (Matt 3:2) by which he understood the coming of the Kingdom foretold in the Old Testament.” (53-54) Also see Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface between Dispensational & Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 83.

wheat to be welcomed into the kingdom, but those who were judged as unworthy would be like chaff and burned up instead of experiencing God's promises (v. 12). John practiced baptism in water so people could demonstrate in a visual way that they were prepared for the Messiah to baptize them in His Holy Spirit at the beginning of His kingdom (v. 11). John preached that the baptism the Messiah would bring would be in the Holy Spirit and fire⁴⁸ (Matt 3:11, Luke 3:16). He understood that the Messiah would pour out His Spirit on everyone (Joel 2:28, 29), and this Spirit of Yahweh would be a fire among the people (Mal 3:2), just like He was during the wilderness wandering (Num 11:1, 16:35). The worthy would be refined in the process (Zech 13:9), but the unworthy would face judgment.⁴⁹

John the Baptist understood the kingdom to mean the rule of the Messiah on earth as prophesied in the OT; however, contrary to expectations, Jesus did not bring His baptism of Spirit and fire to defeat the wicked and establish a kingdom of righteousness on this earth as John had announced. From his prison John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus if He was truly the Messiah, or should they look for someone else instead (Matt 11:2-3). Jesus responded that He was fulfilling Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1, 2 in ways that only the Messiah could do. John was not mistaken in his understanding of the kingdom; Christ will fulfill all prophecies according to His timing, but first He would gather kingdom citizens from times and places that John could not have imagined.

⁴⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 14. Dunn comments,

Two things must be noted. First, the future baptism is a single baptism in Holy Spirit and fire, the *év* embracing both elements. There are not two baptisms envisaged, one with Spirit and one with fire, only one baptism in Spirit-and-fire. Second, the two baptisms (John's and the Coming One's) are to be administered to the same people. . . . one undergoes John's water-baptism with a view to and in preparation for the Messianic Spirit-and-fire baptism. . . . The repentant therefore submits to John's baptism in order that when the greater one has come he may receive the greater baptism, for only thus and then will he be initiated into the Messianic kingdom. (11)

⁴⁹ Dunn further comments,
That fire means judgment is certain, but in Jewish eschatology fire not only symbolized the destruction of the wicked, it could also indicate the purification of the righteous . . . just as Malachi spoke both of a refining fire and of destructive fire (3:2-3; 4:1). . . . In short then, the baptism in Spirit-and-fire was not to be something gentle and gracious, but something which burned and consumed, not something experienced by only Jew or only Gentile, only repentant or only unrepentant, but by all. . . . For the unrepentant, it would mean total destruction. For the repentant it would mean a refining and purging away of all evil and sin which would result in salvation and qualify to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic kingdom. (Dunn, *Baptism in the Spirit*, 12-13)

Jesus proclaimed the same message as John the Baptist in Matthew 25:31-46. When He comes in His glory, He will gather the ethnic groups before Him to separate the worthy from the unworthy. As King, He will tell the worthy, “Come, who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you” (v. 34), but those who are judged to be unworthy will experience fire (v. 41).

The message of the kingdom was the central theme during the public ministry of the Lord Jesus. He came at a time of great interest in Israel concerning the kingdom of God on this earth.⁵⁰ Jesus presented Himself as the fulfillment to the prophetic promise of Messianic salvation.⁵¹ After reading Isaiah 61:1-2, which announced the characteristics of the Messianic age, He proclaimed, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21). He was the King, whose Person equaled the presence of the kingdom.⁵²

Christ taught that His kingdom stood in opposition to the kingdom of Satan. Following His baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil. Satan took Him to the top of a high mountain and showed Him the all the kingdoms of the world (Matt 4:8). The devil promised to give the Lord all these things, if He would fall down and worship him. Satan explained that authority had been handed over to him, and he could give it to anyone he wished (Luke 4:6). Jesus did not dispute the accuracy of Satan’s claim, but simply stated that Yahweh alone is worthy of worship (v. 8).

When the Jewish leadership claimed that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan, the Lord answered, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the

⁵⁰ *Assumption of Moses*, a first century anonymous Jewish writing: “For the Most High will arise, the Eternal God alone, and He will appear to punish the Gentiles, and He will destroy all their idols. Then you, O Israel, shall be happy, and you shall mount upon the necks and wings of the eagle, and they shall be ended. And God will exalt you” (chap. 10), accessed September 30, 2018, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/index.php?id=2124>. Ladd comments that the mention of the eagle is a possible reference to Rome. George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 109.

⁵¹ Ladd presents God’s kingdom as an “already, but not yet” construct. The kingdom of God is both a present spiritual reality (Matt 12:28), and also a future realm in which God’s people will participate as Christ returns to earth (2 Pet 1:11). Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 16-17.

⁵² “The distinctive feature of Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of God is not that he brought a new doctrine of the kingdom, or revolutionized people’s apocalyptic and Messianic expectations, but that he made the kingdom of God inseparable from his own person. Jesus himself spoke only of the kingdom of God, which he tied up inextricably with his own person. Only in this sense did he declare it to be already present.” “βασιλεύς,” in *NIDOTTE*, 1:488-89.

kingdom of God has come to you” (Matt 12:28). Christ countered that if Satan was casting out his subordinate angels, then his kingdom would be divided and could not stand (v. 26).

The Lord Jesus explained that Satan was defeated in His cross, “Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from this earth, I will draw all to Myself” (John 12:31, 32). The apostle Paul wrote that Christ stripped down the evil rulers and authorities in His cross, and He made a show of them publicly in a parade of triumph (Col 2:15). The ultimate victory over Satan’s kingdom is assured, and this realm of darkness is only temporary. Paul also pointed out that Satan as the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot understand the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Cor 4:4). The devil is the spirit now at work in the children of disobedience (Eph 2:2); however, the Lord Jesus opens the eyes of those who believe in Him, that they may turn from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18).

The present condition of the kingdom is described in the parable of the sower (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43). The field is the world, and the wheat is kingdom people. Christ sows good seed, the devil sows weeds and God allows both to grow together until the harvest at the end of the age. Those who are worthy will be gathered into the physical aspect of the kingdom, while those who are unworthy will be burned (Matt 13:24-30).

Jesus presented His kingdom as personalized to the individual. He said, “Truly I say to you, unless you transition to become as little children, you will not enter into the kingdom” (Matt 18:3).⁵³ He explained to Nicodemus that no one can enter the kingdom without a transformative ministry of Holy Spirit. He pictured this work of the Spirit to be a new birth, the believer receives spiritual life and a personal relationship with God (John 3:3-8). Jesus likened the Holy Spirit to the wind, no one can tell where He comes from or where He is going (v. 8). The Spirit works in hearts and lives in ways that are often not recognized by others. The Lord Jesus taught, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, “Look, here it is or there it is! For, look, the kingdom of God

⁵³ Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 169.

is inside you” (Luke 17:21).⁵⁴ It is impossible to tell strictly by outward evidence who has truly given their allegiance to Christ at this time, and each one who accepts Him as King experiences the reality of God’s kingdom. Jesus discussed His kingdom with Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world, if My kingdom were of this world, My subordinates would fight so that I would not be betrayed to the Jews, but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). John’s Gospel presents Christ and those who believe in Him as being in the world, but not of the world. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus explained that a person must be born again (or from above) by the Spirit to see the kingdom (3:7, 8). In His discussions with the Jewish leadership, Jesus testified that they were from below, but He was from above; they were of this world, but He was not of this world (8:23). In the upper room, during His prayer to the Father, Jesus confessed that His disciples were in this world, but they were not of this world, just as He was not of this world (17:14, 16).⁵⁵

The foundation of God’s kingdom is the presence of the King and the power of the Spirit, both have their origins in eternity; while the basis for human life and government is the earth. Humanity naturally has an earthly existence due to physical birth which results in physical death. This earthly existence is characterized spiritual death which results in spiritual separation from God forever. Our only hope is for the Holy Spirit to apply the sacrifice of Christ to our hearts and lives, thereby cleansing our sins and granting spiritual life. In this new existence, not of this world, the believer receives citizenship in God’s kingdom. We are transferred from the authority of darkness into the kingdom of the Son (Col 1:13). We cease from being earthlings, although we still reside on this earth, we are

⁵⁴ This translation depends of the meaning of the word ἐντός (*entos* inside). This word is used twice in the NT, here and in Matt 23:26 “First clean the *inside* of the cup.” Many English versions translate this verse as “The kingdom of God is in your midst” for theological reasons. If Jesus had wanted to say “in the midst,” He would have used ἐν μέσῳ (*en meso*, in [the] midst), used 33 times in the four gospels. See Luke 22:27, “I am in the midst of you as the One serving.” BDAG, “ἐντός,” 269. Also BDAG, “μέσος,” 507. Bock disagrees, “The term cannot mean “within” because contextually Jesus is addressing Pharisees. The last thing he would say to them in their conflict with him is that the kingdom of God is found in their hearts. The idea must be that the kingdom is in their midst, or perhaps in their reach. In either case, the kingdom is presently available through Jesus’ ministry.” Darrell L. Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Jesus,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 42.

⁵⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 528-29; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 593-94.

now resident aliens (foreigners and pilgrims, Heb 11:13), because our citizenship now is in heaven (Phil 3:20).

The Jewish people disagreed with Jesus due to a different understanding of what constituted the kingdom. Telushkin explains that believers today usually think of the Messiah as a wholly spiritual figure; however, during the life of Jesus, Messiah “meant a military leader who would free the Jews from foreign (i.e., Roman) rule, bring them back from the four corners of the earth and usher in an age of universal peace.” He continues to explain that a century after Jesus, many Jews accepted Bar-Kokhba as the Messiah, although he made no claims to spirituality. Bar-Kokhba was supported because of his initial military success. Telushkin concludes that the major reason for Jewish rejection of the Messianic claims of Jesus was that He did not bring political sovereignty for Israel and protection from their enemies.⁵⁶

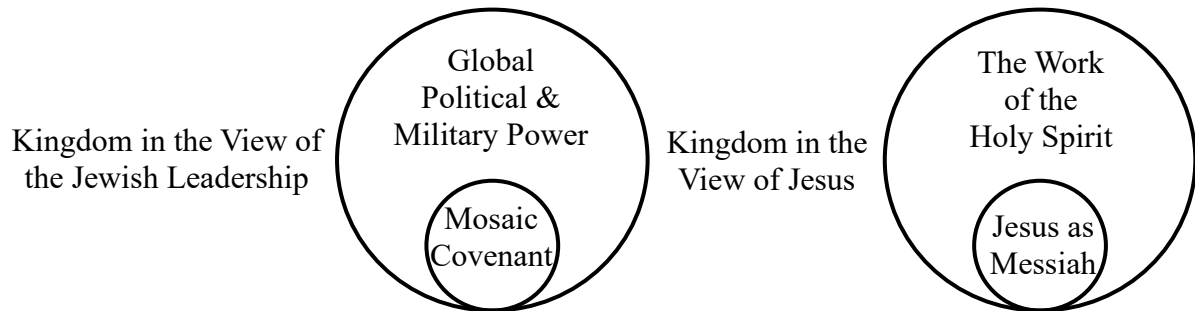
The Jewish leadership had a concept of kingdom based on the foundation of the Mosaic covenant community and that Israel would have kingdom authority over the other ethnic groups of the earth. If Jesus offered them military dominance, the people of Israel would have welcomed His kingdom. The Jewish leadership expected to add political and military power⁵⁷ over the established Mosaic covenant base, but Jesus countered with a vision of the work of the Holy Spirit operating on a foundation of Himself as the Messiah.⁵⁸ He did not proclaim a national kingdom, but a kingdom based on a personal relationship with Him. Jesus followed the preaching of John the Baptist which rejected kingdom participation based on physical descent to Abraham and inclusion in the Mosaic covenant

⁵⁶ Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 126-27, 546.

⁵⁷ Ladd writes, “The Jews wanted a political king to overthrow their enemies. Our Lord’s offer of the kingdom of God was not the offer of a political kingdom. . . . Jesus addressed Himself to the individual; and the terms of the new relationship were exclusively those of personal decision and faith.” (Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 109)

⁵⁸ Hoehner explains, “The Jews had expected God to bring in his physical kingdom, but his disciples learned that this kingdom would first appear in a spiritual form beginning with Jesus’ ministry and last until his return to set up that expected apocalyptic physical kingdom, which will include the judgment of the wicked and the vindication of the righteous.” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 430)

community. His message cut through external national relationships, and instead demanded individual repentance from sin and personal faith in Him as qualification for the kingdom.⁵⁹



Israel desired a global theocracy based on Jewish supremacy.
 Jesus offered a personal relationship with Himself through the Holy Spirit.

Figure 24. Jewish view of kingdom compared with the kingdom view of Jesus.

The Jewish leadership would not give up their entrenched authority resident in the Mosaic covenant structure, so they rejected Jesus as their King and His offer of the Holy Spirit, who would transform each kingdom citizen in their inner person. The Lord Jesus acknowledged that the Jewish people were the “sons of the kingdom” (Matt 8:12), even though the majority rejected Christ and His rule. God promised Abraham that physical descendants would inherit a physical land with worldwide blessings; however, individual Jews would forfeit kingdom participation, because they could not mix God’s promises with faith. Christ commended a Roman soldier for his faith (v. 10), although he was not a physical descendant of Abraham and a participant of the Mosaic covenant community. Jesus explained that many of ethnic groups from the east and west will feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in a future aspect of the kingdom (v. 11); but in a role reversal, many of the direct descendants of these patriarchs, who naturally should belong in the kingdom would show themselves as unworthy, as the result, they will not experience kingdom blessings.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 247.

⁶⁰ Ladd explains, “They were sons of the kingdom because it was Israel whom God had chosen and to whom He had promised the blessings of the Kingdom. The Kingdom was theirs by right of election, history and heritage. So it was that our Lord directed His ministry to them and offered to them that which

Shortly before His betrayal and arrest, Jesus confronted the Jewish leadership with the parable of the tenants; the owner of the vineyard sent his son, who was killed by wicked farmers. He quoted Psalm 118:22, “the stone which the builders rejected became the cornerstone.” Jesus concluded that the kingdom would be taken away from those who reject Him, and given to those who make Him to be the foundation of their lives (Matt 21:33-46). Because the Mosaic covenant community had to a large extent rejected Christ, He would become the foundation for the new covenant community.

The Mosaic covenant was not dynamic enough to be effective in this kingdom experience. It emphasized external regulations and requirements, and its recipients were based on family relationships and genealogies, regardless of their spiritual condition. A new covenant is necessary that emphasizes internal transformation, based on the spiritual condition of its recipients, which is a personal relationship with God.

Jesus explained the necessity of the new covenant with two analogies (Matt 9:16-17). He told those listening to Him that no one uses a patch of new, unshrunk cloth to repair a hole in old clothes, because the hole in the clothing would be made worse when the patch ripped out. In the same way, no one puts grape juice in already used wineskins, because the old wineskins were already stretched out and lost their elasticity, so as the grape juice would ferment, the old wineskins would not be flexible enough. They would burst, the grape juice would spill out and the old wineskins would not be useful for anything else. It was wise to put grape juice in fresh wineskins, so as the juice would ferment, the new wineskins could expand with the pressure. Jesus added that those drinking fermented wine would not desire that which is new, but they will say the old is better (Luke 5:38).

The old Mosaic covenant was not flexible enough to continue serving as the basis for the kingdom of God. Jesus did not come to patch his Messianic kingdom onto a Mosaic covenant framework. A new covenant was required to serve as the foundation of

had been promised to them. When Israel rejected the Kingdom, the blessings which should have been theirs were given to those who would accept them.” (Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 109)

a multicultural, international reign of Christ, in both its spiritual and political aspects; however, the majority of the people of Israel preferred the old Mosaic covenant and rejected the personal relationship with God that was the basis of the new.⁶¹

In the public ministry of the Lord Jesus, the kingdom was restricted to a very small geographical area; as it was limited to the person of Jesus and to those He personally authorized, such as the twelve (Mark 6:7-13) and the seventy (Luke 10:1-23). In His ascension, the presence of the kingdom was removed from earth as the King returned to heaven. At Pentecost, this situation changed; the kingdom is no longer limited to Jesus in His physical presence. The glorified Christ sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His people. Since that time, the presence of Christ resident in His Spirit is available to all kingdom citizens, regardless of geographical location.⁶² The Lord explained that it was to our advantage that He return to heaven and send the Holy Spirit in His stead. “I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I should go away, for if I do not go, the *Paraklete* will not come to you; however, if I go I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

John the Baptist understood Spirit baptism as a fire outpoured on everyone, refining the worthy and destroying those who are unworthy (Luke 3:16-17). This will occur as Christ returns to manifest His reign over all the earth. Jesus told the parable of the minas (Luke 19:11-27), because His disciples thought that the physical/political aspect of His kingdom would be revealed right away (v. 11). A certain man of noble birth went to a distant place to receive a kingdom and return (v. 12). He gave resources to his servants with instructions to “Do business until I come back” (v. 13). However, his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, “We do not want this man to rule over us” (v. 14). When he returned, having received the kingdom, he rewarded his servants according to

⁶¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). Osborne comments that these “two analogies (Luke 5:36 calls them ‘parables’) expand on Jesus’ point regarding the appearance of the new covenant reality and its incompatibility with the old covenant. Just as the joy of the new covenant cannot cohere with the mourning of the old ways, so the new kingdom as a whole cannot be forced into the old one.” (342-43)

⁶² Ladd, *Gospel of the Kingdom*, 271-72.

their efforts. Some servants showed themselves to be worthy and they were rewarded with positions of authority. Other servants were judged as unworthy and were excluded from the kingdom. The king commanded, “Those of my enemies, who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and kill them before me!” (v. 27)

One major use for the word *ekklesia* is to assemble men for battle. Participation in the Athenian *ekklesia* during the Draco period (around 621 BC) was reserved for citizens who could afford to purchase military armor. Following the Solon reforms (594 BC), two years of military service was required prior to attending the civic *ekklesia*. The classical Greek *ekklesia* must approve the declaration for war, due to the fact that those who voted must participate in the military campaign.⁶³ In the Hebrew OT, one meaning of *qahal* is to assemble men for battle.⁶⁴ The LXX translates this use of *qahal* as *ekklesia* in Judges 20:2, 21:5, 8 and 1 Samuel 17:47, as the armies of Israel engaged in warfare against the tribe of Benjamin in Judges 20-21, and against the Philistines in 1 Samuel 17. As in the Greek city-states, the same was true for the men of Israel, those who decided for war were called on to fight the battle.

In the same manner, one purpose for the new covenant *ekklesia* is to participate in warfare. At this time, our weapons are spiritual, and they are effective in defeating strong defensive positions (2 Cor 10:3-4). The apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian church to put on the armor of God in order to defeat the schemes of the devil (Eph 6:10-18). Paul also encouraged Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12), and to engage in a good war through the proper use of prophecy (1 Tim 1:18). When the Lord Jesus returns to this earth to defeat the Antichrist forces, rescue Israel and take His position as King of the world (Rev 19:11-19), the armies of heaven will follow Him (v. 14). The new covenant community will be represented in this formation of saints and angels, as we return with Christ to participate in His victory.

⁶³ Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 4.2, 7.3, 21.2.

⁶⁴ Gen 49:6; Num 22:4; Judg 20:2; 21:5, 8; 1 Sam 17:47; Jer 50:9. This is a significant theme in Ezek (16:40; 17:17; 23:24; 32:3; 38:4, 7, 15).

The first day of the millennium will be a terrible time. Christ will defeat the hostile forces gathered in the land of Israel (Zech 14:3). In the fierceness of His wrath, Christ will strike the nations with a word of His mouth (Rev 19:15). Those who are judged to be unworthy will experience a baptism of fire and will dissolve as they are still standing on their feet (Zech 14:12). It will take seven months for cleanup crews to bury all the bones (Ezek 39:12-15).

Beginning at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is outpoured only on those who pledge allegiance to Christ the King. Since that day, the extent of the kingdom is the hearts of God's people. We have been delivered from the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col 1:13). Now "the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). In the intervening years, the Lord has been gathering kingdom citizens to inherit the earth (Matt 5:5). Those who experience God's kingdom as individuals now are heirs of the kingdom that He promised to those who love Him (Jas 2:5).

Christ could have returned on the day of Pentecost to begin His earthly reign; however, only about six hundred twenty people would have been worthy at that time; one hundred twenty disciples present in Jerusalem, and another five hundred in Galilee. Three thousand accepted the kingdom on that day, but God wanted a greater population in His kingdom than just a very few citizens. Over the intervening years, He has brought many more sons to glory (Heb 2:10), so when He establishes His earthly kingdom in the future, Christ will be able to rejoice over a greater populace.

The Messianic kingdom is based on the foundation of God's Holy Spirit as its core spiritual reality. This spiritual basis will remain foundational when Christ will put the physical/political aspect of His kingdom in place upon His return. This current spiritual reality of the kingdom to the individual does not take anything away from the future physical/political aspect of the kingdom to the world. Kingdom citizenship has always and will always depend on a personal relationship with Christ as King, this is just as true today, as it was during the public ministry of Jesus and as it will be during the future aspect of

God's kingdom. No one is ever worthy in their own merits, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to apply the atoning sacrifice of Christ to each life. Those who are judged to be unworthy, whether in the lifetime of the Lord Jesus, at this time or during the millennium, are guilty because they neglect Christ as Savior and reject Christ as King.

Kingdom Authority

The Lord Jesus asked the apostles who they thought He was (Matt 16:15). Peter answered for the group, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied that Peter was blessed because God the Father had revealed this truth to him. "I also say to you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My *ekklesia* and the gates of Hades will have no power over it" (v. 18). The rock is the revelation from the Father that Jesus is God the Son as the Christ, God's Anointed.⁶⁵ If the Father does not reveal His Son to us for who He is, no one can come to saving faith.⁶⁶

Jesus promised that at a future time⁶⁷ He would build a Messianic community founded on the sacrifice He would soon accomplish. He began to explain that He will establish His own *ekklesia* based on a covenant He would personally make with each of the recipients. In distinction to the Mosaic covenant and its national community, which was entered into by physical birth based on genealogy, participation in this new covenant and its Messianic community would be based on revelation from Christ to each individual

⁶⁵ Possible interpretations for the rock (*petra*) include (1) Peter is the rock. This is based on wordplay between *petros*, a rock which can be thrown (Peter) and *petra*, a rock cliff or boulder. Proponents of this interpretation point to the prominent ministry of Peter in the foundation of Christianity as recorded in the book of Acts. This is the conclusion of Osborne, *Matthew*, 627; Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 260. (2) Christ is the rock. This is a common teaching in the NT based on Ps 118:22 and Isa 28:16. See Matt 21:42; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:7-8. Craig Keener comments that the majority of the church before the Reformation believed that the rock was Christ, not Peter. Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2009), 426. (3) The rock is the truth of Peter's confession "You are the Christ." Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study in Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980), 202.

⁶⁶ No one knows the Father except the Son and to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him, no one knows the Son except the Father (Matt 11:27) and to whom the Father chooses to reveal Him. The Father reveals the Son to us through His Spirit.

⁶⁷ "I will build," future active indicative of *οικοδομέω* (*oikodomeo*). Other examples include, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days, *I will build* another not made with hands" (Mark 14:58). "I will tear down my barns and *I will build* bigger" (Luke 12:18). BDAG, "οικοδομέω," 558.

believer that He is the Messiah, both God's suffering Servant (Isa 53) and King of the world (Ps 2). Each recipient would acknowledge as Peter did that Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh (1 John 5:1).

One key distinction between the new covenant community that Christ would establish and the previous people of God, who lived and died before that time, was the gates of Hades (ᾗδης, the place of departed spirits); this location is called Sheol (שְׁאוֹל) in the Hebrew OT.⁶⁸ All the righteous, from Abel to the thief on the cross, excluding Enoch and Elijah, went to Hades when they died (Ps 139:8). This location was simply the place for all souls, whether they were redeemed or not, to wait until the atonement of Christ. Even the Lord Jesus Himself went to Hades following His crucifixion, as David prophesied, "You will not leave My soul in Sheol" (Ps 16:10). The apostle Peter quoted this prophecy from the LXX in Acts 2:27, "You will not leave My soul in Hades." In His resurrection, Jesus brought all the souls of God's people with Him, so that currently only the lost remain in Hades (Rev 20:13). At this time, new covenant recipients are promised that they will go to be with the Lord in heaven at death (John 14:2, 2 Cor 5:6, 8). Participants in the new covenant community will never experience the gates of Hades; the promise of Christ could not be made any clearer.

Jesus introduced the authority resident in the new covenant community, which He described as the keys of the kingdom.⁶⁹ This new Messianic community became the government of God's kingdom, replacing the old Mosaic community. Jesus introduced this authority in verse 19, and reinforced His teaching in Matthew 18:18, "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Keener comments, "God authorizes the Messianic judicial assembly that follows these procedures to act on the authority of heaven."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ BDB, "שְׁאוֹל," 982-83; BDAG, "ᾗδης," 16.

⁶⁹ Ladd explains, "These disciples of Jesus, his *ekklesia*, now become the custodians of the kingdom rather than the nation of Israel. The kingdom is taken from Israel and given to others—Jesus' *ekklesia* (Mark 12:9). Jesus' disciples not only witness to the kingdom and are the instrument of the kingdom as it manifests its powers in this age; they are also its custodians." (Ladd, *Presence of the Future*, 273)

⁷⁰ Keener, *Matthew*, 454.

Just as the Greek civic *ekklesia* and the *qahal/LXX ekklesia* of Israel made decisions based on what they considered best for their populace, so the new covenant *ekklesia* would also make decisions to determine the best course of action for the kingdom of God. From Sinai to the cross, the Mosaic covenant community made authoritative decisions concerning the rule of God on this earth. Both in productive decisions, such as bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (1 Chr 13:2, 4) and the building of the temple (1 Chr 28:8; 29:1); and in counterproductive decisions as well, such as the war with Benjamin (Judg 20:2; 21:5, 8) and the mutiny of Jereboam (1 Kgs 12:3), this *qahal/ekklesia* (LXX) of Israel served as the governmental authority for the kingdom.

It was impossible for the Mosaic covenant community to continue to exercise authority over God's kingdom; due to the fact that the Mosaic covenant ceased to exist at the cross, and all authority resident in the Mosaic covenant and its covenant community ended at that time. It was necessary for Christ to prepare a new covenant to replace the Mosaic covenant, and a new Messianic community to replace the old Mosaic community. Christ promised to build His *ekklesia* and to bestow on this new covenant community the authority necessary to serve as the representative government of God's kingdom.

The governmental function of the new covenant community may seem weak in its current form, due to the spiritual reality of the kingdom at this time. Each local church has authority to provide guidance for its members now; however, the apostle Paul taught that the *ekklesia* would be more powerful a future context and will judge the world. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy of the smallest cases?" (1 Cor 6:2)

In the future, Christ will rule as King from His capital in Jerusalem, and at the same time, He will authorize new covenant recipients to serve as His representatives in local governments all over the earth. Jesus explained that He will reward His servants with authority over locations in His kingdom, based on their faithfulness. "Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in very little, you will have authority over ten towns" (Luke 19:17). Jesus also promised the twelve apostles that in the resurrection

(παλιγγενεσία, *paliggenesia*, regeneration) [renewal of all things—NIV], when He sits on His glorious throne in His kingdom, they would also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28).

New covenant recipients are promised to reign with Christ in a future context: “If we endure, we will also reign together” (2 Tim 2:12); “You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10, also Rev 1:6); “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev 20:4); “They will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev 20:6). In the return of Christ when He rules the world, from the very first day, the new covenant community will be ready to function as the participatory government to each ethnic group in every locality.

Current spiritual aspect of the kingdom	Future physical aspect of the kingdom
New covenant community in each locality for discipleship and discipline	New covenant community in each locality for governmental authority
The church is the participatory government of kingdom citizens both now and in the future.	

Figure 25. New covenant community authority in the current and future aspects of the kingdom.

McClain discusses the fact that the political *ekklesia* of the Greek city, the Jewish *ekklesia* of the LXX and the Christian *ekklesia* have the same thing in common—they all exercise governing powers. The *ekklesia* was the supreme authority in Ephesus (Acts 19:39), in spite of limitations imposed by Rome. Concerning the Jewish *ekklesia*, the entire congregation was responsible for the execution of the divine laws . . . both king Hezekiah and the congregation united in establishing decrees (2 Chr 30:1-5).⁷¹

McClain comments, “Our Lord’s choice of the Greek term *ekklesia* to designate His Church points at least in the direction of governmental powers.” He explains that the keys of the kingdom and the promise of binding and loosing in Matthew 16:19, repeated

⁷¹ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 327.

in 18:18, is clearly the language of authority. Conferring keys designates stewardship in the authoritative control of resources. This authority is given to the whole *ekklesia*; “whatever the contents of this power, therefore, it pertains not to Peter exclusively as chief of the apostles, nor to the body of apostles exclusively, but to the Church.”⁷²

He explains that a perfected and glorified church will exercise governmental authority as it reigns with Christ in the millennial kingdom. McClain states that at this time “authority and power could never be safely committed to sinful men, even though redeemed and members of the body of Christ.”⁷³ However, commenting on Matthew 18:18, McClain understands that authority is currently conferred to the local church limited to its own affairs, with the ability to discipline its own membership.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Gary North asks from a postmillennialist viewpoint:

There is no detailed discussion of how Jesus Christ will rule on earth through His people. Will there still be politics? Will government be entirely bureaucratic? What laws will Jesus require governments to enforce? What penalties will be imposed? Will civil judges and juries still hand down sentences? How will appeals be conducted? Will the line of justice-seekers in front of Jesus' headquarters be a thousand times longer than the line in front of Moses' tent (Exod 18:13)? We are not told—not by historic premillennialists or dispensational premillennialists.⁷⁵

In response to this question, the Lord Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount discussed victimization and punishment: “I tell you that everyone angry with his brother will be liable for judgment; whoever will say to his brother *ῥακά* (*raka*, worthless) will be liable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever will say *μωρέ* (*more*, fool) will be liable to the fire of Gehenna” (Matt 5:22).

Christ declares in this sermon the ethics required of the kingdom of God (Matt 5-7). The standard for acceptable behavior has been much less in the past, but now in His

⁷² McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 329.

⁷³ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 329.

⁷⁴ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 330.

⁷⁵ Gary North, foreword to *He Shall Have Dominion*, by Kenneth L. Gentry (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), xxii-xxiii.

kingdom, God's expectations for His people are more demanding, due to the indwelling Holy Spirit who has written His law on our hearts and minds.

Blomberg points out that traditional dispensationalists have limited the ethics proclaimed in this sermon to the kingdom that Christ offered to Israel. They assert that the Jewish people corporately rejected this kingdom as they rejected Jesus as King, so it was postponed until national Israel accepts Christ's rule at His coming. In distinction, the majority of interpreters currently view the sermon through the lens of inaugurated eschatology, which "recognizes an 'already/not yet' tension in which the sermon's ethic remains the ideal or goal for all Christians in every age, but which will never be fully realized until the consummation of the kingdom at Christ's return."⁷⁶

John MacArthur focuses on the spiritual aspect of the kingdom, which is its basis now, and will continue to provide the foundation into the future:

The thrust of the Sermon on the Mount is that the message and work of the King are first and most importantly internal and not external, and spiritual and moral rather than physical and political. Here we find no politics or social reform. His concern is for what men are, because what they are determines what they do.⁷⁷

Concerning Matthew 5:22, the Lord Jesus described a three-tier judicial system, those who victimize others verbally must first realize the disapproval of their peers. If they will not listen to their compatriots, and continue in their verbal abuse, this offender must face the Sanhedrin. Those who persist in their stubborn attitude against the authority of this tribunal show rebellion in their heart against kingdom authority; consequently, they must stand in judgment before the great King. Offenders who persist in their disobedience demonstrate their refusal to obey the will of the Messiah. The ultimate end of this extreme rebellion can only be eternal punishment.

Carson comments that this judgment presupposes God's justice because human courts can only try cases of external action, not internal attitude.⁷⁸ Keener understands

⁷⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 94-95. See also Osborne, *Matthew*, 159; Keener, *Matthew*, 160; Carson, *Matthew*, 8:127.

⁷⁷ John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 133.

God's heavenly court which will judge all offenses of intention. He notes that a guilty verdict in God's eschatological judgment will result in eternal punishment.⁷⁹

Osborne writes that the court system begins with a local court, to the supreme court of the land and finally the ultimate court of God, but there is no escalation in offense as described by Jesus. Calling another as "worthless" or "empty-headed" is not that much worse than calling them a "moron" or "fool." *Raka* or "worthless" is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek "moron."⁸⁰

While there may not be an escalation in offense, there is progression in jurisdiction due to the refusal of the offender to submit to proper authority. This same concept is also applied to the new covenant community at this time (Matt 18:15-17). Brothers first discuss the disagreement between the two of them alone. Second, the situation is brought to two or three more so that the matter may be established. Finally, the issue is brought to the church as the final authority; and if the offender will not listen, they are to be considered as an unbeliever outside the authority of the new covenant community.

The context for the judicial system described in Matthew 5:22 is the kingdom, and the new covenant community is the governmental authority for the kingdom, both in the current spiritual aspect of the kingdom and the future earthly rule of Christ. In the kingdom, both now and in the future, victimization is strictly forbidden, if verbal abuse is allowed to continue, it can escalate to physical abuse. Kingdom authorities will not ignore any case of verbal abuse so that the citizens can learn to control their tempers. The first level of judgment will be that of the millennial society; often parental control or family pressure would be enough to solve the problem especially if the offender is young. However, if the judgment of kingdom citizens in normal bodies cannot resolve the situation, the offender will be brought to the glorified saints as the millennial Sanhedrin.

⁷⁸ Carson, *Matthew*, 148-49.

⁷⁹ Keener, *Matthew*, 183-84.

⁸⁰ Osborne, *Matthew*, 190.

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish court during the era of the second Jewish temple from its building in the Persian occupation to its destruction in the Roman occupation. The number of council members was seventy plus one, who was the chief priest as moderator. This number was due to the seventy elders who served as judges subordinate to Moses (Num 11:16). This council focused on temple matters and religious law, and were the Jewish supreme court while the Mosaic covenant community provided the mediatorship for the rule of God.⁸¹

The new covenant community will be the court during the millennial kingdom. Kingdom citizens in normal bodies would be able to judge the majority of cases in family and community matters, but kingdom citizens in glorified bodies as a supreme tribunal would judge the difficult cases. (“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” 1 Cor 6:2.) The ultimate authority would be Christ Himself on His glorious throne.

The kingdom of God needs a government. Unlike the cacophony of current human government with its tyranny, brutality and corruption, when Christ returns as King of the world, the government will be upon His shoulders. In this theocracy/democracy blend, the body of Christ, with Christ as the head and the Messianic community as members, will provide mediatorial rule to represent God to the people and represent the people to God. This is true in the current spiritual aspect of the kingdom in a limited way, but in the future, the authority of the new covenant community will be complete.

⁸¹ W. J. Moulder, “Sanhedrin,” in Bromiley, *ISBE*, 4:332.

CHAPTER 6

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY AND THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

It is the position of this project that in the future spiritual/physical aspect of the kingdom of God, the church as the new covenant community will provide both the global and local government as kings subordinate to Christ the King. There are differences in understanding Christ's kingdom, as has been the situation since the generation following the apostles. At a time in the future, Christ as Man will restore dominion of the earth to mankind. There are three basic positions as to the timing of this restoration of creation authority. Some think that God's people have already received the dominion that was lost in the fall, while others believe that God's people can only participate in this authority in the eternal new heaven and new earth. A common position is that an intermediate aspect of the kingdom is necessary, because it is obvious that redeemed humanity does not exercise dominion over creation now, and there will not be an opportunity for authority over this creation after it is destroyed by fire. A survey of various positions concerning the kingdom becomes important due to its impact on our understanding of the church as the new covenant community.

Introduction

"I will declare Your name to My brothers, in the midst of the *ekklesia* I will sing praises to You" (Heb 2:12). The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 22:23 from the LXX. In this verse, David prophesied that the One who would be crucified in his future, will subsequently declare Yahweh's name to His brothers and praise Him in the covenant community. "I will declare Your name to My brothers, in the midst of the *qahal* I will praise You." The author of Hebrews wanted his readers to understand the closeness of relationship between the Son and the many sons He is bringing to glory (Heb 2:10).

There is a brotherhood between the Son who made holy and the sons who are being made holy (v. 11). Jesus will declare the Father's name to His Messianic community, and in the midst of the *ekklesia* the Son will sing praises to God the Father in a future context. This *ekklesia* is the new covenant community in a yet future celebration.

The first part of Psalm 22 is a prophecy of the Messiah in His humiliation. He cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (v. 1). He is mocked and despised by the people of Israel (v. 7); they insult Him, saying, "Let God rescue Him, since He delights in Yahweh" (v. 8). He is surrounded by hostile Gentiles like wild animals—bulls, lions and dogs—who pierce His hands and feet (vv. 12-13, 16). They divide His clothes and gamble for His cloak (v. 18).

Each of the gospel writers point out that this prophecy is fulfilled in the cross of Christ. He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). He was scorned by the Jews: "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him" (Matt 27:43; Luke 23:35). Christ was crucified by Roman soldiers, who divided His garments and gambled for His clothes (Matt 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24).

The second part of Psalm 22 is a prophecy of the Messiah in His exaltation. Because the Messiah is victorious during His humiliation in death, He will be exalted and worshiped as He returns to earth as King, "Dominion belongs to Yahweh and He rules over the nations" (v. 28). When He comes as King of the world, the Messiah will worship the Father and praise Him in the covenant community (vv. 22, 25). This *qahal* is not the Mosaic covenant community gathered in convocation to worship around the temple in Jerusalem, this is the new covenant community who will share in Christ's glory.

Where the Messiah was mocked and scorned by Israel in His humiliation on the cross, He will be honored and revered by the Jewish people in His return (v. 23). He will not despise the people of Israel in their distress, like they despised Him in His distress; but He will listen to their cry for help as they suffer affliction prior to His coming (v. 24). Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom (Matt 5:3); blessed are the meek, for

they will inherit the earth (Matt 5:5). The poor will be satisfied, they will praise Christ at the gathering of the Messianic community as the great *qahal* (v. 25, LXX *ekklesia*).

Although hostile Gentiles treated Him so shamefully in His crucifixion, all the ends of the earth will pledge allegiance to Christ as King upon His return. All the families of all the ethnic groups will worship Him (v. 27). The kingdom belongs to Yahweh, as He rules the world (v. 28). As the poor becomes rich, they will participate in feasting during their worship experiences (vv. 26-29).

Resurrected believers will kneel before Him (v. 29). They have gone down to the dust, and in their resurrected bodies they will worship the Messiah. Not only citizens at that time in normal bodies, and citizens from the past in glorified bodies, but future generations will also participate in the kingdom (v. 30). Christ will be proclaimed to a people yet to be born as succeeding generations will be told about His righteousness accomplishments (v. 31). Although David used poetical imagery, the literal fulfillment by Christ is understood both in the humiliation of His cross and in His yet future exaltation as He comes as King over the nations.

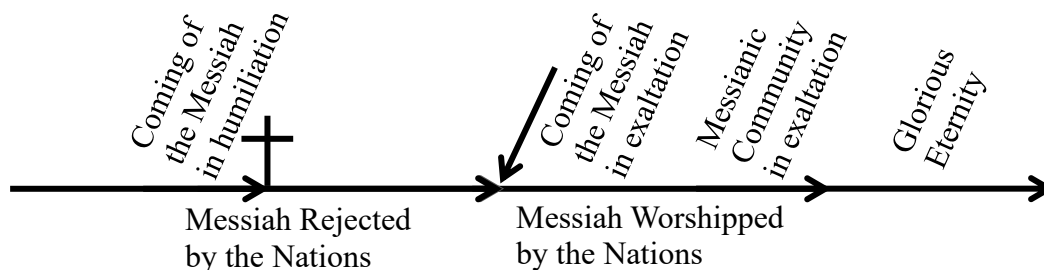


Figure 26. Psalm 22—Two Comings of the Messiah;
First in Humiliation and Second in Exaltation.

Christ is now glorified in heaven, but He is not being worshipped on the earth except by the new covenant community. The Messianic community suffers on this earth at this time, as believers continue to experience grievous persecution. It is God's plan that those who will share in the future glories of the Messiah also partake in His suffering and humiliation in the present. The same is true of the Jewish community; those who will

experience the joys of the second coming of Christ must first go through the sorrows of tribulation prior to His coming (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Zech 14:2). The Lord Jesus explained, “For then there will be a great persecution such as there has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, never will be” (Matt 24:21). Even those among the Gentile nations who will participate in the blessings of the kingdom in the return of Christ, must experience poverty and deprivation beforehand as poor and meek (Ps 22:25-26; Matt 5:3, 5).

David foretells that the Messiah will be accepted in His return by ethnic Israel and by the other ethnicities as well. The entire population of the earth will worship Christ together in a global *qahal*, translated by *ekklesia* in Psalm 22:23, 25 (LXX) and Hebrews 2:12. This worldwide Messianic community will consist of normal people who will have families, as well as resurrected people in glorified bodies just as the Messiah Himself.

Children will be born in this kingdom, and while this next generation will live during the kingdom, they will not automatically be kingdom citizens. These young people will need to be taught about God, and they will need to surrender to the authority of Christ personally. As these descendants receive the sacrifice of Christ and the baptism of the Spirit, they will become kingdom citizens and new covenant recipients. As follow-on generations are born, these children will be taught to accept Christ as Savior and King in these local Messianic communities.¹

The population of the earth as the entire new covenant community, a global *ekklesia*, will gather at Jerusalem annually to worship the King (Zech 14:16), and they will also continue in worship at the various localities where they live throughout the year. These worship experiences will take place in local new covenant communities, which will also function as a participatory form of government.

¹ “Descendants will serve Him, things of the Lord will be recounted to the next generation. They will come to declare His righteousness to a people who will be born that He has done this” (Ps 22:30-31); “I will pour My Spirit on your descendants and My blessing on your children” (Isa 44:3); “As for Me, this is My covenant with them, says Yahweh, My Spirit who is upon you and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from you, your descendants, nor the descendants of your descendants,” says Yahweh, “from this time and forever” (Isa 59:21); “They will be a people blessed by Yahweh, they and their descendants with them” (Isa 65:23); “This is what Yahweh Almighty says, ‘Old men and old women will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with a staff in their hand because of their great age, and the city will be full of boys and girls playing in the streets’” (Zech 8:5).

Those who refuse to accept to the rule of Christ and reject the forgiveness available in His atonement will die when they are one hundred years old. “The sinner being a hundred years old will be accursed” (Isa 65:20). After a thousand years, the devil will be released from the abyss/Hades and he will deceive the large number of Christ rejecters living in the kingdom. These rebellious young people will attempt to defeat Christ the King (Ps 2, Rev 20:7-9). Christ must reign until He has destroyed all His enemies, then He will return the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor 15:24-25).

All evangelicals have looked for the Lord Jesus to return physically to earth, according to the promise of the angels at His ascension, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will return in the same way that you saw Him going into heaven” (Acts 1:11). He rose from the grave in a physical body, He is now in heaven in the same physical body as a first fruits of the future resurrection (1 Cor 15:20), and He will come again to share His eternal, physical existence with all those who believe in Him. This is the clear understanding of the apostle John’s statement in 1 John 3:2, “It has not been revealed what we will be, but we know that when He is revealed, we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is.” Christ will transform our mortal bodies to be conformed to His glorious body (Phil 3:31). Our future experience will be in eternal bodies that are equally physical and spiritual, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor 15:44).

Outside this basic understanding of a future physical return of Christ and a resurrection of both the saved and lost, there is little agreement among evangelicals concerning the second coming of Christ. R. C. Sproul explains:

When we enter the arena of eschatology, we enter a fascinating subject, but one in which there is very little consensus among Christians. There is probably more disagreement about matters relating to eschatology among Christian people than among all of the other doctrines that tend to divide us put together. And because of that there has been something of a crisis in our time in terms of trying to understand the teaching of Scripture with respect to future prophecy.²

² R. C. Sproul, “Crisis in Eschatology,” *The Last Days According to Jesus: When Did Jesus Say He Would Return?* video series (*Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998*).

Robert Clouse gives an overview of the three main positions concerning future events of the coming of Christ:³ (1) Premillennialists believe that Jesus will return to rule over humanity for one thousand years of peace and righteousness. He will bring apocalyptic judgments upon the world prior to His coming due to Satan’s global dominion through the appearance of the Antichrist. At the end of this time period, the Lord will defeat a global rebellion and judge the lost of human history. Christ will finally institute the future states of eternal life for God’s people and eternal death for unredeemed mankind.

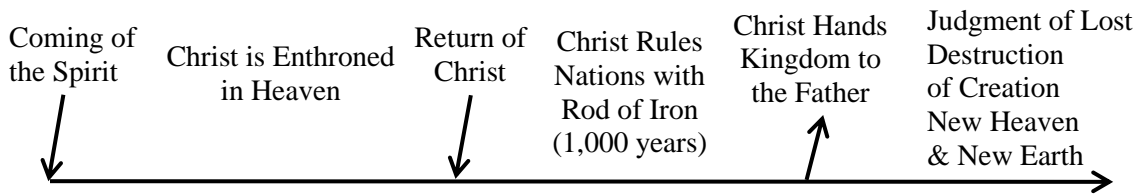


Figure 27. Premillennial view of kingdom of God.

(2) Postmillennialists explain that the Kingdom of God is being accomplished at this time through the preaching of the gospel. The majority of humanity will believe in Jesus and receive His salvation. This response to God’s word and His Spirit will produce peace and prosperity in this world; as the church assumes a greater position of authority, many of mankind’s social problems will be solved. After an extended period of tranquility, Christ will return to judge the saved and the lost, and will finally institute the future states of eternal life for God’s people and eternal death for unredeemed mankind.

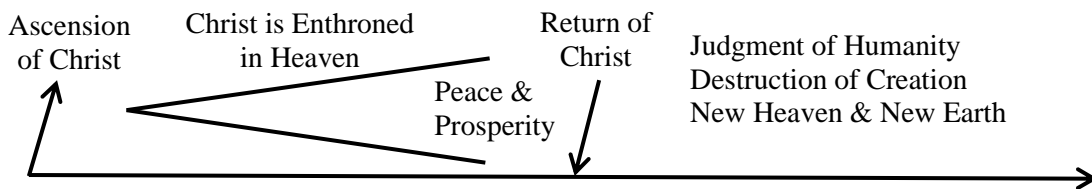


Figure 28. Postmillennial view of kingdom of God.

(3) Amillennialists understand that the reign of Christ began at His resurrection and ascension as He took His position at the right hand of God. The kingdom of God is

³ Robert G. Clouse, introduction to *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 7-9.

now present in the world as Christ rules in victory and He must reign until He returns to defeat all enemies. At that time, Christ will resurrect all humanity to judge the saved and lost alike, and will finally institute the future states of eternal life for God’s people and eternal death for unredeemed mankind.

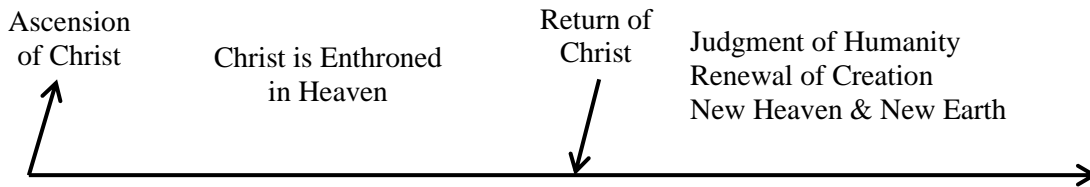


Figure 29. Amillennial view of kingdom of God.

Historical Aspects

Donald Fairbairn explains that Christians’ appeal to the writings of the “early church,” or the patristic period (AD 100-600) in their theological discussions, due to the fact that these writers were close to the apostles in time, language and location, so they would have known how best to interpret the Scriptures. A reading of early church writings reveals a widespread expectation to the return of Christ to earth to establish a physical kingdom. This view is called *chiliasm* or *millenarianism* (Greek *χίλιας*, *chilias*, thousand; Latin *mille*, thousand, *annum*, year) because this kingdom is described as one thousand years in duration (Rev 20:2-7).⁴

Justin Martyr explained in *Dialogue with Trypho*, “I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.” He did not consider this belief to be a requirement for orthodoxy as he noted, “Many who belong to the pure and pious faith and are true Christians think otherwise.”⁵

⁴ Donald Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates,” in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind: Eschatology*, ed. Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 105-7.

⁵ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80, in *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 1:239, Logos Software; also see Allison, *Historical Theology*, 686.

Tertullian (AD 160-220) wrote, “We do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon this earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; insomuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely built city of Jerusalem.”⁶

Irenaeus (AD 130-202) taught in detail in Book 5 of his treatise *Against Heresies* that in a future day the Antichrist would be the leader of the Roman Empire, due to the prophecy of Daniel (2:41-45) that a little horn on the fourth beast equated to the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay (5:25.3; 5.26.1). He explained that the Antichrist would cause worship in a rebuilt Jewish temple to cease in the middle of seven-year period and exalt himself as God. Following this act of ultimate desecration, this evil man will reign for a further three and a half years, to persecute Christians with terrible ferocity (5.25.5). The Antichrist will be defeated by the brightness of Christ’s coming, when He returns to set up His thousand-year kingdom on earth (5.25.3; 5.26.2). Irenaeus warned about speculation concerning the Antichrist’s identity or the meaning of the 666 mark (5.28.2; 5.30.1), unless one prove himself to be wrong and numbered with false prophets (5.30.2). Irenaeus recognized that there were those among orthodox believers who held different views, but this was due in his estimation to the result of gnostic influence (5.32.1). He insisted that Christ’s coming would be physical, and God’s people would populate the subsequent kingdom in physical resurrected bodies, just like the physical resurrected body of the Lord (5.31.2). He pointed out that the faithful will eat food with Christ and Abraham in the kingdom, which would be impossible without physical bodies (5.30.4; 5.33.1).⁷

The author of the *Epistle of Barnabas* (15.3-4) compared the age of the world to the Genesis account of creation. He stated that the six days of creation correspond to the six thousand years of human history, and a seventh day of rest, corresponding to the

⁶ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 3.25, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 3:455. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 685.

⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25-33, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:549; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 685.

millennium, would begin.⁸ Irenaeus taught the same thing in *Against Heresies*:

For in what number of days the world was made, in the same number of thousands of years is it brought to its consummation. Therefore saith the Scripture . . . God ended on the sixth day His works which He made, and God rested on the seventh day from all His works. Now this is a narrative of the past, and a prophecy of the future. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years. In six days then were completed the things which were made; evidently then, their consummation is the six thousandth year.⁹

Many early teachers overemphasized the material abundance of the millennium to become fanciful and foolish. Papias (AD 60-130) imagined that vines would have ten thousand grapes and wheat would have ten thousand grains.¹⁰ Eusebius (AD 263-339) dismissed Papias as having been of very limited understanding, repeating “certain strange parables and teachings of the Saviour, and some other mystical things. To these belong his statement that there will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth.” Eusebius stated that Irenaeus and others adopted these opinions, because of the antiquity of Papias.¹¹ Hippolytus also engaged in date setting to predict the return of Christ. He combined the measurements for the ark of the covenant with the years of creation to arrive with the date for Christ’s return. He calculated that the millennium would begin in the year AD 550, or about 250 years in his future.¹²

The understanding that Christ would return to earth to establish a thousand-year kingdom was strong in the early church, but by the year AD 400 the belief in a

⁸ “‘He finished in six days.’ This implies that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years . . . in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished. ‘And He rested on the seventh day.’ This means when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man.” *Epistle of Barnabas*, 15.19-25, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:126; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 686.

⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.28.3, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:554; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 686.

¹⁰ Papias, *Fragments of Papias*, 4, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:263. Irenaeus favorably quoted this statement of Papias and stated that he was a disciple of the apostle John and a contemporary of Polycarp. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.33.3, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:562. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 685-87.

¹¹ Eusebius Pamphilus, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:11-13, in *NPNF*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: Christian Literature, 1889), 1:154, Logos Software; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 687.

¹² Hippolytus, *Fragments from Commentaries*, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 5:179; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 686.

millennial reign was on the decline. Not everyone agrees that premillennial doctrine was the majority opinion prior to the year AD 300. For example, George Lyons claims that chiliasm was restricted to the Roman province of Asia Minor, the region where the book of Revelation was distributed.¹³ Fairbairn disagrees and points out that Christian writers throughout the Roman Empire; to include Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus of Rome and Tertullian of Carthage, among many others, wrote extensively of their millennial beliefs.¹⁴

Everett Ferguson argues that nonchiliastic beliefs were “widely pervasive in early Christianity and represented by such writers as Hermas, Polycarp, the authors of *Epistle to Diognetus*, *Ascension of Isaiah*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, and *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian.”¹⁵ Thomas Falls, commenting on Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, states that chiliasm was rare in the second century, while nonmillenarian views were the majority:

The belief in the millennium was not as general as Justin’s words imply. The only other early supporters of this doctrine were Papias of Hierapolis and Irenaeus. Many other Christian writers then opposed this belief of a thousand years’ earthly happiness with Christ at Jerusalem after the resurrection from the dead.¹⁶

Fairbairn responds that Lyons, Ferguson and Falls are arguing from silence; they equate the absence of mention about an earthly kingdom with denial of the millennium. He explains that Justin does not refer to his belief in the kingdom in either of his two apologies, but only in his *Dialogue with Trypho*. Irenaeus only writes about his prophetic interpretations in book five of *Against Heresies*, not in books one through four. The fact

¹³ “It must be emphasized that the rejection of millenarian interpretation did not begin with Alexandrian allegorists nor with fourth-century triumphalists who imagined that the kingdom of God had dawned with the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine. Nonmillenarian interpretations of Revelation were at least as early and geographically more diverse than were the millenarian.” George Lyons, “Eschatology in the Early Church,” in *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things*, ed. H. Ray Dunning (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1995), 110, quoted in Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates,” 108.

¹⁴ Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates.”

¹⁵ Everett Ferguson, *Church History, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 1:158. See also Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates,” 108.

¹⁶ Thomas Fall, trans., *Justin Martyr* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 227, emphasis original. See also Fairbairn, “Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates,” 109.

that a writing was concerned about other subject matter does not warrant a conclusion as to the author's millennial understanding, one way or another. Fairbairn concludes,

To demonstrate that amillennialism was common before AD 250, one would need to point out explicit rejections of premillennialism or explicit interpretations of Revelation 20 in nonliteral ways. As we will see, this kind of evidence is abundant in the fourth and fifth centuries, but it appears to be lacking in the second and early third centuries.¹⁷

Origen (AD 185-254) of Alexandria understood an allegorical or spiritual meaning of Scripture, which moved beyond a literal interpretation on which the belief in a millennial kingdom was based. Origen taught in *First Principles* that the kingdom was based on spiritual blessings, not physical benefits. He argued against resurrected believers having the ability to eat and drink, due to the apostle Paul's emphasis of a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44). He rejected the descriptions of others concerning the continuation of marriage, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the saints with authority over cities (2.11.2) "Such are the thoughts of men who indeed believe in Christ, but because they understand the Scriptures in a Judaistic sense, extract from them nothing that is worthy of divine promises."¹⁸ Origen understood that the souls of believers went to paradise on the earth at death where they learned the operations of this world. When the believers would meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:17), their souls would go to levels of heaven learning the operations of each sphere before passing on to the next one; so that finally the souls of believers would reach the ultimate dwelling place with God Himself.¹⁹

Fairbairn comments that Origen interpreted the Bible with a mindset of Platonic philosophy similar to Gnosticism. Salvation in his understanding was the liberation of the soul rather than the redemption of the body, which equated to a denial of the bodily resurrection. Origen also wanted to separate Christian interpretation from any Jewish

¹⁷ Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 110.

¹⁸ Origen, *First Principles*, 2.11.2, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 4:297; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 686.

¹⁹ Origen, *First Principles*, 2.11.6, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*; 4:298; Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 114.

belief system; as the result, he rejected any idea of an earthly kingdom which featured prominently in Jewish apocalyptic thought.²⁰

Another shift from premillennial theology was the conversion of Constantine, emperor of Rome, in AD 331, which gave the church sudden influence over society. Many Christian leaders came to believe the kingdom reign to be present, as the church realized power and authority over the populace. This teaching of a present kingdom age was popularized by Augustine (354-430). He explained in his work *The City of God* (20.7) that many of his day misunderstood Revelation 20:1-6 believing the first resurrection to be physical followed by a thousand years of Sabbath rest:

And this opinion would not be objectionable, if it were believed that the joys of the saints in that Sabbath shall be spiritual, and consequent on the presence of God; for I myself, too, once held this opinion. But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets.²¹

Augustine believed that Satan was currently bound, so that his influence over the nations was limited by the church. He taught there would be one thousand years from the first coming to the second coming of Christ, so an additional six hundred years of human history remained to be accomplished in his view. He argued that the first resurrection occurs when the believer passes from spiritual death to spiritual life, what is now referred to as regeneration; so those who participate in the first resurrection are those who become God's people during this age. Unbelievers who do not come to spiritual life will face Christ's judgment at the end of history.²² The millennial views of Augustine became dominant in the Catholic Church, as well as among the Protestant Reformation.²³

Nathaniel West (1826-1906) traced the history of premillennialism from the premillennial Church Fathers to the advancing power of the papacy following the fall of

²⁰ Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 115.

²¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, 20.7.1, in *NPNF*, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1887), 2:427, Logos Software. See also Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 116; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 688.

²² Augustine, *The City of God*, 20.8-9, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 2:428.

²³ Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 117; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 688.

the western Roman Empire. During medieval times, the visible institution of the church was believed to be the kingdom of God, and the one-thousand-year reign of Christ was dated from His first coming, rather than His second. In the year 1000, the Roman Catholic Church waited for Christ to return, and when He did not, a new date was set beginning with the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312.²⁴

In the dawning of the Reformation, beginning with the Waldenses and John Wycliffe (1320-84), the Pope was called the Antichrist and the Roman Church was considered to be the Babylon of Revelation 17. John Huss (1369-1415) labeled the Pope as “the vicar of Judas Iscariot.” Martin Luther (1483-1546) agreed that the Pope was an Antichrist, which became a common understanding among the Reformers. West explained that the Reformers were focused on the Bible teaching justification by faith and the doctrines of grace, so they could not give the time necessary to study the vast area of eschatology. The Reformers did reassert that Christ would return to earth physically, not to be interpreted as spiritual presence; they also rejected the Augustinian view that the first resurrection equaled regeneration. However, the Reformers rejected millennial hopes as Jewish, they reacted negatively to the millennial claims of the radical event at Munster (1534), and attacked premillennial Anabaptists, whether they were radical or pacifistic.²⁵

Seventeenth-century England experienced a resurgence in premillennial thought surrounding a series of civil wars (1642-51) and Oliver Cromwell’s Commonwealth (1653-58). The Puritans were convinced that the established Church of England did not come far enough out of the Roman Catholic system. The state church was suppressed in 1650 and in its restoration twelve years later, more than two thousand dissenters were ejected from the Anglican Church. These non-conformists were excluded from public life and university degrees, so many immigrated to America. New England became the nesting place where beliefs in religious liberty would smolder for a hundred years until it was

²⁴ Nathaniel W. West, “History of the Premillennial Doctrine,” in *Premillennial Essays* ed. Nathaniel W. West (Chicago: Revell, 1879), 352-53, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hn1fdi&view=1up&seq=361>.

²⁵ West, *Premillennial Essays*, 354-58, 361-62; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 690-91; Clouse, *Meaning of the Millennium*, 10.

manifested in the Great Awakening, the American Revolution and its insistence in the separation of church and state.²⁶

Johann Alstead (1588-1638) published an interpretation of Revelation 20, which was incorporated into Joseph Mede's (1586-1639) commentary on the book of Revelation that same year.²⁷ "He advocated premillennialism in such a scholarly way that this work continued to influence eschatological interpretation for centuries."²⁸

Isaac Newton (1643-1727) one of the most influential scientists of all time was fascinated by prophecy. He quoted the writings of Justin Martyr, Papias, Irenaeus and noted their belief in a thousand-year kingdom.²⁹ He asserted that the Papacy was the Antichrist. He found 1,260 days in Revelation 11:3; 12:6, and applied the day-year principle to determine the time of Christ's return. He started his timeline in AD 800 with Charlemagne and concluded that the millennium would begin in the year 2060.³⁰

The Fifth Monarchy was a millennial movement which began in England in the mid-1600s. These Fifth Monarchists believed the four beasts of Daniel 7 to be ancient

²⁶ William Watson writes, "Most Puritans were historicists, believing they were in the midst of apocalyptic events that traced through Church history." He explains that English Reformation in the 1600s resulted in a revival of historicist premillennialism. This process of Reformation was not easy, and non-conformists were persecuted by both Roman Catholic and English Protestant state churches. In this social upheaval which resulted in civil war, Puritans became convinced that the reign of Christ was near. This understanding had two antecedents; Roman Catholic amillennial historicity and Anabaptist premillennialism. This historicism does not fit easily into modern millennial categories, and one should not read current systems of eschatology back into this prior thought. Watson further states, "What unified Puritan thought regarding eschatology was their historicism. Whether they were what we would understand to be amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial, almost all of them were historicists until mild forms of preterism began to emerge in the 1600s out of historicism." William C. Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby: Seventeenth-Century and Eighteenth-Century English Apocalypticism* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2015), 1-3. Also see Joyce Horn, "Oliver Cromwell (1588-1658)," in *NIDCC*, rev. ed., ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 271; "Act of Uniformity of 1662," The Parliament, accessed January 6, 2020, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transforming-society/private-lives/religion/collections/common-prayer/act-of-uniformity-1662/>; "America as a Religious Refuge," The Library of Congress, accessed December 10, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html>. Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 179-81.

²⁷ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 692; Clouse, *Meaning of the Millennium*, 10.

²⁸ Robert G. Clouse, "Mede, Joseph," in Douglas, *NIDCC*, 646.

²⁹ Isaac Newton, *Observations upon the Apocalypse of St. John*, Ch. 1, accessed January 2, 2020, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16878/16878-h/16878-h.htm#NtpJohI_41.

³⁰ *Papers Show Isaac Newton's Religious Side, Predict Date of the Apocalypse*, Associated Press, June 19, 2007, https://archive.is/20070629231937/http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070619/28049_Papers_Show_Isaac_Newton's_Religious_Side,_Predict_Date_of_Apocalypse.htm.

empires ending with Rome. The papacy assumed political power of the Roman Empire to become the Antichrist or the beast of Revelation 17. This fifth monarchy was the visible kingdom of Christ, under the authority of His saints (meaning them), until He returned to accomplish the final judgment. These beliefs concerning the papacy as the Antichrist were common among English Puritans, but the Fifth Monarchists applied these beliefs very literally to their day, to include the use of force to overthrow the English monarchy, and were active in the revolution of Oliver Cromwell.³¹

In 1642, Robert Maton published *Israel's Redemption or the Prophetical History of Our Saviour's Kingdom on Earth*:

An important element in Maton's millenarian chronology was the restoration of the Jews to their homeland. Once the Jews were restored, a great army would rise up against them to do battle in Armageddon. At that time Christ would return and subdue the entire world. Christ would then sit as a king in the throne of David and rule with his resurrected saints for a thousand years. These thousand years were to follow the defeat of the Beast and the False Prophet, and was to coincide with the binding of Satan. Satan would then be loosed again, and after the final struggle, there would be a second resurrection in which all would be judged. The world would then end as the Son delivered it to the Father.³²

Mark Bell analyzed Maton's writings and noted that he rejected the mystical interpretations of earlier radical millenarians who blended apocalyptic eisegesis with revelation. He employed scientific thinking in an exacting hermeneutic with reverence for the text, which resulted in fewer contradictions as the prophecies were interpreted literally. Unlike Joseph Mede and other millennialists of the time, Maton argued for the literal physical presence of Christ in His kingdom for a thousand years. His argument was simple: "the Bible indicated an earthly reign and there was no mention of Christ returning to heaven after the start of the millennium, therefore there was no reason not to presume that Christ would physically rule the entire thousand years."³³

³¹ Austin Woolrych, "Fifth Monarchy Men," in *The Oxford Companion to British History*, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://www.encyclopedia.com>.

³² Mark R. Bell, "The Revolutionary Roots of Anglo-American Millenarianism: Robert Maton's *Israel's Redemption* and *Christ's Personal Reign on Earth*," in *Journal of Millennial Studies* [A Paper Presented at the 4th Annual Conference of the Center for Millennial Studies, November 1999] (Boston: Boston University), <http://www.mille.org/publications/winter2000/bell.PDF>.

³³ Bell, "Revolutionary Roots of Anglo-American Millenarianism," 4.

Maton influenced Baptists, such as Thomas Killcop, who published the first Particular Baptist tract on believer's baptism in 1642. Killcop also authored *Ancient and Durable Gospel* in 1648; using Maton's work as a basis, he explained that salvation was purchased through the cross, but not to be fully realized until Christ's return. "The time of the purchase is past, the time of the redemption [is still] to come."³⁴ For these millenarians Christ's second coming changed the conception of His first coming. In Killcop and Maton's view, the real function of the first advent was to set prophecy in motion, so that redemption would be fully and finally realized at a future day.³⁵

Increase Mather (1639–1723) and Cotton Mather (1663-1728), Puritan leaders in colonial America, openly proclaimed a belief in the second coming of Christ and a literal thousand year time of peace before the eternal new heavens and earth. In 1669, Increase Mather published a book on the salvation of Israel, as he looked for the mass conversion of the Jews as a precondition for Christ's return. He insisted that in the near future, the Jewish nation would be converted at the beginning of the millennium.³⁶ Mather explained that the world was peaceful in the Garden of Eden, so also during the millennium. Christ, as the second Adam will return the world to its original state.³⁷ In contrast to others who proclaimed the millennium to be a present reality, Mather pointed out that God's kingdom, both in salvation and in the millennium, must come down from God in heaven.³⁸ Most contemporaries stumbled over two resurrections on one Judgment Day; Mather resolved the problem by making the Judgment Day to be a thousand years long, and tying it to a sabbath tradition (six days for man's work and a seventh day for God's rest).³⁹

³⁴ Thomas Killcop, *Ancient and Durable Gospel* (1648), quoted in Bell, "Revolutionary Roots of Anglo-American Millenarianism," 5.

³⁵ Bell, "Revolutionary Roots of Anglo-American Millenarianism," 6.

³⁶ Mason I. Lawrence and David Watters, "Increase Mather's 'New Jerusalem': Millennialism in Late Seventeenth-Century New England," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (Worcester, MA: 1977), 345-46, <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/4517596.pdf>.

³⁷ Lawrence and Watters, "Millennialism in Seventeenth-Century New England," 348.

³⁸ Lawrence and Watters, "Millennialism in Seventeenth-Century New England," 352.

³⁹ Lawrence and Watters, "Millennialism in Seventeenth-Century New England," 349.

Watson concludes that whenever Christians are oppressed they look with longing to Christ's coming, but when they become comfortable, millennial hopes fade. In the 1600s, Joseph Mede developed the first comprehensive system of eschatology from a Reformed perspective; and at the same time, Manasseh ben Israel, a rabbi from Amsterdam, spoke of the hope that Jews could return to their homeland. Puritans who had been marginalized were given an opportunity to express their millennial hopes as the Church of England lost power due to rebellion against the crown. When the Anglican Church regained influence, these dissidents were again disenfranchised and struggled to express their convictions. Many Puritans immigrated to America, where millennial hope took root.⁴⁰

The teachings of Daniel Whitby (1638-1726) became popular in the 1700s and 1800s. Whitby was a pioneer postmillennialist who believed a period of peace would come as a result of the effects of the gospel. Due to a righteous optimism in the great revivals in both England and America, successful missions endeavors, scientific and technological advancements, social and political achievements, all seemed to bring in the fullness of the kingdom of God on this earth before the second coming of Christ. Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) in America and Andrew Fairbairn (1838-1912) in England contributed to the popularity of postmillennial thought at that time.⁴¹

The 1800s were very eventful concerning the various views of the second coming of Christ. Postmillennialism began the century in the most favored position. Evangelicals in both England and America were optimistic about the reception of the gospel message in global missions and large revivals, churches in England and America were large and popular, the standard of living was improving, social evils such as slavery, child labor and ethnic wars were decreasing. It seemed that the human race was about to realize a glorious era of peace and prosperity.⁴²

⁴⁰ Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 340-41.

⁴¹ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 693; Clouse, *Meaning of the Millennium*, 10-11; Blaising, "Premillennialism," 178.

⁴² Allison, *Historical Theology*, 694; Clouse, *Meaning of the Millennium*, 10-11.

Two factors changed everything; first, Charles Darwin introduced the theory of biological evolution in 1859. R. C. Sproul explains that “social Darwinism” or cultural evolution was applied to God’s kingdom. Nineteenth-century scholars rejected the monotheism revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures and developed instead an evolution of worship that began as animism, or the worship of nature and spirits; continuing to polytheism, or the worship of many gods; developing into henotheism, or the worship of a primary deity for a specific ethnicity; culminating with monotheism late in Jewish history which is the worship of one God. Nineteenth-century liberalism sought to remove supernatural aspects from Christianity and teach that the kingdom of God was evolving naturally through human effort without the intrusion of a transcendent God.⁴³

Second, world wars and communist revolutions demonstrated how difficult Christianization of the world would prove to be and how easy it is to reverse decades, if not centuries, of faithful ministry. As a result, postmillennialism began to experience decline among evangelicals at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁴

The 1800s also revealed changes in premillennialism. A robust historic premillennialism was represented among varied denominations, the leadership included Charles Spurgeon (1834-92), English Baptist; George Muller (1805-98), English Brethren; George N. H. Peters (1825-1909), American Lutheran; and Nathaniel W. West (1826-1906), American Presbyterian.⁴⁵ Historic premillennialists follow the teachings of Irenaeus that Christians will experience persecution from Antichrist forces during the tribulation, and will be caught up to meet Christ in His coming to defeat the Antichrist

⁴³ R. C. Sproul, *The Last Days According to Jesus: When Did Jesus Say He Would Return?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 20-21.

⁴⁴ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 694; Timothy P. Weber, “Dispensational and Historic Premillennialism as Popular Millennialist Movements,” in Blomberg and Chung, *A Case for Historic Premillennialism*, 8.

⁴⁵ Dennis M. Swanson, *Charles H. Spurgeon and Eschatology*, accessed December 17, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070805053115/http://www.spurgeon.org/eschat.htm#ans-conc>; Michael Cordner, *The Rapture of the Church*, accessed December 17, 2019, <http://www.ntslibrary.com/Online-Library-The-Rapture-of-the-Church.htm>.; George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*. 3 vols. (repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978); West, *Premillennial Essays*, 313.

and his hostile army. Irenaeus wrote that all believers throughout history will meet the Lord in the air in newly resurrected bodies to welcome Him in His return to earth to initiate His global rule for a thousand years.⁴⁶

Another premillennial view called dispensationalism was developed in the 1830s. John Darby (1800-1882), an English Plymouth Brethren, distinguished between Israel and the church. He believed that the church did not replace Israel, but the two are distinct peoples with separate histories and destinies. Darby taught that the church would be removed from the earth in the rapture before the tribulation period so that God's prophetic plan could again focus on national Israel during that seven-year time period and the follow-on millennial kingdom on this earth.⁴⁷

Weber states, "Although historical generalizations are often foolhardy, this one is not: by the end of World War I, dispensationalism was nearly synonymous with Fundamentalism and Pentecostalism."⁴⁸ Several factors resulted in the popularity of dispensational premillennialism, especially in the United States. Dispensationalism became foundational to the Fundamentalist rejection of postmillennial liberalism and evolutionary inroads into mainstream denominations. It became clear that conservatives would not regain control over churches, schools and printing ministries, so they abandoned older institutions to begin anew. These independent churches and schools often began with a dispensational doctrinal statement.⁴⁹

Beginning with the Azusa Street revival (1906), the Pentecostal movement is overwhelmingly pretribulation premillennialists. This movement embraced dispensational

⁴⁶ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25.4, 5.29.1, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:549-55.

⁴⁷ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 584; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 87; see also Craig A. Blaising, introduction to *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 16.

⁴⁸ Weber, "Popular Millennialist Movements," 16.

⁴⁹ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 1:208-37; Weber, "Popular Millennialist Movements," 16; George W. Dollard, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1972), 86; Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement: 1930-1956* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 11-12.

eschatology while rejecting dispensational ecclesiology; Pentecostals understand baptism of the Spirit to be a powerful blessing subsequent to regeneration, to give spiritual gifts and increased holiness; while dispensationalists insist that Spirit baptism places the believer in the body of Christ at salvation. Pentecostals also continue to practice personal prophecy and date setting, which causes confusion and discredits a belief in an imminent rapture.⁵⁰

Historical events seemed to confirm the dispensational message. Since the late 1800s/early 1900s, dispensationalists believed that the Jews would return to their land, and that the condition of the world will become progressively worse until coming of Christ. Suddenly in 1948, Israel became a nation and solidified their existence in a series of miraculous military victories over large Arab armies. The highpoint of dispensational popularity followed the Six Day War in 1967, when Israel regained the old city of Jerusalem with its temple mount, and Hal Lindsay's *Late Great Planet Earth* was published in 1970.⁵¹

According to a survey conducted by LifeWay Research in 2016,⁵² most Protestant pastors believe that Jesus will return in the future, but few agree about the details. About half (48 percent) accept premillennialism, the view that the thousand-year reign of Christ happens in the future. A third (31 percent) believe in amillennialism, the view that there is no thousand-year reign—instead Jesus already rules the hearts and minds of Christians. One in 10 (11 percent) hold postmillennialism—the idea that the world will gradually become more Christian until Jesus returns. Denomination makes an impact: Baptists (75 percent) and Pentecostals (84 percent) are most likely to choose premillennialism. Lutherans (71 percent) were most likely to choose amillennialism,

⁵⁰ Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 251-65; Weber, "Popular Millennialist Movements," 16.

⁵¹ Weber, "Popular Millennialist Movements," 18; Hal Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

⁵² Bob Smietana, "Pastors: The End of the World is Complicated," April 26, 2016, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2016/04/26/pastors-the-end-of-the-world-is-complicated>.

followed by Presbyterian/Reformed pastors (52 percent) and Methodists (37 percent). Methodists were also more likely than other denominations to choose postmillennialism (27 percent).

Premillennialism

The presence of the King mandates the kingdom. The Lord Jesus explained, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come unto you” (Matt 12:29). Evil angels will not be active in the earthly kingdom of Christ, He will imprison each one, starting with their Satanic ruler. Christ demonstrated this kingdom power in His earthly ministry; demons, disease and death could not remain in His presence. The same will be true in His return to earth, the kingdom of Christ will be a paradise.

It was not possible for Christ to remain on earth in His glorious physical body following His resurrection. He ascended to the right hand of God the Father in heaven, where He possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matt 28:19). Christ outpoured the Holy Spirit, as the gift of the Father, upon all who believe in Him. Now the kingdom of God is present in the lives of God’s people through Christ’s indwelling Spirit (Rom 14:17). We are individually transferred from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13) as the Holy Spirit in His baptism and indwelling applies the sacrificial atonement of Christ to each believer.

John the Baptist understood from the Hebrew prophets that Spirit outpouring/ baptism was the method of kingdom citizenship. Joel revealed that the Messiah would pour out His Spirit on all those who live to experience the kingdom at His coming (2:28-29). John baptized with water those who testified that they were prepared to be baptized with the Spirit on the first day of the kingdom. True to His word, beginning at Pentecost, Christ poured out His Spirit upon those who were spiritually prepared to participate in His kingdom. God’s people receive God’s kingdom by Spirit baptism. Christ is King, and those who experience the indwelling Holy Spirit are His kingdom in the world at this time. This same spiritual kingdom will continue in the physical return of Christ. Kingdom citizens

are a small minority today, but at the second coming only kingdom citizens will remain alive. At that time God's kingdom will be physical on a spiritual foundation.

The constitution of Christ's kingdom is the new covenant, just as the Torah was the constitution of the Mosaic covenant. The apostle Paul explained that the Holy Spirit writes the new covenant internally on the warm hearts of believers, just as God wrote the old covenant externally on cold stone at Sinai (2 Cor 3:1-11). The Mosaic covenant with its external law and its animal sacrifices was not dynamic enough to serve as the basis for the kingdom of Christ, a new covenant was necessary, which has as its foundation the sacrifice of Christ and the internal presence of the Holy Spirit.

The governmental legislature of the kingdom is the new covenant community, just as the Mosaic covenant community was the authority for the theocracy of Israel from Sinai to the cross. In that theocracy, God interacted with the *qahal* of Israel as they decided the best course of action. At times their decisions proved counterproductive, but binding nonetheless on the populace they represented. That *qahal* was ill-suited to provide authority for the kingdom of Christ; so a Messianic community, an *ekklesia* of new covenant recipients, was required to serve as the representative body of Christ for governmental representation for Christ's kingdom. New covenant churches at this time, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, deliberate the best course of action and make decisions binding on those they represent. This body with Christ as its head, is a fusion of democracy and theocracy. As a theocracy, God reveals His plan and purpose, and as a democracy, this community decides the best course of action to implement God's revealed will. This same construct operational now in the spiritual aspect of Christ's kingdom will continue to operate during the spiritual/physical manifestation of the kingdom of God.

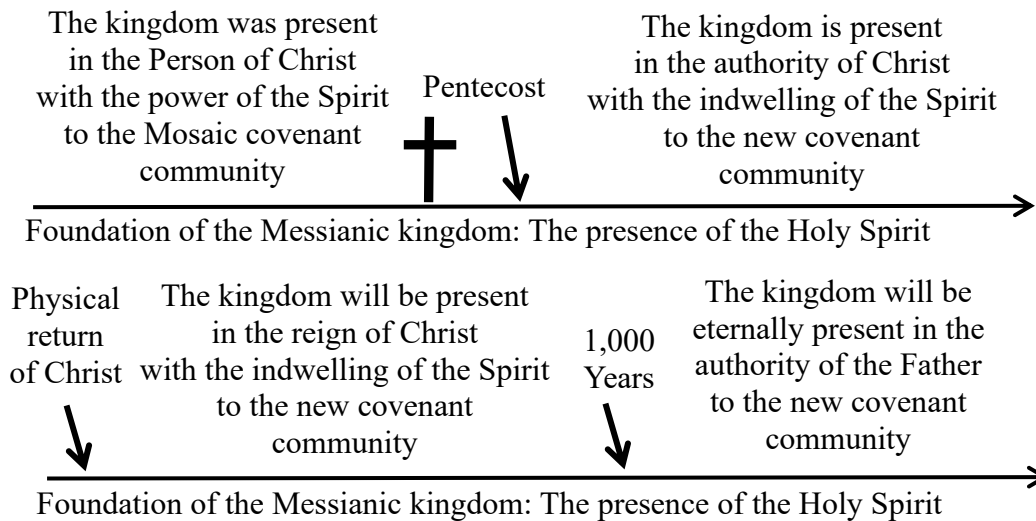


Figure 30. Progression of the Messianic kingdom in the purposes of the Persons of the Trinity.

As wonderful as our citizenship in Christ’s kingdom today, and as good as our participation in the church as the new covenant community is now, the best is yet to come. Christ will return to earth in His physical, glorified body and the new covenant community will follow with physical, resurrection bodies, just like His. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Ps 2:8-9), and we will rule with Him. He will be King of the world, and we will be subordinate kings, according to His promise (Rev 2:26-27). As wonderful as our citizenship in Christ’s earthly kingdom will be, and as good as our participation in the church as the new covenant community at that future time, the best is yet to come. After the thousand years has expired and the judgment of the lost world is completed, we will participate in Christ’s eternal kingdom in a re-created new heaven and earth forever.

Postmillennialism

Lorraine Boettner could not disagree more. He rejects the idea of an intermediate kingdom age that would follow the return of Christ. He cannot accept that evil continues to exist, only to be held in check by the iron scepter of Christ’s rule. He views a final rebellion against the saints and the holy city as incredible:

This element in particular seems to present an inconsistency—a mongrel kingdom, the new earth and glorified sinless humanity mingling with the old earth and sinful humanity; Christ and the saints in immortal resurrection bodies living in a world

that still contains much sin and scenes of death and decay. To bring Christ and the saints to live again in the sinful environment of this world would seem to be the equivalent of introducing sin into heaven.⁵³

Kenneth Gentry explains that postmillennialists expect the proclamation of the gospel to win the majority of mankind to salvation, which will produce a time of peace and prosperity on earth. After an extensive time of global righteousness, Christ will physically return to end history with the resurrection and judgment of all mankind.⁵⁴

The New Testament clearly expects an era of Christian dominion to occur prior to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ in power at the final judgment. This era of dominion will produce the worldwide transformation of society through the preaching of the gospel and individuals' widespread positive response to the message of redemption - a continuity of dominion.⁵⁵

He bases his kingdom doctrine on creation and the Abrahamic covenant. God created man in His image to exercise dominion over the earth. God also promised Abraham that he would receive a worldwide blessing (Gen 12:3), and that he would be heir of the world (Rom 4:13). He explains at length that God gave man dominion over the material world⁵⁶ and temporal sovereignty as derivative of God's absolute and eternal sovereignty.⁵⁷ Humanity has dominion over this physical creation during this time. The first man (Adam) lost authority in the fall and struggled with Satan's evil purposes; but Christ, the Last Adam, defeated Satan in His cross and restored dominion (physically, culturally and judicially) to redeemed mankind.

God's covenantal dominion will be extended in history through His covenant-keeping representatives in history. The spiritual heirs of the Second Adam will progressively fulfill the comprehensive task that was originally assigned to the First Adam. Redemption progressively triumphs in history over reprobation. The resurrection of Christ was and remains more powerful than the Fall of Adam: not just judicially but also culturally.⁵⁸

⁵³ Loraine Boettner, "Postmillennialism," in Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium*, 121-22.

⁵⁴ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., "Postmillennialism," in *Three Views of the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell Bock. Counterpoints. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 13-14.

⁵⁵ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *He Shall Have Dominion* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), 232.

⁵⁶ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 177.

⁵⁷ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 179-80.

⁵⁸ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 185-86.

However, this dominion expansion would be gradual; “here a little, there a little” (Isa 28:10).⁵⁹ The example of Israel’s conquest provides an illustration. Deuteronomy 7:22 explained that God would clear out the Canaanites “little by little.” Gentry points to the prophecy of Daniel (2:34-35, 44) as the stone of God’s kingdom from heaven struck and destroyed the image (which was accomplished in one blow at the cross), only to slowly become a great mountain to fill the whole earth.⁶⁰

He focuses on the kingdom parables in Matthew 13 to support his interpretation. In the parable of the sower (vv. 3-9), a good crop increased some thirty, some sixty and some one hundred-fold. In the parable of the wheat and tares (vv. 24-30), despite incredible growth of the wheat, the kingdom will always include a mixture of righteous and unrighteous. The ultimate separation will take place when Christ returns to earth. In the parable of the mustard seed (vv. 31-23), the kingdom grows magnificent beyond comprehension. In the parable of leaven (v. 33), the kingdom fills the earth. The mustard seed speaks of extensive expansion, while the yeast speaks of intensive penetration. He notes that these parables reinforce Daniel’s prophecy of the God’s kingdom growing to a place of global dominance, Dan 2:44).⁶¹ Gentry concludes: “The historical prospects of gospel victory bringing blessing on all nations comes by gradualistic conversion, not catastrophic imposition (as in premillennialism) or apocalyptic conclusion (as in amillennialism).”⁶²

In response to this view that conditions on earth will gradually become better as the majority of humanity responds to the gospel, postmillennialists must live in some alternate reality, as society is becoming increasingly hostile to Christ and His people. Jesus pointedly explained to His disciples:

⁵⁹ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 249.

⁶⁰ Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion*, 251.

⁶¹ Gentry, “Postmillennialism,” 25-28.

⁶² Gentry, “Postmillennialism,” 29-30.

If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but you are not of the world because I chose you out of the world. Remember the word that I said to you, 'The servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you (John 15:18-20).

The world might have seemed to be getting better in the year 400, during the experience of Augustine, as the pagan citizens of the Roman Empire accepted a nominal, external outlook of Christianity, before barbarian hordes sacked Rome and destroyed the western empire. The world might have seemed to be getting better two hundred years ago, with missionary advances, as well as scientific and technological breakthroughs, before two disastrous world wars, atheistic communism, militant Islam, evolutionary philosophy, secular humanism, internet pornography, drug cartels, organized crime, overpopulation, pandemics, scarce resources and an unpredictable economy all point to an apocalyptic future. The world is headed for tribulation one way or another, and lost humanity is looking for a godless leader to solve this pending global crisis.

Concerning the kingdom parables (Matt 12), there are good seed, but the majority are unproductive. The tares are gathered by the angels at the coming of Christ to experience a fiery judgment, while the wheat will shine as the sun in a future aspect of God's kingdom (vv. 37-43). The beginning of Christ's kingdom at Pentecost, small as the mustard seed and hidden as yeast, becomes global at His second coming.

Each believer must decide for themselves if God is fulfilling man's dominion over creation at this time, or if we must wait for Christ's return to this earth. An honest look at this world reveals man in total depravity that will accept God's authority only by way of the rule of Christ in His coming. Daniel foretold of God's kingdom filling the earth, only after it totally destroys the world's governments. Scriptural statements tell of a catastrophic imposition, and current reality reinforces this increasingly harsh outlook.

Amillennialism

Benjamin Merkle gives four reasons why an intermediate kingdom cannot exist between this current age and the eternal state of the new heavens and new earth: First, this

present creation will be destroyed by fire on the Day of the Lord. “The Day of the Lord will come like a thief in which the heavens will perish with a noise, the elements will dissolve with burning heat, and the earth with all its works will be not be found” (2 Pet 3:10). He parallels this verse with Romans 8:18-23, as the apostle Paul describes animal creation groaning in distress waiting for the “revelation of the sons of God” (v. 19). Merkle explains that creation will be liberated at the time when God’s people receive glorified resurrection bodies.⁶³ In his explanation, this *day* cannot mean a time period of a thousand years.

In response, the word *day* (Hebrew יוֹם, *yom*; Greek ἡμέρα, *hemera*) can mean twelve hours of daylight (Gen 1:5, John 11:9), twenty-four hours from sunset to sunset (Gen 1:31, Luke 4:2), or an age or epoch (Ps 2:7, John 8:56). Specifically to this discussion is the Day of Yahweh, which is expressed by the prophets as the time when God reveals Himself in history. This is described as a time of judgment (Joel 1:15, 2:1, 2; Amos 5:18, 20); the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 597 BC was explained as a Day of Yahweh then in Jeremiah’s past (Lam 1:21), the locust plague as a Day of Yahweh currently being experienced in the present (Joel 1:15), and the Day of Yahweh was foretold as a future event (Isa 2:12; Ezek 30:3).⁶⁴

The Hebrew prophets foresaw this future Day of Yahweh as one special day (“a unique day—a day known only to the LORD”—NIV; Zech 14:7), as a Day of Yahweh’s wrath (Zeph 1:15-18), a time of sacrifice (Zeph 1:7-8) and a day of battle as God pours out the blood of His enemies who rebel against Him (vv. 14-17; Jer 46:10; Ezek 13:5; Joel 2:11). While this day will be characterized by judgment—“In that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zech 12:9), it will also be a day of salvation and hope for those who trust in Yahweh—“It will happen that whoever calls of Yahweh’s name will be saved, for there will be deliverance in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, as Yahweh has said, and among the remnant whom Yahweh calls” (Joel 2:32).

⁶³ Benjamin J. Merkle, “The Meaning of the Millennium: An Amillennial Perspective,” in *Understanding Prophecy: A Biblical-Theological Approach*, ed. Alan S. Bandy and Benjamin L. Merkle (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2015), 261-62.

⁶⁴ Moisés Silva, ed., “ἡμέρα,” in *NIDNTTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 2:389-90.

This day will be protection (Zech 12:1), cleansing (13:1), outpouring of the Spirit (12:10) and refreshment (14:8) to God's people.⁶⁵

The Day of Yahweh denotes more than one calendar day and signifies an event which marks off a divinely inaugurated period of time, which the prophets reveal as "the days to come,"⁶⁶ "in those days,"⁶⁷ or "at that time."⁶⁸ That future day (Isa 2:11-12) is described as latter days when Yahweh rules the nations, who will come to Jerusalem to seek His guidance (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3). Yahweh enables Israel to rebuild and inhabit cities in those days. In latter days God restores the blessings of Israel following a time of distress and judgment (Jer 33:16; Hos 3:5; Joel 3:1; Zech 8:23). God makes His new covenant in future days (Jer 31:31). The prophet Daniel understands a time of trouble followed by a time of deliverance (Dan 12:1); the angel revealed to him that from the desecration of the temple to the time of blessing would be one thousand two hundred ninety days (v. 11).⁶⁹

The Day of the Lord also plays an important part in the NT, as Jesus refers to Himself in "the day of the Son of Man" for that time when He will appear in the glory of His kingdom (Luke 17:24, 30). Christ spoke of that day as an unexpected time of judgment on the whole world (Luke 21:34-35). As in the OT, the Day of the Lord is expressed by the apostles the time when Yahweh reveals Himself in history. This is described as a time of judgment (Matt 10:15, 12:36); not only wrath on the lost world (Rom 5:5, Rev 6:17), but of angels (Jude 6), and also of believers (1 Cor 5:5). Christ will raise His own on this eschatological day (John 6:39). For God's people, there can be boldness (1 John 4:17), rejoicing (Phil 2:16), and even boasting (2 Cor 1:14) in the day of Christ.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Gerhard von Rad, "ἡμέρα," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:945.

⁶⁶ Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13; Jer 7:32; 9:24; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 31:27, 31, 38; 33:14.

⁶⁷ Jer 3:16, 18; Luke 5:18; 31:29; 33:15f; Ezek 38:17; Joel 3:2; 4:1; Zech 8:6, 23.

⁶⁸ Amos 5:13; Isa 18:7; Mic 3:4; Zeph 1:12; 3:19f; Jer 3:17; 4:11; 8:1; 31:1; Ezek 7:7,12; Dan 12:1. Jeremiah never speaks of "the Day of Yahweh," but frequently prophesies of the same time frame but in the plural.

⁶⁹ Von Rad, "ἡμέρα," 2:946.

⁷⁰ Silva, "ἡμέρα," 2:392-93.

As in the OT, there is a focus on one special day when Christ will return to defeat the Antichrist and his armies in the battle of that great day of God Almighty (2 Thess 2:2, 8; Rev 16:14). In the NT, the Day of the Lord signifies a time which Christ and the apostles reveal as “days” in the plural. The author of Hebrews quoted Jeremiah (31:31-34) to explain the new covenant (Heb 8:8, 10); “Behold, the days are coming.” In Acts 2:17 (“It will happen in the last days”), the apostle Peter quoted the prophet Joel (2:28, “It will happen afterwards”) to explain that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21). Those who call on the name of the Lord now (Rom 10:13) experience the same salvation as those who will call on Yahweh when He returns in the Person of the Son (Joel 2:32).

Paul teaches the doctrine of an apocalyptic day still to come (Acts 17:31, Rom 2:5), yet at the same time he regards himself as already involved in the eschatological event. Not only does he take over the existing tradition of the nearness of the last day (Rom 13:12), but in addition calls upon his readers to walk “as in the day” (v. 13), “now” being “the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). In other words, the ages are intertwined.⁷¹

Perilous times will come in the last days (2 Tim 3:1) when mockers will ask “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet 3:3). Christ spoke of “the days of the Son of Man” (Luke 17:26), as preliminary to the day when the Son of Man is revealed like lightning from heaven (v. 30). He explained that there would be a time of tribulation such as the world has never yet experienced, nor will experience again (see Dan 12:1) followed by a time of blessing (Matt 24:19, 22, 29; Luke 21:22, 23, 29).

The Day of the Lord is both the calendar day that Christ returns to earth, and an era of multiple days as He reveals His judgment upon this world. This unique Day of the Lord when Christ comes to this world will be a day of wrath, of judgment, of battle and bloodshed; however, there are circumstances leading up to the Day of Christ’s return with an era to follow. The destruction of the universe by fire (2 Pet 3:10-12) will be the final event in the Day of the Lord program, although it will occur after the intermediate millennial kingdom and before the re-creation of the eternal new heaven and earth.

⁷¹ Silva, “ἡμέρα,” 2:392-93.

Scripture explains, “One day is as a thousand years with the Lord” (2 Pet 3:8). The first coming of Christ was thirty-three years long, while the second coming will be an event a thousand years in duration.

The apostle Paul revealed the future time when creation, especially animals, will be released from their present cruel bondage as God’s people receive their dominion mandate (Rom 8:21). Isaiah described the same conditions when the wolf and the lamb would feed together and the lion would eat straw like an ox (Isa 11:6-9, 65:25). The apostle Peter writes of a later time in 2 Pet 3:10, 12, as fire burns the universe, melts the elements and leaves the earth laid bare. Animal creation would not survive. It is easier to understand creation dominion with little children leading wolves, lambs and lions during a millennial age, than for the presence of babies in the future eternal state.

Amillennialists believe the creation mandate and the inheritance of Abraham will be fulfilled in the new heaven and new earth. They do not hold that humanity experiences dominion over creation at this time, and since they cannot accept an intermediate millennial kingdom, this creation authority must be restored in the eternally future new earth. In order to establish continuity with this created order, many amillennialists understand that this creation is not totally dissolved and re-created as described by the apostle Peter (2 Pet 3:10, 12), but only renewed and refurbished as described by the apostle Paul (Rom 8:21).

Randy Alcorn points out that some understand that this new heaven and earth does not speak of the final destruction of this present creation. In 2 Peter 3:10, the KJV reading “will be burned up” is based on the word κατακαήσεται (*katakaesetai*) in the Majority Text; however, the critical text reads εύρεθήσεται (*heurethsetai*, will be found), translated as “laid bare” in the NIV. He quotes John Piper, “When Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10 say the present earth and heaven will ‘pass away,’ it does not have to mean that they go out of existence, but may mean that there will be such a change in them that their present condition passes away.” Alcorn explains that the Greek word καινός (*kainos*), means *new* “in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by

what is new.” He further explains, “Paul uses the same word, *kainos*, when he speaks of a believer becoming “a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). The new earth will be the same as the old earth, just as a new Christian is still the same person they were before. Different? Yes, but also the same.”⁷²

In response, the apostle Peter used the word λύω (*luo*) in 2 Peter 3:11 to describe the future result of this current creation. The Greek word *luo* means “to loose, to release, to destroy”; the choice of “dissolved” is appropriate. The word *kainos* is also used of the new covenant (Heb 8:13), which is not a renewed covenant, but it has totally replaced the old covenant that no longer exists. In the same way, the new creation is not a renewed creation, but it has replaced an old creation that disintegrated. We are a new creation in Christ, so God is creating us as a part of the new creation ahead of time, so that we can survive the transition.

Merkle gives a second reason why an intermediate kingdom cannot exist between this current age and the eternal state of the new heavens and new earth; unbelievers will be judged when Christ returns.⁷³ He discusses at length 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10:

God will repay those oppressing you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels, taking vengeance in flaming fire on those who do not know God, who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and who will pay the penalty of eternal loss from the presence of Lord and from His glorious power. He will be glorified in His saints and admired by all those who believe in that day because you believed our testimony.

Merkle states that Paul links judgment on the wicked to the day that Christ comes from heaven; consequently, unbelievers will experience judgment at the return of Christ.

Premillennialists agree that at the time of Christ’s return every unbeliever in the world will die and be confined to Hades, while God’s people of all history will be alive to enjoy the blessings of the earthly kingdom. The Day of Christ will be characterized by wrath, vengeance and retribution as the Lord defeats this rebellious world with a great

⁷² Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), 147-49.

⁷³ Merkle, “The Meaning of the Millennium,” 262.

expression of His power. To speak honestly, every person will be either redeemed or dead at the beginning of Christ's kingdom on earth. This does not mean that children cannot be born to people in families with normal bodies eventually, and this does not negate the belief that the great white throne judgment will occur at the end of the millennium.

Anthony Hoekema writes that there will be a general resurrection of both believers and unbelievers at the return of Christ: "Amillennialists reject the premillennial teaching that the resurrection of believers and that of unbelievers will be separated by a thousand years."⁷⁴ He states that all men will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to reveal the eternal destiny of each one, to publicly separate the people of God from His enemies, and to determine the degree of reward or punishment that each will receive.

Strimple points out that the teaching of Christ declares a resurrection of the saved and lost at the same time:⁷⁵ "For an hour is coming in which all those in their tombs will hear His voice and will come out—those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done wickedly to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

In response, 1 John 2:18 tells that this present time is the *last hour*. Blaising explains, "If the eschatological hour can be extended over two thousand years, it is not impossible that a thousand years might transpire between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust."⁷⁶

Premillennialists differentiate the judgment seat of Christ from the great white throne judgment. Only the children of God will stand before Christ's tribunal (βήματος, *bematos*, Rom 14:10, 2 Cor 5:10) to receive commendation for faithful service or loss of reward for disobedience. This tribunal will reveal the quality of the believer's works, that which was accomplished with selfish motives will be destroyed (1 Cor 3:10-13). "If the

⁷⁴ Anthony A. Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium*, 182-84.

⁷⁵ Robert B. Strimple, "Amillennialism," in Bock, *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, 101.

⁷⁶ Craig A. Blaising, "A Premillennial Response," in Bock, *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, 150.

works of anyone is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, so as through fire” (v. 15). Only the lost world will be judged at the great white throne (Rev 20:11-15). Souls from Hades are united with their bodies (v. 13), and all are physically cast into the lake of fire (v. 14).

These statements of Christ and Daniel emphasize that all will participate in an eschatological accounting for their lives, whether a believer or an unbeliever, and everyone will be reunited body and soul for their eternal destiny. These pronouncements do not negate or contradict further details as to scope or time which are revealed in the Scriptures.

The third reason Merkle gives why an intermediate kingdom cannot exist between this current age and the eternal state of the new heavens and new earth is that natural, perishable bodies do not exist beyond Christ’s return. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50). Paul taught that believers would receive imperishable, immortal bodies at our resurrection, which would be unnecessary in a millennial environment populated with people with natural bodies.⁷⁷

In response it must be pointed that believers today are kingdom citizens in flesh and blood bodies. We are just as much a citizen of the kingdom at this time as we will ever be in the future. We did not inherit God’s kingdom through physical birth, each one received the kingdom due to spiritual birth, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God . . . that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:3, 6).

Even though we are currently kingdom people, there are future realities of our kingdom inheritance yet to experience. One future reality is our glorious, resurrection body. Now only Christ has a glorified body, which has flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). In the eternal state of the new heaven and new earth, each of God’s people will ultimately have a glorified body like His; however, the millennium will be an intermediate kingdom where some of God’s people, who lived before in history, will be resurrected to share in the experience,

⁷⁷ Merkle, “The Meaning of the Millennium,” 262.

while others will be able to enjoy a lifetime of human existence as God originally intended for His creation. “Old men and old women will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with a staff in his hand because of great age, and the streets will be full of boys and girls playing” (Zech 8:4-5). The presence of children and old people reveal an intermediate kingdom age where some people have normal bodies for one thousand years. It is not impossible for people with normal bodies to interact with those in glorified bodies. Jesus in His resurrection body interacted with his disciples in normal bodies for forty days. He walked and talked with them, He ate fish and honey with them and met with more than five hundred normal people at one time.

Fourth, Merkle states that there will not be any opportunity for individuals to receive salvation following Christ’s return. He discusses the writing of the apostle Peter that scoffers will deny the coming of Christ; however, the Lord is patient “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). “If the reason for the delay of Christ’s return is his desire to further extend the opportunity for the gospel, then it follows that when he comes that opportunity will be terminated.”⁷⁸

In response, it is true that all opportunity for salvation will end for the lost world on the day of Christ’s return as the vast majority of the earth’s population will perish. The same conditions were present on the day the flood came in the time of Noah. The pre-flood world did not understand, “until the flood came and removed them all, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt 24:39). Earth population began again with the descendants of Noah, and many of those who were born after the flood continued to rebel against God’s authority on their lives.

One of the missions of the new covenant community will be to teach the follow-on generations about their need for salvation. Many will believe in Christ as Savior and receive Him as their King. Those believers will continue to reside in the millennial kingdom all their natural lives. Others who reject Christ as Savior and refuse to accept

⁷⁸ Merkle, “The Meaning of the Millennium,” 262.

Him as their King will die when they are one hundred years old (Isa 65:20). After the thousand years are expired, Satan will be loosed from the abyss of Hades and will deceive the young generation of Christ-rejecters (Rev 20:7-8). Christ will defeat this final rebellion (v. 9) and judge all of lost humanity of history as His great white throne (v. 11).

Robert Strimple surveys OT prophecies of a Messianic kingdom; the reign of the Messiah from Jerusalem, to include a rebuilt temple, Levitical priesthood, animal sacrifices, Sabbath worship and physical circumcision. He asks how post-resurrection, post-Pentecost Christians should understand OT prophecies of a future glorious kingdom. Strimple responds that Hebrew prophets told of the Messianic kingdom in terms that OT people could understand. This Messianic age was inaugurated by Christ, of which the church now participates. He explains that key concepts, communicated in the OT and experienced in the NT, include the people of Israel, the promised land, the city of Jerusalem, the temple and its sacrifices, and the throne of David.⁷⁹

Strimple states concerning the people of Israel that the true Israel is Christ Himself. Isaiah tells of the suffering Servant (chap. 41). In chapter 42, this Servant is an individual, explained in the NT as fulfilled in Christ; however, in chapter 44 the Servant is the nation of Israel. He points out that Israel was called to be the Lord's servant to the world, but because of covenant unfaithfulness, God brought forth His special Servant, Christ who is true Israel. God promised covenant blessings to Abraham and his seed, to which the apostle Paul explains that the Seed is Christ (Gal 3:16), but more, those who are in Christ participate in His blessings, so we become Abraham's seed in Him (Gal 3:29).⁸⁰ He believes the nation of Israel to be God's people in the OT and the believing church to be the people of God in the New; but Christians today receive these blessings, regardless of ethnicity, only as we are united to Christ by faith. Concerning the new covenant specifically to be made with the house of Israel (Jer 31:31), it is mediated to believers today, only as we are in Christ, who is true Israel (Heb 8:6).⁸¹

⁷⁹ Strimple, "Amillennialism," 84-87.

⁸⁰ Strimple, "Amillennialism," 87-89.

Strimple explains that the kingdom of David began in the enthronement of Christ as He took His place at the right hand of God in heaven. God promised an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7:16; Isa 9:6), which was fulfilled in Luke 1:32-33: “He will be great and He will be called Son of the Highest, the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and there will not be an end to His kingdom.” Strimple points out that James quoted Amos 9:11-12 during the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13-17), which states that the Messiah will rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David, so that humanity may seek Yahweh and Gentiles may call on His name. He quotes F. F. Bruce who explains that the fulfillment rebuilding of the David’s tabernacle is “the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the Son of David, and the reconstitution of His disciples as the new Israel, and the fulfillment of the second part in the presence of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the Church.”⁸²

Strimple states concerning the temple that Christ Himself is the true temple. Jesus declared that One greater than the temple is here (Matt 12:6), and that when He spoke of raising the temple, He spoke of His body (John 2:21). There will not be a temple in the new Jerusalem, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Rev 21:22). Now God’s people as living stones are being built as a temple for the habitation of God’s Spirit (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5).⁸³

In response to Strimple’s position, it is true that Christ experienced glorification in His resurrection and enthronement in His ascension. Jesus is as much the King, the Son of David, at this time as He will ever be forever. His one kingdom has a spiritual foundation and an eternal duration. There is no difference in His mediatorial rule based on the new covenant beginning at Pentecost whether in heaven or on the earth. Christ is the true Israel, those who are in Him are seed of Abraham, because He is the Seed of Abraham;

⁸¹ Strimple, “Amillennialism,” 89-90.

⁸² F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 310. See also Strimple, “Amillennialism,” 94-97.

⁸³ Strimple, “Amillennialism,” 97-100.

we are the sons of God because He is the Son of God. We partake in every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 2:6). Christians today receive these blessings, regardless of ethnicity, only as we are united to Christ by faith. Christ is new covenant sacrifice; He is the new covenant High Priest and those who have participated in the new covenant through Him are His subordinate priesthood. We are living stones in a corporate temple for the residence of the Holy Spirit, because He indwells us and our individual bodies are the temple of the Spirit. Our ultimate home is the new heaven and the new earth, and we will reside in the new Jerusalem with our Triune God and all His redeemed forever.

However, the fact that Gentile believers today are the spiritual seed of Abraham does not make us spiritual Israel. Those of other ethnicities are not incorporated into Israel, either physically or spiritually, at our salvation. Participation in Christ does not involve ethnicity, but neither does it remove it. Believers of the many people groups retain their ethnicity at this time, and even in heaven every ethnicity will be represented before the throne of God (Rev 7:9). Jesus has Hebrew ethnicity; He was a Jew in His life on earth, and even in His glorification and enthronement He remains the King of Israel, the Son of David and the Lion of Judah. The apostles were Jews in their lifetimes, and in their future millennial service for God, their Hebrew ethnicity will play a part. Christ promised that in the resurrection they would sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28).

Jews retain their ethnicity at this time, and those of Israel who are in Christ do not forfeit their heritage. The apostle Paul as a believer identified with ethnic Israel, and expressed concern about those who were his relatives according to the flesh (Rom 9:3). Paul even used the word *Hebrew* twice to describe himself [“Are they Hebrews? So am I” (2 Cor 11:22); a Hebrew of the Hebrews (Phil 3:5)]. Why this is important, simply God had a purpose for ethnic Israel in His first coming and still has a purpose for ethnic Israel in His second coming as well.

Fred Zaspel and James Hamilton explain from Romans 9-11 that “true Israel” or “spiritual Israel” exists within the larger group of ethnic Israel (v. 9:6), within the larger

group of physical descendants of Abraham is a smaller subset of spiritual descendants (v. 7), and within the children of flesh is a smaller group of children of promise (v. 8).⁸⁴

Genealogy does not determine one's relationship with God. He gives His blessings only to those who accept His promises by faith. The apostle Paul understands that the majority of ethnic Israel in his day rejected Jesus as their Messiah (v. 11:5), but that had been the case throughout Israel's history. The majority had always rejected (v. 7), while a remnant obtained God's grace (v. 5). Paul gives the illustration of Elijah's day, only seven thousand refused to worship Baal (v. 4). Israel had rejected Christ, but Paul did not view this rejection to be total, he was a believer among the people of Israel. He also did not regard this rejection to be final; God would be faithful to His promise and at a future time all Israel will be saved (v. 26). Zaspel and Hamilton point out that the same people that are rejecting now will accept the promises of God one future day.⁸⁵

They discuss how Gentiles fit into this present rejection, future acceptance paradigm: Israel's failure brought blessing to the Gentiles, so Israel's acceptance will bring greater blessing (v. 12). The blessing that Israel failed to accept is the Abrahamic covenant and its promise of a worldwide kingdom. The Abrahamic covenant is like a cultivated olive tree, but unbelieving Israel has been broken out. Believing Gentiles are like branches taken from wild trees and grafted into the cultivated tree of Abrahamic promises. It is an easier process to graft natural branches back into the cultivated tree, as an ethnic Jew comes to accept God's promises by faith. They explain that God has not rejected his people Israel. God will one day reverse the present situation—not just the remnant but “all Israel will be saved.” God designed Israel's temporary unbelief and rejection to fulfill his global saving purpose, a purpose that reflects his marvelous grace.⁸⁶

Concerning Israel and the church, the position that “all Israel” is a reference to the Jewish/Gentile church has a long history among Reformed interpreters; however, recent

⁸⁴ Fred G. Zaspel and James M. Hamilton Jr., “A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” in *Three Views on Israel and the Church: Perspectives on Romans 9-11*, ed. Jared Compton and Andrew Naselli (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 101, 108.

⁸⁵ Zaspel and Hamilton, “A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” 115.

⁸⁶ Zaspel and Hamilton, “A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View,” 117.

expositors have concluded that Paul's focus is ethnic Israel. It would be inconsistent to understand Israel as Paul's "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3), only to give a spiritualized meaning of Israel as a Jewish/Gentile church in 11:26. They agree with the majority opinion that "all Israel" refers to ethnic Israel as a whole which comes to faith in Christ *en masse* in a coming day. They point out that Israel is now characterized by rejection, but one day they will come to be characterized by acceptance. Paul emphasizes the point that God made a decree that could never be annulled or transferred to others; consequently, His promise to Israel stands. "God's gifts and calling are irrevocable" (v. 29).⁸⁷

Believing Gentiles do not take away any future promises to ethnic Israel, but as these future kingdom promises are realized by believing Israel, believing Gentiles will participate in God's kingdom blessings in equality (Rom 11:11-12). Believing Jews and Gentiles participate in kingdom promises as new covenant recipients now in equality, and both will participate in future blessings as the new covenant community just as equally. Concerning the millennial kingdom, God gave Adam the world, but he forfeited it. God promised land to Abraham, but his descendants were exiled from it. Christ will come to earth as the Last Adam to establish dominion; as Abraham's Seed to fulfill the land promises, and as the Son of David to rule the nations.

Understood this way, the millennium becomes a necessary step toward the new heaven and new earth, the completion of God's creation project before the purging renewal. Before God makes all things new, he will accomplish his purpose for the present heavens and earth through the reign of Christ during the millennium.⁸⁸

Merkle explains that Revelation 20 asserts the binding of Satan between the first and second comings of Christ. He writes that the imagery is often figurative or metaphorical in the book of Revelation; the truth is to be accepted as a reality, but recognized in its symbolism. For example, Satan is spoken of as a dragon (Rev 12:1);

⁸⁶ Zaspel and Hamilton, "A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View," 117.

⁸⁷ Zaspel and Hamilton, "A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View," 122-24.

⁸⁸ Zaspel and Hamilton, "A Typological Future-Mass-Conversion View," 139.

a dragon is symbolic, but the devil is real. In Revelation 20:1, an angel brings a chain, lock and key to bind Satan; the binding is real, but the chain is symbolic of God's intention to limit the devil's influence in the world. Merkle further explains that the thousand-year time frame is also symbolic of a certain period of time. During this prescribed time, his ability to deceive the nations is curtailed. He understands that Jesus bound Satan during His public ministry (Matt 2:29) and defeated the devil with his evil kingdom in His cross (Col 2:15). Hebrews points out that Jesus died that He might destroy the devil (Heb 2:14). The apostle John informed us that the Son appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Now Satan is a roaring lion (1 Pet 5:8), but he is a lion on a leash (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6).⁸⁹

Craig Blomberg understands the return of Christ to earth to defeat the forces of evil arrayed against Him in Revelation 19. The armies of earth are gathered for the battle of Armageddon, and Christ comes with His army from heaven to completely defeat His enemies. The text points out two of the key leaders, the beast (Antichrist) and his valued lieutenant, the false prophet, who are quickly captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire first of all. Readers expect to find out what happens to Satan, the most evil ring leader, and they are not disappointed; the book seamlessly continues to describe that the devil is not incarcerated in the lake of fire, at least not at first, but he is imprisoned in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3).⁹⁰

In the meantime, the people of earth enjoy the kingdom of God without Satan's evil intervention, he will not have the opportunity to deceive humanity at all for a thousand years, while saints who were killed during the previous tribulation will reign subordinate to Christ in resurrected bodies. When the thousand years are finished, Satan is released and will deceive people who experience temptation for the first time. Many will follow the devil in rebellion against Christ, and they will be defeated in their mutiny. Finally, Satan

⁸⁹ Merkle, "The Meaning of the Millennium," 260.

⁹⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, "The Posttribulationism of the New Testament," in Blomberg and Chung, *A Case for Historic Premillennialism*, 67-68.

is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet remain, and all of humanity throughout history who have rejected God's authority on their lives will be judged and eternally imprisoned in the lake of fire (Rev 20:4-15). The apostle Paul declares that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Yahweh (Phil 2:9-11).

Amillennialists disagree, Strimple explains that the chapters in the book of Revelation are not always chronological, and in the case of chapters nineteen and twenty, chapter twenty brings the readers back to Christ's first coming and the beginning of the gospel age. He points out that the two visions; the binding of Satan (20:1-4) and the martyred saints (20:4-6) seem to be similar because both use the same phrase "a thousand years," but the binding of Satan is earthly, and the martyred saints are heavenly. He affirms that when believers die and go to heaven, we reign with Christ there.⁹¹

In response it must be said that although Christ defeated Satan and his kingdom on His cross, the devil is active and powerful, and has been so since the Garden of Eden. Satan is now on a leash, but that was also true in the experience of Job; the devil could do no more than what he was allowed. Satan is deceiving the nations at this time, and the whole world rests in the evil one (1 John 5:19). The devil has authority over this world and he gives it to whoever he wishes (Luke 4:6); however, during the millennium, Satan will be imprisoned and not be able to deceive the ethnic groups for a thousand years. Following that time, he will be released for one last time for deceiving.

In addition, the book of Revelation presents saints in heaven with golden crowns, sitting on thrones and clothed in white garments (4:3). It will be our glorious honor and privilege to worship One seated on the throne. Living creatures (which we do not yet understand) will proclaim:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain and purchased to God by Your blood those from every tribe and language and people group and ethnicity. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and *they will reign on the earth* (Rev 5:9-10).

⁹¹ Strimple, "Amillennialism," 121.

It is true that there will be an aspect of reigning in the eternal kingdom of the new heavens and earth, although those details are not revealed to us. Revelation 21:24 reveals that ethnicities will walk by its light and kings of the earth will bring their glory into the new Jerusalem.

Each believer has to decide for themselves if the devil is active and powerful on this earth, or is Satan bound so that he can no longer deceived the nations at this time; and whether it makes more sense that the devil will be bound during Christ's earthly kingdom, so that the people of that time can experience life free from temptation to evil.

Ladd understands a biblical solution between two extremes; one end of the spectrum a common type of covenant theology asserts the church to be spiritual Israel in every way. Israel rejected its Messiah, so God rejected Israel finally and completely. The kingdom was taken away from Israel and given to the church (Matt 21:43); the church becomes the royal priesthood, holy nation and God's own people (1 Pet 2:9). The church is now the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16), and as spiritual Israel, the church has replaced ethnic Israel, so all the promises in the OT to national Israel must be understood as spiritual blessings for the church. As the result, according to traditional covenant theology, any and all prophecies of a literal, earthly kingdom for Israel are interpreted as a spiritual, heavenly kingdom for the church.⁹²

Ladd explains that on the other end of the spectrum, the more traditional dispensationalists assert that Israel and the church are two distinct people that can never be mingled or confused. God has two separate programs in biblical history and prophecy; one for the church and another for Israel. When Israel rejected its Messiah, God turned to the church; and when His purposes for the church is fulfilled, He will rapture the church out of the way and return to His prophetic plan for Israel. The church is a parenthesis in God's program for Israel; the millennium will be a resumption of the theocracy of Israel and the kingdom will be a revival or renewal of a quasi-OT order.⁹³

⁹² George Eldon Ladd, "Israel and the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (October-December 1964): 206-7.

⁹³ Ladd, "Israel and the Church," 206-7.

Ladd understands a mediating way in five propositions: first, the church has taken the place of Israel and must be called spiritual Israel. He explains that the church is the spiritual seed of Abraham, and heirs of his promise (Gal 3:29). Every believer participates in circumcision of the heart (Col 2:11), the act of the Spirit that makes an outward Jew a true Jew inwardly (Rom 2:29).⁹⁴

Second, NT apostles spiritually apply OT promises to the church. Ladd gives two examples: Hosea 1:6, 9, 2:18-19, the prophet tells of God's rejection of Israel because they broke His covenant. One child was named *Lo-ruhamah* which means "No-pity," another was named *Lo-ammi*, "Not-My-people." However, Hosea sees a future restoration for ethnic Israel. God will make a new covenant to betroth the people of Israel to Himself forever. "I will have pity on 'No-pity,' and I will say to 'Not-My-people,' you are My people" (2:23). The apostle Paul applies this passage to everybody regardless of ethnicity (Rom 9:25-26), as those who are not God's people become sons of God. Also Joel 2:27-29 tells of a day when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, and the apostle Peter applies this passage to the church in Acts 2:16. Ladd can see no other interpretation than a promise originally given to ethnic Israel is fulfilled in the church as spiritual Israel.⁹⁵

Third, the Levitical system of animal sacrifices has passed away forever because the sacrifice of Christ is an eternal reality (Heb 8:6). The old covenant has been totally displaced by the new covenant mediated at the cross (Heb 8:13). Previous animal sacrifices were illustrations of the greater and permanent atonement of Christ, and now that the shadow has passed away, the reality has come, (Heb 10:1-2).⁹⁶

Fourth, although the church is spiritual Israel, the apostles taught that ethnic Israel has a future salvation. Paul was concerned about the fate of ethnic Israel; it is true that the majority of the Jewish people continue to reject Christ, but due to this rejection, the gospel has gone out to the whole world. Paul points out that if the rejection of Israel

⁹⁴ Ladd, "Israel and the Church," 207-8.

⁹⁵ Ladd, "Israel and the Church," 208-9.

⁹⁶ Ladd, "Israel and the Church," 210-12.

results in riches for the Gentile world, how much greater riches will the Gentile world receive when ethnic Israel accepts their Messiah (Rom 11:11-12). If Israel would have received Jesus as their King with acclaim in spiritual repentance and faith at His first coming, this would result a totally different world and the rest of humanity would be in a different circumstance. Christians today have the opportunity to be kingdom citizens and heirs of God's earthly kingdom because of ethnic Israel's continued rejection. The day that ethnic Israel responds to their Messiah for salvation will be the first day of the millennium. This is the principle of "To the Jews first, then also to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46; Rom 1:16, 2:9-10). On the day of Christ's return, ethnic Israel in mass will call upon the name of Yahweh for salvation first (Joel 2: 32), then all the other ethnicities will call upon the name of the Lord as well (Acts 2:21, Rom 9:13). There is no distinction between ethnic Jews and other ethnicities, for the same Lord is rich to all who calls upon Him (9:12).

Fifth, Ladd asserts that salvation of Jews happens on the same terms as the salvation of anyone else, through saving faith in Christ Jesus as our crucified Messiah. There is only one plan of salvation for each one who becomes the people of God throughout human history; but salvation is individual, each one has individual circumstances that brings them to Christ. Ladd envisions millennial Israel as a truly Christian nation, as every ethnic Jew believes on Jesus as their Messiah.⁹⁷

In response, Ladd's concluding vision is breathtaking in scope, millennial Israel will be Christian, because Christ will be King. Millennial Israel will be new covenant, the Holy Spirit will ratify the new covenant to each one personally as He applies the sacrificial atonement of Christ in the baptism which results in His outpouring. But this blessing does not come to ethnic Israel in isolation, every other ethnic group residing around the world will be Christian and new covenant as well. Ethnic Eskimos will be just as Christian and new covenant during the millennial kingdom as ethnic Israel. Ethnic Zulu will not become spiritual Israel in the millennium, they will have their own

⁹⁷ Ladd, "Israel and the Church," 212-13.

customs and culture, and they will have their own territory allotment distinct from Israel. Every other of the many ethnicities will have their own representative government in the new covenant community around the world. If ethnic groups as new covenant participants will not be spiritual Israel during the millennium, then the various ethnic groups are not become spiritual Israel now. Those of ethnic Israel who have spiritual life are spiritual Israel, while those of ethnic Samoans who have spiritual life are spiritual Samoans.

It is true, those who are in Christ who is Abraham's Seed, so believers are all Abraham's spiritual descendants, but being Abraham's spiritual seed does not equal spiritual Israel. OT prophecies for ethnic Israel will happen to ethnic Israel as God promised. Yahweh promised that ethnic Israel would receive the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34), that ethnic Israel would receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29), and that they would see Me whom they had pierced (Zech 12:10). God promised that all of ethnic Israel who called upon His name would be saved in His coming (Joel 2:32). Just because God promised these future blessings to ethnic Israel (and they will receive each promise as prophesied), does not mean that He is restricted in giving these blessings to anyone else as He wills. Giving the new covenant to Israel does not restrict giving the new covenant to any other individual. Giving the outpouring of the Spirit to Israel on the day He returns to earth does not restrict God from giving this outpouring to others at other times, such as Cornelius at Caesarea (Acts 10:44) or to us today. God's prophecies to ethnic Israel does not restrict Him to ethnic Israel, so other ethnicities do not have to become Israel, either physically or spiritually, to participate in God's promised blessings. Before the cross, under the Mosaic covenant, individuals of other ethnicities would become physical Israel in order to participate in Abrahamic covenant promises; but now after the cross, individuals of other ethnicities do not become spiritual Israel in order to participate in Abrahamic covenant promises. The new covenant is ratified without ethnic considerations as recipients become a new humanity in Christ (Eph 2:14-18).

The Rapture Question

The apostle Paul explained that on one future day,

The Lord will descend from heaven with loud command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will arise first. Then we, who are living and remaining, *will be transported* with them for a meeting with the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:13-18).

The key word is ἀρπαγησόμεθα (*harpagesometha*, we will be caught away).

This word ἀρπάζω (*harpazo*) has fourteen occurrences in the NT. It was used of Philip (Acts 8:39), who was miraculously and instantaneously transported from the desert to Ashdod. It was used of the apostle Paul who was transported to heaven in a vision (2 Cor 12:4). It was also used of snatching victims from fire so that they are not harmed (Jude 1:23).

During their wilderness wandering, the Mosaic Covenant community was alerted to continue their journey by a trumpet call (Num 10:2). The sound of a trumpet also gathered the assembly for war (v. 9) and called the people to worship (v. 10). The trumpet sound will also gather the new covenant community in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52. Those new covenant recipients who are alive will join with those who have lived in previous years, and the entire community will gather together with Christ.

The Hebrew prophets foretold the coming of Yahweh to earth in judgment to be accompanied by trumpet sound. “Yahweh will be seen over them and His arrow will shoot like lightning; Yahweh will blow the trumpet and go with whirlwinds from the south” (Zech 9:14). Christ also described His return to earth with a trumpet call. “He will send His angels with a trumpet call and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” (Matt 24:31).

Due to the similarity of Matthew 24:31 with 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52; trumpets at the *parousia* of Christ and the gathering of His people, these verses have been interpreted as the same event throughout church history. Irenaeus explained at length that the church must first endure the Antichrist’s tyranny, at which time the majority of saints will be sacrificed. At the end of this purification process, the

Antichrist will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming and believers as victors are given immortality to reign with Christ on this earth for a thousand years (5.28.2).

That His words concerning its [future] resurrection may also be believed; so also at the end, when the Lord utters His voice "by the last trumpet," the dead shall be raised, as He Himself declares: "The hour shall come, in which all the dead which are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; those that have done good to the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (5.13.1).

When in the end the church shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, "There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be." For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome, they are crowned with incorruption (5.29.1).⁹⁸

Tertullian declared, "The dead in Christ will receive their resurrected bodies at the Lord's return." At the same time, all believers will obtain "a divestiture of the body as clothing superimposed upon it with a garment which is from heaven. They shall put this heavenly garment on their bodies."⁹⁹ John Chrysostom explained in an exposition of 1 Thessalonians 4 that the church will go up to greet Christ as He returns in the clouds to welcome His arrival to earth.¹⁰⁰

In a theological treatise entitled *On Christ and Antichrist*, Hippolytus (AD 236) described the Antichrist as a yet to be revealed Roman Emperor (28), who will also be a Jew from the tribe of Dan (14). He will be revealed during a future seven-year time as he makes a covenant with the Jews (43). In the middle of the seven-year period (63), he will stop the sacrifices in the temple to proclaim himself as god (64). The first three-and-a-half-years will feature the prophecy of Enoch and Elijah, who will be killed by the

⁹⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.28.2, 5.13.1, 5.29.1, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 1:549-55.

⁹⁹ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5.12, in *ANF*, 3:425; see Allison, *Historical Theology*, 685.

¹⁰⁰ John Chrysostom delivered this homily on 1 Thessalonians in a church in Constantinople, probably in the spring of AD 402:

On what account shall we be caught up? For the sake of honor. For when a king drives into a city, those who are in honor go out to meet him; but the condemned await the judge within. And upon the coming of an affectionate father, his children indeed, and those who are worthy to be his children, are taken out in a chariot that they may see and kiss him; but those of the domestics who have offended remain within. We are carried upon the chariot of our Father. For He received Him up in the clouds, and "we shall be caught up in the clouds." Seest thou how great is the honor? and as He descends, we go forth to meet Him, and what is more blessed than all, so we shall be with Him. John Chrysostom, *Homily on 1 Thessalonians* 8, in Schaff, *NPNF*, 13:356. See also Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 124.

Antichrist (43), followed by a second three-and-a-half-year reign of terror (61). God will shorten those days of persecution so that the church will not be totally eradicated (62). Christ will return to awaken all who are dead, righteous and unrighteous alike. The righteous will inherit the kingdom, but the unrighteous will depart into the lake of fire (65). Concerning the resurrection of the righteous, Hippolytus quotes 1Thessalonians 4:13-17 in full to show that in distinction to the unrighteous, those who believe in Christ will be caught up from the earth to the clouds to greet the Lord in the air (66). Jesus will bring the souls of dead saints with Him, who will receive their resurrection first; followed by believers who are alive, and all God's people will always be with the Lord.¹⁰¹

Brian Daley discusses this dependence by Hippolytus on Irenaeus and Tertullian, as he followed the writings of his mentors closely without adding contradicting details. Hippolytus "is content simply to advance Irenaeus' tentative suggestions as the best interpretations available."¹⁰²

David Gunn points out three historical examples of a belief in a rapture of Christians before the defeat of the Antichrist.¹⁰³ First is the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, a third-century addition to an earlier Jewish writing with the same title. Both versions focus on the appearance of Elijah as a forerunner to the Messiah. The Christianized revision gives more details about the tribulation period, after the Antichrist is revealed, two witnesses (Enoch and Elijah) arrive to oppose him. Christ takes His people to heaven before sending His wrath upon the earth.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Hippolytus, *On Christ and Antichrist*, 14-66, in Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*, 5:215-19. See also Fairbairn, "Contemporary Millennial/Tribulational Debates," 128.

¹⁰² Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 39-40.

¹⁰³ David Gunn, "Is the Pre-Trib Rapture a Recent Invention?" *Baptist Bulletin*, September 22, 2015, 17-19, <https://baptistbulletin.org/the-baptist-bulletin-magazine/is-the-pre-trib-rapture-a-recent-invention>.

¹⁰⁴ James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research: Issue Seven of Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 95-97; "The Apocalypse of Elijah", accessed April 2, 2020, <http://www.3-in-1.net/Pseudepigrapha/Apocalypse%20of%20Elijah/The%20Apocalypse%20of%20Elijah.htm>.

The second example is the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraim*, also called *Sermon on the End of the World*. This writing, dated as early as AD 373 and as late as 627, also follows the details as taught by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, except that it clearly presents the rapture at the beginning of the final three-and-a-half-year reign of terror by the Antichrist.¹⁰⁵

Third is the beliefs of Dolcino and his followers called the “Apostolic Brethren” in northern Italy around the year 1300. No writings of Dolcino survive, but there is one anonymous Latin record from 1316, which summarized his preaching. Dolcino is reported as saying that the Antichrist would have power over the earth for three and a half years. At that point in time, the Apostolic Brethren would be transferred to heaven and replaced on the earth with Enoch and Elijah. When the Antichrist is killed, Dolcino and his followers would descend heaven to convert all living to the true faith of Christ.¹⁰⁶

These examples reveal several occasions in history when various believers understood a removal of true Christians before the end of the tribulation. Each of these examples follow the prophetic timeline of Irenaeus and Hippolytus, with the difference of placing the rapture at the beginning of the final three and a half years at the point when the Antichrist reveals his true intentions. This belief would now be categorized as a “pre-wrath” or midtribulation position of the rapture.

Puritan writers in England and America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries expressed a great interest in a rapture of saints, as non-conformists explored the

¹⁰⁵ Timothy J. Demy, “Pseudo-Ephraem,” in *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*, ed. Mel Couch (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 329.

Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time. Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes? See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: “Woe to those who desire to see the Day of the Lord!” For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins.

(*Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraim*, accessed December 27, 2019, <https://www.pre-trib.org/articles/mr-pseudo-ephraem/messages/teacher/pseudo-ephraem>)

¹⁰⁶ Apostolic Brethren, founded in about 1260, was a northern Italy religious sect that desired to emulate the apostolic way of life from the Book of Acts. They emphasized repentance and poverty, and rejected marriage, infant baptism and clerical orders. Its leader, Fra Dolcino was burned at the stake in 1307. Some of these beliefs were espoused by later Anabaptists. “Apostolic,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Apostolic>.

doctrine of millennialism. This interest coincided with deposing of the English monarchy in 1649 and the weakening of the state Anglican church. Puritans understood a series of four kingdoms; Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, the last of which was represented by the Papacy. The English had been set free from the authority of the Catholic Church a century earlier, only to be bound to the Church of England. Dissenters looked to a fifth monarchy as the kingdom of Christ. They had a difference of opinion in that some affirmed the church to be the catalyst for bringing in the kingdom, while others understood that Christ must come personally to rule the earth. Both agreed that for the present, believers must evangelize the lost and live holy lives worthy of Christ's commendation at His coming. In England, millennial interest dissipated with the reinstated crown and return of power to the state church, which disenfranchised Puritans and non-conformists. "In New England, however, Puritanism in general and millennialism in particular retained a vitality and influence that persisted throughout the eighteenth century and beyond."¹⁰⁷

Cotton Mather focused on prophetic studies. His father, Increase Mather, was a famous Congregational pastor in Boston and a President of Harvard College. Increase had written a series of premillennial books, most were sermons that were transcribed, which Cotton would edit. Cotton Mather agreed with his father that the conversion of the Jews would signal the return of Christ to establish His kingdom on earth, but in 1724, Cotton came to believe that the salvation of the Jews was not a future event, but had happened in the book of Acts when all of the early Christians were also all Jewish. He concluded that Christ could come at any time as that sign had been fulfilled.¹⁰⁸

Towards the end of his life, Cotton Mather struggled with a dilemma; he understood a bodily resurrection of believers at the coming of Christ, and *raised saints* would rule over *saved nations*. The concept of *saved nations* was important to him because he believed it included the living Christians in his beloved New England. He also accepted

¹⁰⁷ Jeffery S. Mares, "Cotton Mather's *Problema Theologicum*," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (Worcester, MA: 1995), 339-41, <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44517835.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ Mares, "Cotton Mather's *Problema Theologicum*," 333-35.

that the apostle Peter's prophecy of an apocalyptic fire which would purify the world for the millennium (which he called the *Chiliad*), so how were the saved nations (people living at the beginning of the millennium) to survive the conflagration?

He noted that his father, Increase Mather, asserted a lesser purification before the millennium and global destruction following. Cotton debated if the judgment fire was associated with the defeat of the Antichrist (= Papal) armies at the return of Christ, so that New England would escape a fire in Rome. He took 1 Peter 3 to be a literal, worldwide catastrophe, so he was not convinced his people would be safe. He explained in a diary entry about reading an anonymous tract *Good Things to Come* (1675) which provided a further understanding that *saved nations* would be caught up into the air to escape danger from the global conflagration, and returned to earth to enjoy the millennium in glorified bodies. With his questions settled, his heart was a rest.¹⁰⁹

Typical of this time period is Thomas Draxe (1608), who exhorted his readers to prepare for the coming of Christ. He believed in a partial rapture of the worthy to escape the time of judgment on earth. Following the destruction of Papal influence and the salvation of the Jews, Christ would return to resurrect dead saints and rescue those who have suffered for a while, and welcome all into His everlasting kingdom of glory.¹¹⁰

Robert Maton (1642) wrote that the saints would be caught up from the earth while Christ judges the nations who are hostile to the Jews. When the battle of Armageddon is completed, the saints will return to earth for the kingdom of Christ.¹¹¹

Ephraim Huit (1643) explained that there would be a partial rapture of Christians to escape the trials suffered by the people of earth before the coming of Christ. This is followed by the conversion of Jews, the invasion of hostile Gentiles, which he understood to be Turks and Saracens as kings of the north and south (Dan 11). When the Jews are

¹⁰⁹ Mares, "Cotton Mather's Problema Theologicum," 342-47.

¹¹⁰ Thomas Draxe, *The Lambs Spovse Or The Heauenly Bride. A theological discourse, wherein the contract betwixt* (London, 1608), quoted in Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 136.

¹¹¹ Robert Maton, *Israel's Redemption or the Prophetical History of Our Saviour's Kingdom on Earth* (1642), quoted in Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 138.

finally saved, both spiritually and physically, the church as the bride will descend from heaven.¹¹²

Elizabeth Avery (1647) described a gathering of saints before the tribulation to rest in heaven and return with Christ to defeat the Antichrist. Nathaniel Homes (1653) used the word *rapture* for the gathering of saints who are alive to be taken to heaven for “a great distance of time,” while events of the book of Revelation unfold on earth.¹¹³

John Browne (1654) understood a mid-tribulation, premillennial rapture. He taught that two tribes of Judah and Benjamin would establish a homeland at Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. The Antichrist will be revealed in Rome, and while he builds his power, the rest of the ten tribes would return to the land. The Antichrist will go to Jerusalem to proclaim himself as god in the temple, while the Jews scatter into the wilderness. The saints are taken up to heaven, while the Antichrist persecutes the Jews wherever he can find them. At the end of the forty-two months, Christ returns to cast the Antichrist and his false prophet into the lake of fire, and will bind the devil during the kingdom.¹¹⁴

There was a flurry of religious publication during the 1600 and 1700s, and the majority of premillennial teachers accepted a post-tribulation rapture due to the writings of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus. This rapture at the coming of Christ was understood to be necessary in order to prepare for Christ’s kingdom, as judgments were finalized, such as the defeat of Antichrist forces and a fire to purify the earth. Some believed a time interval of up to three and a half years was required as the wrath of the Antichrist against the Jews, and the wrath of God against the Antichrist was completed. The saints would return to earth when all was safe to receive the kingdom.

At the year 1800, the majority opinion regardless of millennial orientation equated Matthew 24:31 with 1 Thessalonians 4:16, the gathering of the elect to meet

¹¹² Ephraim Huit, *The Whole Prophecie of Daniel Explained* (1643), quoted in Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 141-43.

¹¹³ Elizabeth Avery, *Scripture-Prophecies Opened* (London, 1647); Nathaniel Homes, *The Resurrection Revealed* (1653), quoted in Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 143-44.

¹¹⁴ John Browne, *A Brief Survey of the Prophetical and Evangelical Events of the Last Times* (London, 1654), quoted in Watson, *Dispensationalism before Darby*, 148-52.

Christ at His coming. A change came with Edward Irving, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland, who became famous for his pulpit oratory in London in 1822. Irving focused on the return of Christ and the use of spiritual gifts for all God's people. Manifestations of tongues, prophesying and healing began among some Presbyterian churches in Scotland in 1830, these events were also experienced in London in the spring of 1831. Irving was rejected by his church in 1832 and lost his ordination in 1833. He began an independent congregation in London, but died in December 1834 after beginning this new ministry.¹¹⁵

Irving came to a premillennial understanding due to his studies of the writings of Church Fathers; however, he introduced a teaching of "first fruits" which were those who were counted worthy to escape all things that are coming to pass and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 11:36). He emphasized that the "taking away of the first fruits" is only the first stage of the mighty work to be done in bringing this dispensation to a close. Next on the prophetic calendar would be the manifestation of the Antichrist, the presence of the two witnesses (Noah and John the Baptist), and the coming of Christ to gather all those who show themselves worthy during the great tribulation. The immediate and special task of "apostles" (twelve were selected by him) was to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit to the "first fruits" by the laying on of hands. He realized that these "apostles" did not have a large following, but the few "first fruits" would be representational of the great multitude who will experience the coming fiery trial, the terrors of the tribulation; some of which would survive under the protection of God, most of which would be taken away by death.¹¹⁶

Although they were thoroughly Protestant, Irving's followers organized themselves as the Catholic Apostolic Church, in an attempt to return to the faith of the NT apostles. This movement had almost a thousand churches with a membership of 200,000 (mostly in the British Isles and Germany) in 1901, the year the last of the twelve

¹¹⁵ Philip Schaff, ed., *Creeds of Christendom*, "The Catholic Apostolic Church (called Irvingites)" (New York: Harper Brothers, 1919), 1:906-9, accessed December 29, 2019, <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds1/creeds1.x.xiv.html>.

¹¹⁶ Schaff, "The Catholic Apostolic Church (called Irvingites)," 1:910-15.

“apostles” died. Without any way to ordain new apostles to lay hands on the next generation of “first fruits,” the movement became extinct.¹¹⁷

John Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in the 1830s understood that the church did not replace Israel, but the two are separate peoples, each with its distinct history and destiny. They believed in the *rapture* of the church, that the body of Christ formed at Pentecost by the baptism of the Spirit, would be caught up to heaven before the tribulation. A seven-year tribulation period was prophesied in the OT concerning Israel, as Jacob’s trouble (Jer 30:7) and a time of distress for Israel (Dan 12:1), as God would again focus on the Jewish people as He did before the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the birth of the church. Darby insisted on two foundational beliefs; first, no one knows when the rapture will take place, and second, it will occur before the tribulation. Darby proclaimed, “We go to meet Christ in the air. Nothing is clearer, then, than that we are to go up to meet him, and not await his coming to earth.”¹¹⁸ He taught that the church would be raptured to receive heavenly blessings; while Israel, after a time of purification, would receive earthly blessings.

Darby emphasized that the church had a better inheritance than Israel due to its spiritual status, as seated in heavenly, not earthly places (Eph 2:6). Although Israel would receive favored nation status on earth during the future millennial kingdom, Darby believed that the resurrected and glorified church, not Israel, would govern the earth with Christ during that time. He stressed that the privilege of the church is union with the risen Christ, while the privilege of Israel was to belong to Christ when He reigns from Jerusalem. He explained that union with Christ was not an OT promise given to Israel, but was a mystery hidden from previous generations.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ “Catholic Apostolic Church,” *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), <https://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/religion/christian/denominations/catholic-apostolic-church#axzz0xIH0GuVx>.

¹¹⁸ J. N. Darby, “The Rapture of the Saints,” in *The Collected Works of J. N. Darby*, ed. William Kelly (Sunbury, PA: Believers Bookshelf, 1972), 11:125, quoted in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 695.

¹¹⁹ Paul R. Wilkinson, *For Zion’s Sake: Christian Zionism and the Role of John Nelson Darby* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), 115.

Samuel Tregelles, a noted biblical language and textual scholar of the 1800s, alleged that Darby's rapture concept originated in the 1830 charismatic manifestations in Scotland surrounding the ministry of Edward Irving. Tregelles was originally a Plymouth Brethren, but left the denomination due to disagreements over the timing of the rapture, as he was a posttribulationist.¹²⁰

Dave MacPherson attempted to attribute the origin of Darby's pretribulation rapture to Irvingism and to prophecies of fifteen-year-old Margaret MacDonald.¹²¹ He researched Tregelles' original accusation to confirm that Darby did visit Scotland in 1830. There is no evidence that Darby encountered Macdonald, whose prophecies were posttribulationist in nature and published ten years later. Darby considered the charismatic activity he witnessed to be demonic in nature.¹²²

Darby's pretribulation rapture doctrine was not well received in England, but his view of dispensational premillennialism became popular in America. Evangelists were attracted to the powerful pretribulation rapture message. "Jesus may come at any time, even before I finish this sermon, are you ready?" D. L. Moody was an early dispensationalist, and every major evangelist from him to Billy Graham were pretribulation premillennialists.¹²³

The Fundamentalist and Pentecostal movements became influential in the American acceptance of the pretribulation rapture. In much the same way that Irvingites and Darbyites were on opposite sides of the spectrum a century earlier, yet both proclaimed a rapture of saints—so Pentecostals with their emphasis on Spirit baptism for charismatic manifestations and apostolic laying on of hands, and Fundamentalists with their emphasis

¹²⁰ Samuel P. Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming: How is it Taught in Scripture, and Why?*, 1886, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://rediscoveringthebible.com/Tregelles1.pdf>.

¹²¹ Dave MacPherson, *The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin* (Kansas City, MO: Heart of America Bible Society, 1973). See also Weber, "Popular Millennialist Movements," 11n; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 695n.

¹²² J. Barton Payne, *Book Review: The Unbelievable Pre-Trib Origin by Dave MacPherson*, *JETS*, March 1974, https://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/17/17-1/17-1-pp051-058_JETS.pdf. See also Wilkinson, *For Zion's Sake*, 195-96.

¹²³ William McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 166-216; Weber, "Popular Millennialist Movements," 15; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 695.

of Spirit baptism for inclusion in the church, the body of Christ, yet both agree on the rapture of the saints. Pretribulation rapture became a fixture in doctrinal statements for churches, Bible schools and colleges, as well as parachurch ministries.

Books and films have captured the public's attention. *The Schofield Reference Bible* proved to be extremely popular. Over the years, millions studied their KJV Bibles with the marginal notes both at church and home, to develop a dispensational perspective which became a foundation for American evangelicals.¹²⁴ Hal Lindsay's *Late Great Planet Earth* was published in 1970,¹²⁵ more than thirty-five million copies have been sold. The film *A Thief in the Night* (1972), with sequels *A Distant Thunder* (1978), *Image of the Beast* (1981), and *Prodigal Planet* (1983) portrayed a young woman's struggles in the tribulation because she missed the rapture.¹²⁶ Recently the *Left Behind* series, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, are a number one *New York Times* best-selling series with over sixty-three million books sold, and are the basis for Hollywood motion pictures.¹²⁷

Pretribulation Rapture

Paul Feinberg explains his understanding that the church will be raptured from the earth to heaven before the beginning of the tribulation period:

The church will not go through the Tribulation because of the character of that entire period as a time of the outpouring of the penal, retributive, divine wrath, as well as the promises of God to the church that exempt it from both the time and the from the Second Advent of Christ because of the need for an interval for people to be saved, so that they can enter into the kingdom age in natural, nonglorified bodies. Finally, the differences between Rapture passages and Second Coming passages lead me to believe that there are two separate events referred to in the passages.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ *Schofield Reference Bible*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917); Allison, *Historical Theology*, 697.

¹²⁵ Lindsay, *The Late Great Planet Earth*; Blomberg, "The Posttribulationism of the New Testament," 63.

¹²⁶ *Thief in the Night*, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0070795>.

¹²⁷ Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995), accessed January 10, 2020, <http://www.leftbehind.com>; also see Blomberg, "The Posttribulationism of the New Testament," 63.

¹²⁸ Paul D. Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," in *Three Views on the Rapture: Pre- Mid- or Post-Tribulation?* ed. Gleason L. Archer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 86. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 699.

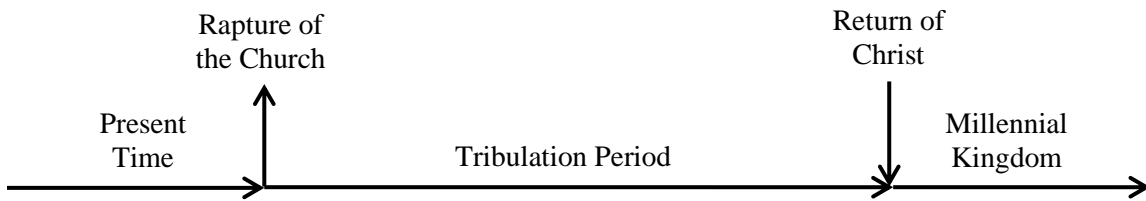


Figure 31. Pretribulation rapture before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation time period.

Midtribulation Rapture

Gleason Archer describes his position that the church will go through the first three-and-a-half-years, but will be raptured before the second half of the tribulation period.

If the Great Tribulation is to be identified with the second half of the final seven years prior to Armageddon, during which the bowls of divine wrath will be poured out on the earth, then the view we are about to advocate is really a form of pretribulation Rapture. It simply regards the first three and a half years, during which the Antichrist will increase his power and mount his persecution against the church as a lesser tribulation, not nearly as terrifying or destructive to life as those fearsome plagues that will dominate the last three and a half years. . . . The final generation of the pre-Rapture church will be subjected to the wrath of man, but spared the wrath of God.¹²⁹

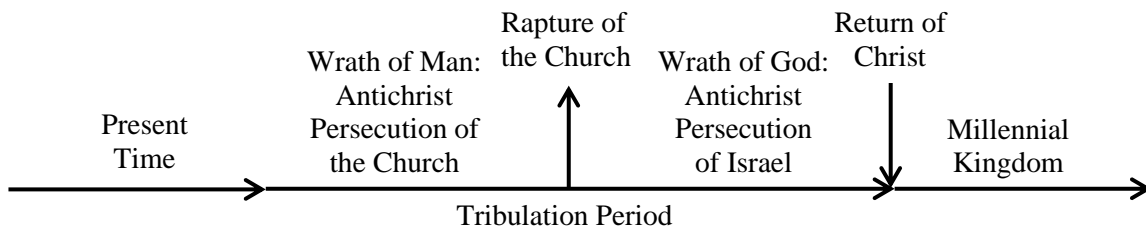


Figure 32. Midtribulation rapture before the wrath of God is poured out on during the second half of the seven-year time period.

Posttribulation Rapture

Douglas Moo defends his view that the church experiences the totality of the tribulation period to be caught up at the second coming of Christ to welcome Him in His return to earth:

We have discovered that the terms used to describe the Second Advent are all applied to a posttribulation coming and that believers are exported to look forward to that

¹²⁹ Gleason L. Archer Jr., “The Case for the Mid-Seventieth-Week Rapture Position,” in Archer *Three Views on the Rapture*, 139; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 700.

coming. Any indication that this coming is to be a two-stage event, in which the rapture is separated from the final manifestation, would have to come from passages that describe the event. We can conclude that no evidence for such a separation is found in any of the principle texts on the rapture. On the contrary, such evidence as exists is in favor of locating the rapture after the tribulation, at the same time as the final *Parousia* (the return of Christ).¹³⁰

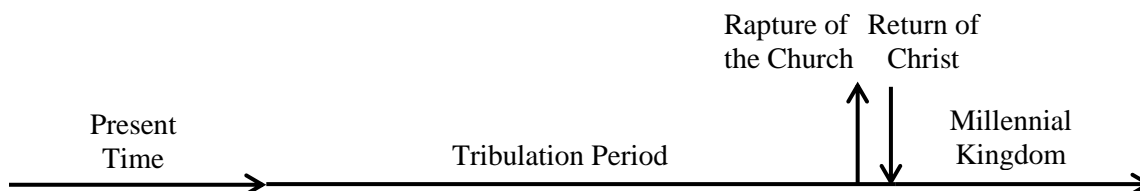


Figure 33. Posttribulation rapture after the seven-year tribulation time period to meet Christ in His return to the earth.

According to a survey conducted by LifeWay Research in 2016, 36 percent of Protestant ministers in the United States accept a pretribulation, premillennial rapture scenario; 18 percent hold to a posttribulation rapture and 4 percent believe that there will be a midtribulation or pre-wrath rapture. Twenty-five percent say the rapture is not literal; 8 percent would not agree with any of these views and 4 percent are not sure what will happen. Mainline denominations are more likely to believe that the rapture is not literal, while evangelicals are more likely to accept a pretribulation rapture. Also, pastors under forty-five years old more likely to believe in a posttribulation rapture, while those who are older are more likely to believe in a pretribulation rapture.¹³¹

Summary

This project argues that the pretribulation rapture is the strongest position. The Bible reveals the tribulation time period as outside the boundaries of civilized society. Two forces influence human government today; the kingdom of God on one side and the kingdom of Satan on the other. Societies waver between these two powers; if the kingdom

¹³⁰ Douglas J. Moo, “The Case for the Posttribulation Rapture Position,” in Archer, *Three Views on the Rapture*, 182; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 700.

¹³¹ Smietana, “Pastors: The End of the World is Complicated.”

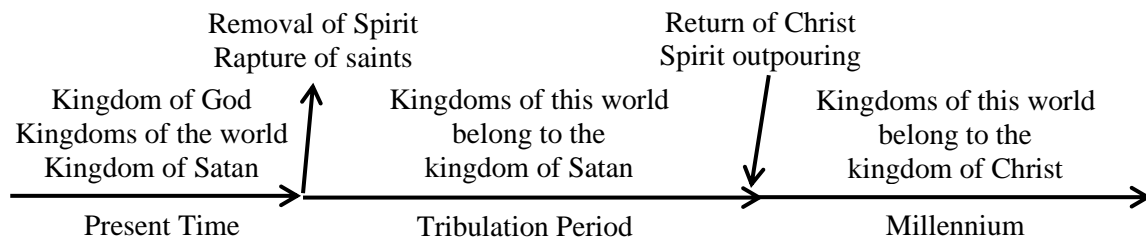
of God has more influence, the society flourishes to that extent, but if the kingdom of Satan has more influence, society suffers. Human government is not neutral due to the total depravity of man, but there are constraints on human behavior because of societal pressure due to the Noahic covenant. Individuals do not act according to their worst inclinations because society controls behavior and punishes those who victimize others (Rom 13:3-4).

There are examples where societies have descended into demonic influence, and after a time of destructive behavior, the evil runs its course and the situation returns to acceptable norms. Examples include Rwanda 1995, Cambodia 1975, North Korea, Soviet Union, Communist China, Nazi Germany, the French Revolution, the Inca, Maya and Aztec empires, and the pre-flood world. However, the planet Earth will not be merely influenced by demonic activity during the tribulation, it will be controlled by the devil. Satan will rule the world through a human leader that he will possess. The entire demon army will focus on bringing human subservience to evil and devil worship.

This scenario can only occur if the kingdom of God with its beneficial influence has been removed. This aspect of God's kingdom began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit, so it can only be removed by the departure of the Spirit and His outpouring initiated on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit in His kingdom initiation activity cannot be removed without also removing those in whom He dwells. It is impossible for the Spirit to be taken from the earth in His baptism/indwelling capacity, and to leave those who were formerly indwelled suddenly empty. If the Holy Spirit and His restraining work is removed, this will result in an interruption to the new covenant ministry of Spirit outpouring, baptism and indwelling.

The tribulation is like the pre-Pentecost world. For fifty day before Pentecost, the Jewish people went through the motions of Levitical temple services and sacrifices, not realizing that the Mosaic covenant was made obsolete at the cross. The Holy Spirit worked in hearts to convict people of sin and to bring about new birth. The Spirit will be active in the same way during the tribulation period, He will bring about regeneration, but

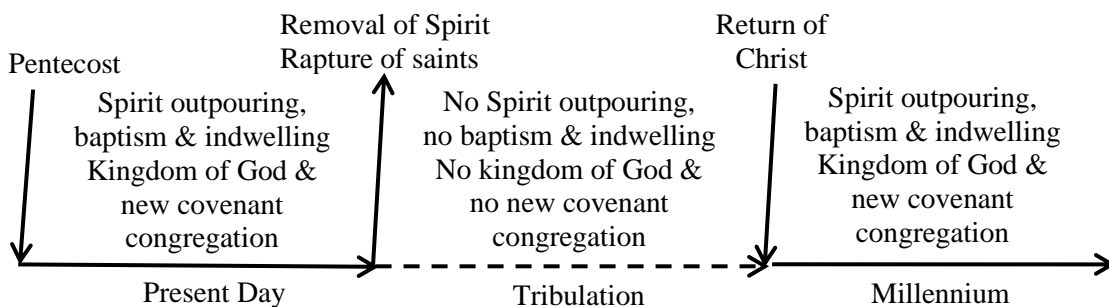
He will not baptize and indwell believers to ratify the new covenant, until the Holy Spirit is again outpoured by Christ on the day of His return. On the first day of the millennial kingdom, Christ will baptize those who believe in Him with the Spirit as Joel and John the Baptist prophesied. This outpouring, baptism and indwelling will result in kingdom citizenship and new covenant ratification during the millennium, exactly as believers experience today.



Presently both the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan impact the kingdoms of this world. The kingdom of God will be absent during the tribulation, while the kingdom of Satan will be removed from the millennium.

Figure 34. Kingdom of God vs. kingdom of Satan.

The millennial kingdom will be diametrically opposite to the tribulation period. Christ will rule the world and all Satanic influence will be removed. The kingdom of Satan will be banished and the kingdom of God will reign supreme. The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all humanity, not just on a small minority as is the case at this time.



The kingdom of God is based on the new covenant ratification of the Spirit. For the kingdom of God to be absent, the outpouring of the Spirit which results in Spirit baptism and indwelling must be interrupted.

Figure 35. Present day, tribulation and millennial conditions.

This understanding depends on an exposition of 2 Thessalonians 2:5-7, “Do you not remember that I said these things while I was still with you? Now you know what is restraining, so that he will be revealed in his proper time; for the mystery of lawlessness is already working, there is only One restraining at present, until He becomes taken out of the middle.”

The apostle Paul is responding to a controversy in the Thessalonian church concerning the Day of the Lord and our gathering together with Him (v. 1). Some had further questions, wondering if that day had already come. It was necessary for Paul to give additional guidance to explain what he had taught them while he was with them and what he had written in his first epistle. Obviously, Paul had revealed that the Day of the Lord was a process and not a single calendar day. If he had taught the Day of the Lord to be the one calendar day when Christ will return to defeat evil forces and rescue those who call on Him, and at that same time gather together the believers to Him, then Paul’s answer to those who were teaching that day was already past would have been easy: Has Christ returned to earth? No. Are we gathered with Him? No. It is difficult to imagine why the Thessalonians would have had additional questions.

Paul explained that the Day of Christ was more than a single calendar day, and some became alarmed that they would experience eschatological tribulation in addition to the present difficulties of life, including persecution from the Roman Empire; it was too much for some of them to contemplate. Paul reminded the Thessalonians what he had taught during the three weeks he had spent with them on his way from Philippi to Berea (Acts 16:1-10). Two things must occur before Antichrist as the man of sin or the son of eternal condemnation (*ἀπωλείας, apoleias*, destruction not to imply annihilation) is revealed. First, there must be an apostasy or a universal rebellion against God, and second, the restrainer must be removed. In verse 6, he referred to the restraining force as a neuter singular participle, but in verse 7, this restrainer is a person, as he used a masculine singular article with a masculine singular participle (the one restraining). Paul discussed the fact that the mystery of lawlessness was already at work, but the one restraining kept this evil from its ultimate expression.

There have been various suggestions as to the identity of the restrainer, Tertullian and Hippolytus thought that the restraining force was the Roman Empire, and the restraining person was an emperor. They believed the Antichrist to be a future Roman emperor, who could not take power as long as another currently held the throne.¹³²

Gene Green translates *κατέχων* (*katechon*) as “seizes” instead of “restrains,” as if some demonic power or Satan himself will seize or possess the Antichrist so that he can be revealed. Of the 18 times *katechon* is used in the NT, it has the meaning of “possess” or “hold fast” on 13 occasions, while 5 times it has the meaning of “suppress” or “hold back.”¹³³ Charles Wanamaker translates *katechon* as “prevail” or “hold sway.” He asserts that the mystery of lawlessness is the neuter principle, while Satan is the individual that will reveal this secret rebellion when he is ready.¹³⁴

In distinction, Robert Thomas points out that “hold back” or “restrain” is the more plausible choice for the meaning of *katechon* because the atmosphere of conflict pervades the passage. “Hold fast” and “hold sway,” though a legitimate meaning for the verb elsewhere, cannot satisfy the obvious antagonism in the present discussion.¹³⁵

F. F. Bruce comments on the phrase “so that he may be revealed in his proper time.” He notes that *εἰς τὸ* (*eis to*) with the infinitive denotes purpose here (as in v. 5), so the meaning must be “you know what is restraining him in order that he may not be revealed before the proper time.” He adds, “If the purpose is indicated, the purpose is God’s, to which the man of lawlessness the restraining power are perforce subservient. It is implied that there is a ‘proper time’ decreed for the revelation of Antichrist as well as for the epiphany of the true Christ” (1 Tim 6:15).¹³⁶

¹³² Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 250.

¹³³ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, TPNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 316-17.

¹³⁴ Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 254-57.

¹³⁵ Robert L. Thomas, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, in vol. 11 of *EBC*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 325.

¹³⁶ F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, WBC, vol. 45 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 170.

The majority interpretation is that God is in control of the prophetic calendar, and He is the One who continues to restrain both this antichrist philosophy in the world and the Antichrist himself until he is ready to be revealed. Thomas comments: “It is evident that the restrainer, to accomplish his mission, must have supernatural power to hold back a supernatural enemy (v. 9). God and the outworking of his providence is the natural answer;” however, he adds that the accepting God’s providence as the restrainer does not account for the neuter-masculine variation in gender.¹³⁷

Both Ladd and Sproul understand that God Himself is the restrainer as He asserts His providential control to reveal a divine purpose and a divine schedule (“at the proper time,” v. 6). R. C. Sproul specifically comments on 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 and deems the position that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit as “unwarranted” and “bizarre.” He affirms that God restrains directly with His providential control.¹³⁸

D. Edmond Hiebert explains that there has been much discussion concerning the replacement of the neuter participle in verse 6 with a masculine participle in verse 7, “the one restraining.” This change indicates a personality as the restrainer. The neuter-masculine combination makes such suggestions as the gospel and Paul himself, human government or society, the church or even Satan as improbable.¹³⁹

The apostle John pointed out in his epistles that the Antichrist will come, but in the meantime many antichrists are operating in the world (1 John 2:18). Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is the incarnated Son is an antichrist (1 John 2:22, 4:2–3; 2 John 7). John contrasted the Spirit in us with the spirit in the world (1 John 4:1-4). Those who confess that Jesus Christ is their personal, incarnational God is of God’s Spirit (v. 2); conversely, those who deny that Christ is their personal, incarnational God is of the spirit of the Antichrist. This Antichrist spirit is already, but not yet. This spirit was already in the

¹³⁷ Thomas, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 324.

¹³⁸ George Eldon Ladd, *Blessed Hope: A Biblical Study of the Second Advent and the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 95; R. C. Sproul, “The Antichrist,” in *The Last Days According to Jesus*, video series.

¹³⁹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Thessalonian Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 313.

world in John's day, but it will be revealed in its ultimate expression at a future time, when the Antichrist himself will be unleashed (v. 3). John explains that He who in us (the Spirit of Christ) is greater than he (the spirit of Antichrist = the devil) who is in the world, so we have overcome them (v. 4). He uses the neuter singular to agree with the neuter gender of the word πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) both for the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist in verse 2; with masculine singular in verse 4, revealing personality for both He who is in us, and he who is in the world.

This neuter/masculine reference to the Holy Spirit was also used by Jesus on the night He was betrayed (John 14-16). When He spoke of the παράκλητος (*parakletos*), a masculine word, Christ used the corresponding masculine article, but when the Lord referred to the Spirit as πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), a neuter word, He used a neuter article. However, He used the masculine form of the demonstrative pronoun ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*, He), not the neuter pronoun ἐκεῖνο (*ekeino*, it); and in this way, Christ broke gender agreement to reveal the personhood of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁰

“The (masc.) *Paraklete* (masc.), the (neut.) Spirit (neut.) Holy (neut.) who (neut.) the Father will send in My name, He (masc.) will teach you all things” (John 14:26).

“When the *Paraklete* (masc.) comes, whom (masc.) I will send to you from the Father, the (neut.) Spirit (neut.) of truth, who (neut.) proceeds from the Father, He (masc.) will testify about Me” (John 15:26).

“When He (masc.) will come, the (neut.) Spirit (neut.) of truth, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak of Himself (masc.) . . . He (masc.) will glorify Me” (John 16:13-14).

Paul also broke gender agreement in Ephesians 1:14 in reference to the Holy Spirit, “Who (neuter to correspond to *pneumati* in the previous verse) is the guarantee of our inheritance, the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His (masculine) glory.

Hiebert concludes that the identification of the restrainer is the Holy Spirit due to the fact that the neuter gender is used in verse 6 because the word for Spirit is neuter,

¹⁴⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 232.

and the masculine gender is used in verse 7 to emphasize the personality of the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ now indwells believers individually and the church corporately; this special relationship began at Pentecost; however, during the tribulation the world will be dominated by the spirit of Antichrist. The world will return to the environment that was in effect before Pentecost; as the result, the new covenant outpouring of the Spirit which results in baptism, and indwelling will be interrupted. This suspension of the Spirit's outpouring, which results in the interruption of His new covenant ministry, does not demand that the Spirit will be inactive during the tribulation.¹⁴¹ He will continue to bring the new birth of spiritual life to all who respond to God's word by faith, in the same way that He was active before Pentecost. In the return of Christ, the Son and the Spirit will work in tandem as Christ will defeat the Antichrist with the πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) of His mouth (v. 8), and will pour out the Spirit, baptizing all who will call on His name (Joel 2:28-29, John 1:33).

All evangelical believers agree that Christ will return to earth physically to resurrect His people, who will receive a glorified body like His, and to judge rebellion against His authority in both fallen angels and unredeemed humanity. However, it becomes difficult to insist on complete agreement in our understanding of future events. Scriptures provide basic principles, but there will be many surprises as the Lord works out the details of what He has provided for us and what He has determined for the world. There is a future aspect for the new covenant community as we share in the inheritance of Christ. We are confident that new covenant recipients will share in the mediator ministry of Christ; as He is the ultimate Prophet, Priest and King, we are new covenant priests and prophets at this time, and in our glorification we will also be kings subordinate to Christ the King. Christ has promised that we will participate in His rule (Rev 2:26-27, Ps 2:8-9) as He restores our creation dominion over the earth.

¹⁴¹ Hiebert, *Thessalonian Epistles*, 314.

CHAPTER 7

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY AND DISPENSATIONAL THOUGHT

Dispensationalism is an attractive and popular understanding of kingdom and the church. There has been progression to dispensationalism which has produced changes in thought over the years. As the result, this theological system has become a spectrum of biblical interpretation, so that the more traditional proponents would disagree in many of the details with the more progressive among them. One common dispensational belief is that the church began at Pentecost and will culminate at the rapture. While this project accepts many of the basic tenets of dispensationalism, a discussion of the church as the new covenant community both now in this present day, and in the future as well, requires a substantial change in how to view millennial believers.

Traditional Dispensationalism Kingdom Postponed

One key concept to traditional dispensational theology is that the church is parenthetical in the program of God. Historically, dispensationalists define the church age as “the time period between Pentecost and the rapture, as a parenthesis of time interrupting the Messianic kingdom program.”¹ According to this belief, Israel was the focus of God’s redemptive activity before Pentecost and will return to the center of God’s program during the tribulation and millennium following the rapture. Chafer prefers the term *intercalation*, rather than the word *parenthesis*, due to what he understands to be the total lack of relationship between Israel and the church:

The out calling of a heavenly people from Jews and Gentiles is so divergent with respect to the divine purpose toward Israel, which purpose preceded it and will yet follow it, that the term parenthetical, commonly employed to describe the new age-

¹ Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 26; see John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 227-30.

purpose, is inaccurate. A parenthetical portion sustains some direct or indirect relation to that which goes before or that which follows; but the present age-purpose is not thus related and therefore is more properly termed an *intercalation*.”²

Traditional dispensationalists teach that Christ came to offer the kingdom to Israel, but they rejected Him as their King. Because of this national rejection, the kingdom was postponed and the kingdom of God is currently not in existence at all on earth. Christ will return to earth at a time in the future to rescue Israel from pending extinction and will offer the kingdom to Israel once again. Israel will then accept Christ as their King who will establish His kingdom over the world from His capital of Jerusalem. Due to this view of a strict separation between Israel and the church, the kingdom cannot coexist with the church. The church will be removed in the rapture, and God’s program will return to Israel. This is the position of McClain and is a common understanding of many dispensationalists even at this current time.³

McClain explains that Christ can assume the position as Davidic King only when He returns to reign on the earth during the Millennium. “That the throne in heaven, to which Christ ascended and where He now sits, cannot be equated with the throne of David, should need no argument, for the two are never so identified in Scripture.”⁴

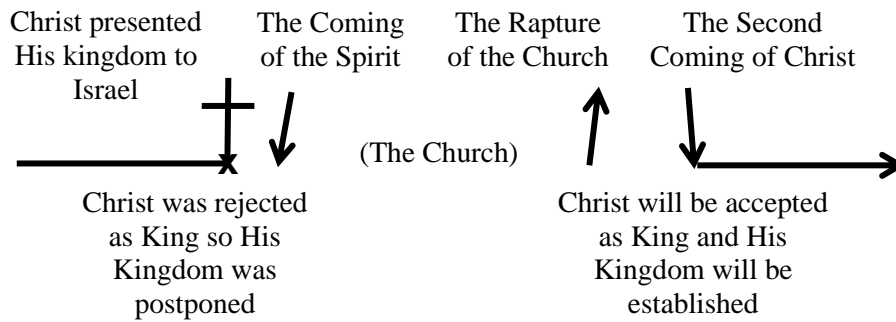
Specifically concerning Colossians 1:13, “Who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved Son,” McClain

² Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 4:41.

³ Alva McClain states, “During the present Church age, from Pentecost to the second coming of Christ, the Mediatorial Kingdom must be said to be in abeyance, in the sense of its actual establishment on earth.” Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 439. Rolland McCune agrees, “For a study of the millennial kingdom, the finest and most comprehensive treatise is by Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. McClain was my theology teacher in seminary and his book on the kingdom was his *magnum opus*.” Rolland D. McCune, *Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008), 3:385. Charles Swindoll explains, Stanley Toussaint follows Alva McClain in advocating an “intercalation” view of the kingdom. Such a view would not see either a mystery form in the present age or an inaugurated fulfillment in the church prior to a consummating fulfillment with Israel and the earthly kingdom. The present age between the two advents of Christ is a parenthesis, or an “intercalation,” prior to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. For Toussaint, all references to kingdom in the New Testament have the earthly millennial kingdom in view. (Charles R. Swindoll, foreword to *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 11)

⁴ McClain asserts, “The Kingdom was ‘at hand’ because the Mediatorial King had arrived. Without such a King there could be no Kingdom established on the earth in the Biblical sense. It follows, therefore, to reject the King would be to reject the Kingdom. . . . When our Lord was on earth He proclaimed the Kingdom and His Person as inseparable, and if the future manifestation of the Kingdom will depend on His personal presence, it is not easy to understand how there could be today any genuine Kingdom of God on earth.” (McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 305)

states that believers have been transferred judicially into the still future kingdom of God: “The context here suggests that the action must be regarded as *de jure* rather than *de facto*.”⁵ However, in an answer to McClain’s assertion, just as we are now positionally seated in heaven (Eph 2:6), but are not in heaven in fact, so it is with the kingdom. If believers are positionally in the kingdom, as we are positionally in heaven, then we remain in the kingdom of darkness in fact, just as we remain on the earth in fact.



A common position is that the church age from the Pentecost to the rapture is a parenthesis, and God will focus again on Israel when the church is removed.

Figure 36. Traditional dispensational view of the kingdom and the church.

In response to traditional dispensationalists, the kingdom of God has not been postponed. The kingdom was present in the public ministry of Christ due to the presence of the King. The kingdom is present now in its spiritual dimension, as God’s Spirit indwells God’s people. Christ now rules in the hearts and lives of those who acknowledge Him as their King. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ who indwells us (Rom 8:9), as the Lord Jesus in the upper room discourse explained that He would be present in the lives of believers through this indwelling of the Spirit (John 14:18, 20, 23). At this time, God’s children are delivered from the authority of darkness at our indwelling by the Spirit and transferred into the kingdom of the Son. The kingdom of God is presented in an “already, but not yet” construct. Jesus is already the Christ, the King from David’s dynasty who will rule the world (Acts 2:29-37, 3:20; Ps 2:6-9). The Lord Jesus is already the Sovereign King of

⁵ McClain, *Greatness of Kingdom*, 435.

Kings and Lord of Lords, and in His timing He will reveal Himself in power and glory to reign on this earth (1 Tim 6:15).

This spiritual core of the kingdom of God will not cease at the return of Christ, but the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in His indwelling will continue as the basis for the physical/political aspect of Christ's reign on this world. Christ and the Holy Spirit worked together as a partnership during the public ministry of Christ, and that common purpose between Christ and His Spirit continues today. The future millennium will also be a spiritual/physical kingdom as the unity between Christ and the Holy Spirit will continue to provide the new covenant foundation for the kingdom of God.

Progressive Dispensationalist Inaugurated Kingdom

There has been a welcome progression in dispensational thought concerning the kingdom. Currently an inaugurated view of the kingdom is taught among progressive dispensationalists, which understands the Davidic covenant as initiated in the resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ, as He sat down at the right hand of God the Father. Blaising and Bock point out the special relationship that God promises to David's Son. Christ is the culmination of the covenant that Yahweh made with David.⁶ He was anointed by the Holy Spirit in His baptism, and immediately took the role the Servant of Yahweh as prophesied by Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-7; 52:13-53:12). As the suffering Servant, Christ fulfilled the punishment predicted in the Davidic covenant, "I will be His Father and He will be My Son. If He does wrong, I will correct Him with the rod of men and with blows from the sons of Adam (humanity)" (2 Sam 7:14). Jesus suffered not for His own wrongdoing, but for judgment due to the sins of others.⁷

In His public ministry, Jesus as the Christ was acknowledged to be the King of Israel as the Son of David (Matt 12:23; 21:9), and greater than David and Solomon

⁶ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 49.

⁷ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 176.

(Matt 12:42; 22:42-45). In His death, the Jewish populace taunted Christ as the King of Israel (Matt 27:42-43) and Gentile soldiers called Him the King of the Jews as they mistreated Him (Matt 27:29-30). Messianic claims for mere mortals end with their death, but Jesus demonstrated complete authority over all creation in His resurrection, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me” (Matt 28:18).⁸

The apostle Peter proclaimed that Jesus was both Lord, synonymous to the name of Yahweh; and Christ, the anointed King (2:36), as seated at God’s right hand.⁹ Blaising and Bock conclude that Jesus as the Christ is currently God’s anointed King at this time; however, they explain that there is an “already/not yet” aspect to the Davidic covenant activity of Jesus.”¹⁰ The physical/political aspect of the Davidic kingdom as foretold by Hebrew prophets is not in operation on the earth now. The Jewish people expected a material kingdom, John the Baptist proclaimed a physical kingdom and the Lord Jesus demonstrated the physical nature of His promised kingdom in His public ministry. Jesus was in a physical body and interacted with people around Him in a physical way. He proclaimed the kingdom and healed those who were suffering with physical diseases (Matt 4:23-24). When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask if Jesus was indeed the Coming One, He answered that the people were experiencing physical blessings (Matt 11:5).¹¹

Blaising and Bock state that the ultimate physical blessing is resurrection. The resurrected Christ touched His disciples, He spoke to them, ate with them, and walked with them (Matt 28:9, 10; Luke 24:41-43, 13-35). Kingdom citizens in resurrected bodies will sit down and eat together with Christ Himself (Luke 13:28-29; 22:16-18). However, the kingdom is just as much spiritual as it is physical. The kingdom is *of God* and is primarily spiritual. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that kingdom citizens would be born of the Spirit,

⁸ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 176-77.

⁹ This claim was also made by Stephen (Acts 5:31), Paul (Rom 1:1-4; Eph 1:20-22; Phil 2:9-10; Col 1:13, 18:3:1), the writer of Hebrews (1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), the apostle John (Rev 1:5), and again by Peter (1 Pet 3:22). Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 177-80.

¹⁰ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 180-81.

¹¹ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 176.

and without this spiritual life, no one could see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3; 5-8).¹² John the Baptist proclaimed that the kingdom would begin as the Messiah would baptize participants with the Holy Spirit (John 3:33) and Jesus explained that as the Messiah He would bestow the Holy Spirit from God the Father (John 7:37-39; 14:16-19; 16:7).

Blaising and Bock understand the Messianic kingdom to be an incremental process; first, the kingdom was present in the public ministry of Jesus, as He was the very person of God’s Messiah.¹³ Second, the kingdom is present now as Christ the King is present in the person of His Holy Spirit. Christ is now present in the hearts and lives of believers (John 14:20, 23). Christ is in His people as the Spirit of Christ lives in them (Rom 8:9-10). God’s kingdom of righteousness in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17), and God’s people have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son (Col 1:13).¹⁴

Third, the kingdom will be physically present on earth in the return of Christ. The Lord ascended in bodily form, He will return just as physically (Acts 1:11). As God’s anointed King, the Lord Jesus as Christ will rule over the nations. He will imprison all wicked spirits and subjugate all political government under His personal authority. Earthly blessings which were prophesied in the OT and experienced in His personal presence during His first coming will be universally enjoyed in His second coming. The apostle John received a revelation that this millennial aspect of the kingdom would last for one thousand years (Rev 20:4-7).¹⁵ Finally, the Messianic kingdom will be eternally present in the presence of God and Christ (Rev 21:3, 22:1-5). When Christ has subjected all things to Himself, the last enemy to be destroyed will be death itself; then Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father.¹⁶

Bock explains that when it was revealed in the NT that Christ would come to this world on two occasions, not just once, the appearance of a parenthesis could not be

¹² Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 176-77, 242-43.

¹³ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 177-80, 248-51.

¹⁴ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 251-54, 280.

¹⁵ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 255-66, 281.

¹⁶ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 283.

avoided, because prophecies in the OT often presented events of the ministry of Christ together. Many OT prophecies concerning the first and second comings are presented together, so that the reader can distinguish between the two time frames only by context. An example is Psalm 22; the crucifixion in His first coming is presented in verses 1-21, but the reign of Christ in His second coming is prophesied in verses 22-31. Christians today can clearly separate the two occurrences because the first coming is our history, but the second coming is still in our future. He notes that when these two time periods are pulled away, “the gap in between the two parts inevitably looks like a parenthesis.”¹⁷ However, he does not understand a pause in God’s kingdom program. It is clear that Jesus announced His kingdom to the Mosaic covenant community, which was rejected at that time, but this offer was never withdrawn. The kingdom of God is just as available to believers following Pentecost as it was to believers during the life of Christ. Unbelieving people today can refuse God’s offer of the kingdom, just like unbelievers rejected God’s kingdom during the public ministry of Jesus.

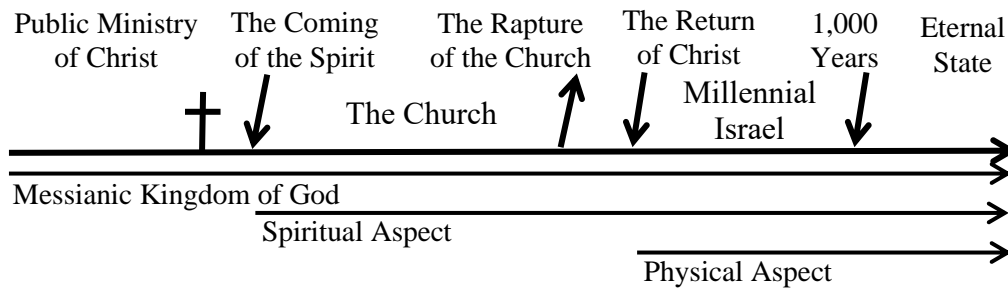


Figure 37. Progressive dispensational view of the kingdom and the church.

**Dispensationalist View of the New Covenant:
Church Participation—Millennial
Israel Ratification**

There has also been a welcome progression of dispensational thought in the understanding of the new covenant. John Darby originally taught a strict separation between Israel as an earthly people in contrast to the church as a heavenly people. He

¹⁷ Darrell L. Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Jesus,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 60.

understood from Jeremiah 31:31-34 that the new covenant was a future reality for Israel; however, he realized from Hebrews 8 that the spiritual blessings associated with the new covenant are made available now in the blood of Christ. Darby taught that the church indirectly participates in blessings, such as the law in our hearts and the forgiveness of sins, because of our relationship with the Mediator of the new covenant.¹⁸

This view of a direct participation of the new covenant by national Israel during the millennium, but an indirect participation for the church today, was clearly presented by Darby's disciples, such as William Kelly, who wrote,

I do not say we, Christians, have got the new covenant itself, but we have got the blood of the new covenant. We have that on which the new covenant is founded. The new covenant itself supposes the land of Israel blessed and the house of Israel delivered, but neither the one nor the other has become true yet. The new covenant supposes certain spiritual blessings, namely, the law of God written in the heart and our sins forgiven. These spiritual parts of the new covenant we have received now, along with other blessings peculiar to Christianity, namely, the presence of the Holy Spirit and union with Christ in heaven which the Jews will not have.¹⁹

Chafer presented a two new covenant position in his systematic theology. He understood a separation between Israel and the church to be so strict that a new covenant promised to Israel could not also be applicable to the church, so in his view, a second new covenant was required.²⁰

This view of two new covenants was clearly presented by Chafer's students, such as John Walvoord and Charles Ryrie. Walvoord observes, "Preference was stated earlier in this study for another view advanced by Lewis Sperry Chafer advocating for two new covenants, one for the nation of Israel to be fulfilled in the millennium, the other for the church to be fulfilled in this present age."²¹ Ryrie summarizes, "This view finds two

¹⁸ Mike Stallard, "The Interpretation of the New Covenant in the History of Traditional Dispensationalism," in *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant*, ed. Mike Stallard (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012), 77-78.

¹⁹ William Kelly, *Jeremiah: The Tender-Hearted Prophet of the Nations* (Oak Park, IL: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.), 80, quoted in Stallard, "New Covenant in Traditional Dispensationalism," 83-84.

²⁰ Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7:98-99; 4:314-15, 325; Bruce A. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," in Blaising and Bock, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 91.

²¹ Walvoord, *Millennial Kingdom*, 218; Stallard, "New Covenant in Traditional Dispensationalism," 98.

new covenants in which promises to Israel and promises to the Church are more sharply distinguished even though both covenants are based on the one sacrifice of Christ.”²²

Homer Kent strongly affirms one new covenant, which was the position of his mentor, Alva McClain: “The essence of the new covenant is spiritual regeneration, enjoyed now by Christian believers and prophesied for national Israel at the second coming of Christ.”²¹ He advocated a view similar to Darby, “The most common explanation among premillennialists is that there is one new covenant. It will be fulfilled eschatologically with Israel but is participated in soteriologically by the church today.”²³

Mike Stallard surveys currently held positions concerning the new covenant among more traditional dispensationalists, and concludes that the majority view is a direct participation of the new covenant to Israel in the millennium, but an indirect application for the church now, which is the original view proposed by Darby.²⁴ He states that traditional dispensationalists understand that the church participates in the new covenant to a lesser extent now than Israel will during the millennium, because the prophecy of Jeremiah specifically designates the new covenant recipients as the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not the church.²⁵ Among traditional dispensationalists, Stallard sees a willingness to view “the church as substantially engaging as a participant in the new covenant without being a formal partner.”²⁶

Bruce Compton understands that “the church presently participates in the new covenant; Israel fulfills the new covenant in the future.”²⁷ He explains that believers today participate in soteriological aspects of the new covenant, such as receiving forgiveness of

²² Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1953), 112-14; Stallard, “New Covenant in Traditional Dispensationalism,” 98.

²³ Homer A. Kent, “The New Covenant and the Church,” in *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 289. See also Stallard, “New Covenant in Traditional Dispensationalism,” 102; Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” 92.

²⁴ Kent, “The New Covenant and the Church,” 297.

²⁵ Stallard, “New Covenant in Traditional Dispensationalism,” 103.

²⁶ Stallard, “New Covenant in Traditional Dispensationalism,” 104.

²⁷ Bruce Compton, “Epilogue: Dispensationalism, The Church and The New Covenant,” in Stallard, *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant*, 276.

sins, as well as the baptizing and indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit, and Christ’s high priestly ministry as subordinate priests. These salvific provisions of the new covenant are directly ratified by the sacrifice of Christ. However, he argues that millennial Israel will directly fulfill the new covenant, in that they will experience eschatological provisions, when Christ will gather them from where they have been exiled, restore their homeland and reconstitute them as a nation.²⁸

<p>The church between Pentecost and the rapture</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Soteriological Aspects of the New Covenant</p>	<p>Millennial Israel</p> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Eschatological Aspects of the New Covenant</p>
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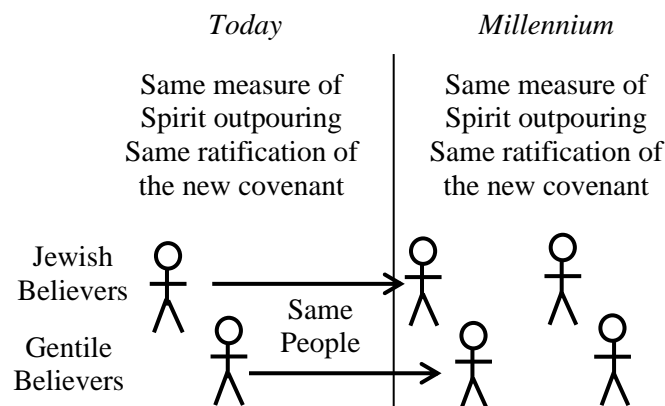
Figure 38. Dispensationalist view of the new covenant:
church presently participates—
millennial Israel ratification

In response to this traditional dispensationalist position, there is no difference in the soteriological aspects of the new covenant between the church of today and Israel during the millennium. The indwelling Holy Spirit applies the sacrificial atonement to each new covenant recipient in the exact same way. Believers now (whether they are Jew or Gentile) and believers during the millennium (whether they be Israel or any other ethnicity) receive the same blood of the new covenant as it is applied through the same ministry of the same Holy Spirit. There is no difference in salvation aspect of the new covenant.

In addition, there is no difference in the eschatological aspects of the new covenant between the church of today and Israel during the millennium. The eschaton began with the public ministry of Christ Jesus. God spoke in these last (ἐσχάτου, *eschatou*) days by His Son (Heb 1:2). It has been revealed in these last (ἐσχάτου, *eschatou*) times for you (1 Pet 1:20). We know that it is the last (ἐσχάτη, *eschate*) hour (1 John 2:18). The eschatological kingdom of God began at Pentecost.

²⁸ Compton, “Dispensationalism, The Church and The New Covenant,” 277.

The Messianic kingdom of God is the result of the outpouring (Joel 2:28-29, Ac 2:33) and the indwelling of the Spirit (Ezek 36:37, John 7:37-39). The outpouring of the Spirit which results in baptism and indwelling are equally important for new covenant recipients today, as it will be during the millennium. The fact that the Holy Spirit is poured out on believers today does not take anything away from believers during the millennium. This is not a case of either/or, it is both/and. All new covenant recipients are indwelt in equal measure, no believer today is indwelt by the Spirit in a greater way, whether Jews or Gentiles, male or female, slave or free. The same is true of millennial believers, all will be equally indwelt by the Holy Spirit and will equally receive new covenant, whether they be Jewish believers or from any other ethnicity. In addition, new covenant recipients who are indwelt today will also be indwelt by the Holy Spirit during the millennium; in fact, believers today will participate fully in the millennial kingdom. We do not experience less indwelling now or more indwelling in the future. We are kingdom citizens now, and we will be kingdom citizens in equal measure in the global rule of Christ. Believers today are equally ratified new covenant recipients both now and in the future; there will not be a time when we will receive an additional portion or a greater measure of the new covenant. Believers today are just as much new covenant community participants at this time as we will ever be into the future and forever.



All believers who experience Spirit baptism and indwelling participate in new covenant provisions and kingdom promised in equality.

Figure 39. The same new covenant ratification and the same kingdom citizenship.

Currently, progressive dispensationalists understand an inaugurated view of continuity in new covenant provisions between the church now and Israel in the future. Blaising and Bock explain that the new covenant foretold by OT prophets was established in the death of Christ:

These are not blessings which are *like* those predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are the *very same* blessings which those prophets predicted. For the new covenant which is presently in effect through Jesus Christ is not one which is *like* that predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but it is *that very same* covenant which they prophesied which is in effect today.²⁹

According to Blaising and Bock, the NT unmistakably teaches that the new covenant is currently in operation and all who believe in Jesus receive its provisions. However, they also point out that new covenant promises are not yet fully realized in the experience of the believer. New covenant recipients are being transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:6, 18), but that lifelong process has yet to be completed. For the present, God's people have the indwelling Holy Spirit as a guarantee of total redemption at a time yet future (Eph 1:13-14). The apostle Paul explains that at the coming of the Lord Jesus, God will make us completely holy, to include the bodies of believers (1 Thess 5:23). Until then, we experience distress as we wait for the redemption of our body, when our adoption as God's sons will be finalized in us (Rom 8:23). We do not know what that future perfection will be like, but when we see the Lord Jesus in His coming, we will be made like His glorious body (1 John 3:2). They assert that believers are now living under inaugurated new covenant blessings, and in the future our bodies will be resurrected and our transformation will be complete. The new covenant will be completely fulfilled and its provisions will be fully received for the church at the rapture.³⁰

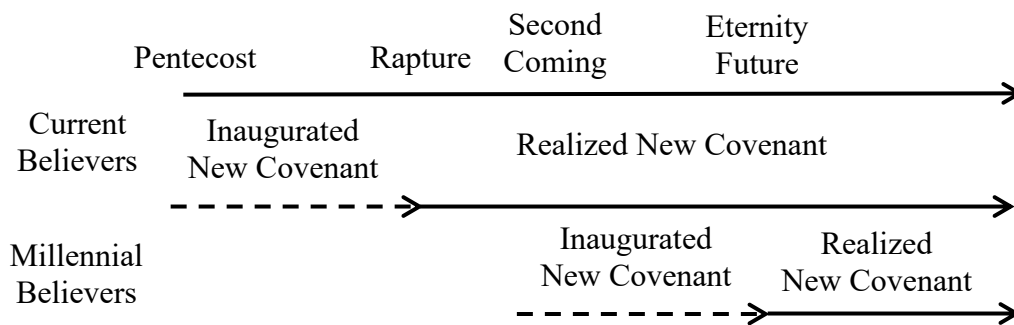
Blaising and Bock correctly point out that God is accomplishing the process of sanctification in our lives, as the apostle Paul explained in Philippians 1:6, "Being convinced of this very thing that He who has begun a good work in you will continue

²⁹ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 202.

³⁰ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 208-11.

to accomplish it until the Day of Christ Jesus.” There is an “already/not yet” aspect to salvation; God has already saved us (Eph 2:8, Titus 3:5), He is saving us now (2 Cor 2:15), and He will save us in the future (Rom 13:11). There will be a day in the future when Christ will transform our lowly bodies to be conformed to His glorious body (Phil 3:21), and we will be made completely holy in our bodies, as well as our spirits and souls (1 Thess 5:23).

However, in distinction to the progressive dispensational view, the believer who has just received Spirit baptism/indwelling is no more or less a new covenant recipient than they will be at the rapture when they stand before the Lord in a glorified body. No recipient ever grows or develops into a higher form or a more advanced state of new covenant ratification. The believer today will not be washed in the blood of Christ in a deeper way or experience the baptism/indwelling of the Spirit in a greater manner in the future. We will never receive more of the atonement of Christ, nor more forgiveness of sin at any future time. There are no degrees to the new covenant.



If believers now experience an unrealized new covenant, then believers throughout the millennium will also experience an unrealized new covenant.

Figure 40. Progressive dispensationalism inaugurated vs. realized new covenant.

Blaising and Bock understand that believers today experience new covenant provisions in an inaugurated manner, and as we are glorified at the rapture, the new covenant will become fully realized in us. If that is true, then millennial believers will participate in the new covenant in an inaugurated manner for the entire thousand year

rule of Christ on the earth, and will only fully realize new covenant provision in the new heaven and earth, due to the fact that they will experience the entire millennium in normal bodies, and will receive their resurrected bodies only when they enter the eternal state. Jeremiah (31:31-34) and Ezekiel (36:16-36) prophesied that the new covenant will be fully realized at the beginning of millennium, not after one thousand years are expired as the saints with normal bodies are glorified in the future state. If millennial believers will experience the realized new covenant in normal bodies before their glorified bodies, then normal believers now realize the new covenant in normal bodies before our resurrection as well. We receive the totality of the new covenant as the Holy Spirit applies the sacrifice of Christ in His baptism/indwelling. There will be no time in the future that we will receive any additional or advanced new covenant ratification.

Bruce Ware affirms that while the new covenant was prophesied to be ratified specifically with Israel, OT prophets foresaw Gentile participation, especially in Isaiah 55:3-5. He writes that Yahweh will call nations which Israel did not know in Isaiah's day into the future kingdom. He notes that in the OT, Gentiles could participate in the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants through the proselyte process, so it is reasonable to understand Gentile participation in the new covenant during the millennium, in addition to new covenant ratification with Israel.³¹

Ware explains that the new covenant is marked by the totality of forgiveness of sins to God's people, and the indwelling of the Spirit with brings the internalization of God's law to each participant. He understands that Christ inaugurated the new covenant in His resurrection and ascension as He sent the Spirit to indwell His followers. He points out that the new covenant is based on the blood of the new covenant and the indwelling of the Spirit.³² Ware emphasizes that the mere fact of Christ's atoning death was not

³¹ Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," 72-73.

³² Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," 84-85.

sufficient to initiate the new covenant, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was required to internalize God’s law and apply the sacrifice of Christ to each recipient. This inauguration took place at Pentecost due to the timing of the giving of the Spirit. Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:37-38), and in the upper room, on the night He was betrayed, the Lord explained that it was advantageous for Him to go away so that He could send the Spirit “who lives with you, but will be in you” (John 14:17).³³ Ware discusses at length the apostle Paul’s teaching on the Holy Spirit’s new covenant ministry in 2 Corinthians 3. The Spirit makes believers qualified as new covenant recipients and “the superior glory of the new covenant is seen in its transforming power to enable its covenant participants to live increasingly righteous lives through the Spirit.”³⁴

However, Ware disagrees with the understanding of the new covenant church of today and new covenant Israel during the millennium to compose one undifferentiated people of God.³⁵ He understands that the current church and future Israel share theological commonality (the same new covenant), while maintaining distinct identities. One major distinction is the territorial and political aspects of the millennial kingdom. God has promised to accomplish a national restoration of Israel to its land during the millennium, which is not a promise applicable to the new covenant church. Another distinction is the “already/not yet” promises of God which are now preliminary, and will only be fully realized at a future time. He explains,

The fulfillment of the new covenant thus should not be now viewed as an all-or-nothing affair. Rather it is best seen as partially realized now (spiritual aspects of forgiveness and indwelling Spirit for all covenant participants) and later to be realized in its completeness (when all Israel is saved and restored to its land).³⁶

³³ Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” 86-87.

³⁴ Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” 88.

³⁵ Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” 92-93.

³⁶ Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” 93.

Ware concludes that in one sense future Israel and the church are a united people of God as they participate in the same new covenant, but in another sense they are a differing people of God due to separate identities.³⁷

In response to Ware's discussion, it is true that there is a progression in the plan and purpose of God for humanity. There is an "already/not yet" aspect to God's kingdom; Christ already rules in our hearts, but He does not yet rule the nations with a rod of iron, that He will do in the future. However, believers today are just as much kingdom citizens as believers who live during the millennium. We are kingdom citizens today because we have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son (Col 1:13). The kingdom of today is not inferior or deficient to the kingdom of tomorrow; it is the same kingdom. Believers of today are not second-class kingdom citizens, only to be granted first-class status at the return of Christ; citizens now will also participate fully and in equality in the millennial aspect of the kingdom. The requirement for kingdom participation this time is believing Jesus as Savior and receiving Christ as King, which will also be the same requirement on the first day of the millennium.

The new covenant is not "best seen as partially realized now" as Ware writes. The core new covenant realities of forgiveness in the blood of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are eternal blessings for all new covenant recipients. The believer who has experienced the application of the sacrificial atonement of Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit is a new covenant recipient for eternity. Ware could not be more wrong when he stated: "The fulfillment of the new covenant thus should not be now viewed as an all-or-nothing affair." Either the Holy Spirit has written God's law on our hearts, or He has not. Either God is our God and we are His people, or it is not true. Either we know God with a personal relationship, or we do not. Either God has forgiven our sins, not to remember them anymore, or He has not. There are no degrees of new covenant ratification. The believer of today does not have less of the new covenant, and the believer during the millennium will not have more.

³⁷ Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," 93.

One example could be Israel at Sinai, who received the Mosaic covenant forty years before they entered the promised land to participate in their inheritance. The Mosaic covenant in the experience of Israel during the wilderness wandering was not partially realized. Ratification of the Mosaic covenant was viewed as an all-or-nothing affair. There was progression in the experience of the Mosaic covenant community as they inherited the promised land, and as they later experienced great blessings under David and Solomon's rule, but there was not varied communities of people with differing identities under the Mosaic covenant. There was only one Mosaic covenant and one covenant community from Sinai to the cross. One covenant requires one covenant community. The same is true of the new covenant; every believer to whom the Holy Spirit applies the sacrificial atonement of Christ through baptism/indwelling receives the one new covenant and also participates in the same new covenant community, this is true today and it will be equally true during the millennium.

Pettegrew discusses at length that Hebrew prophets foretold of the ministry of the Spirit in the new covenant. He points out prophecies concerning the outpouring of the Spirit (Isa 32:15, 44:3; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech 12:10) and notes that John the Baptist spoke about the Holy Spirit when he proclaimed the Messiah would baptize in the Spirit. He concludes that the message of the OT prophets is that the Messiah will perform Spirit outpouring/baptism during a future kingdom era.³⁸

He shows that Jesus and the apostles applied the Spirit outpouring/baptism prophecies of John and the prophets to a time when Christ would be glorified (John 7:37-39). In the upper room discourse, the Lord Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit after He departed (John 16:7). The Lord commanded the disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, which was the Spirit baptism that John the Baptist proclaimed (Acts 1:4-5). "Only after being exalted to the right hand of God did Christ send the Holy

³⁸ Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 45-46.

Spirit, which had been promised by the Father and which subsequently He poured out (Acts 2:33).”³⁹

Pettegrew points out that this outpouring/baptism of the Spirit marks a change in the relationship believers have with God. Before receiving the Spirit, He remains *with* them, but after receiving the Spirit, He will be *in* them (John 14:17). He understands that the prophets, including John the Baptist, spoke of the Messianic kingdom in its impact on Israel. When Jesus spoke of Spirit baptism, His disciples understood the outpouring of the Spirit to Israel. They asked, “Will You restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?” The Lord Jesus responded that they would receive power to be witnesses to Him beginning at Jerusalem and ultimately beyond Israel, to Samaria and the ends of the earth.⁴⁰

Pettegrew rightly states, “The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost began the new covenant program,”⁴¹ and continues, “The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the new covenant that involved entry into stage one of the Messianic age.”⁴¹ He also teaches that the church could not begin until Christ had ascended into heaven, pointing out that the apostle Paul specifically wrote that the Lord was made head of the church after God “raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places” (Eph 1:20).⁴²

Pettegrew comments that there was no mystery in the OT that Gentiles would be included in salvation during the Messianic kingdom; the apostle Paul also revealed that Spirit baptism would comprise the body of Christ made up of Jews and Gentiles in equality (1 Cor 12:13). He states that the mystery revealed to Paul was that Jews and Gentiles would “be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph 3:6).⁴³ However, he concludes, “From the day of Pentecost until the

³⁹ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 67.

⁴⁰ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 87.

⁴¹ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 97.

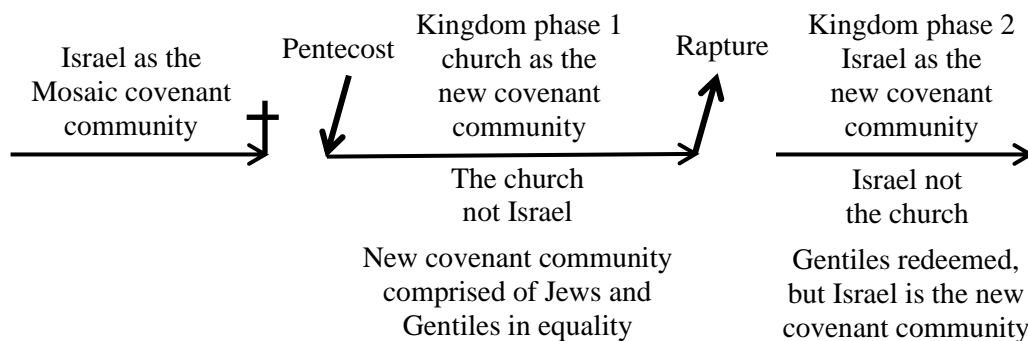
⁴² Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 99.

⁴³ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 99-100.

Rapture, the church becomes the focus of God’s operation here on earth. After the Rapture, the nation of Israel will once again come back into center circle. . . . At that point in the future, the kingdom will be restored to Israel.”⁴⁴

He understands the new covenant began at Pentecost with the outpouring/ baptism of the Holy Spirit and will continue due to the same Spirit outpouring/baptism throughout the millennium. However, he teaches that kingdom authority will be taken from the church at the rapture and returned to Israel. Israel before the cross was the Mosaic covenant community with kingdom authority, and Israel after the rapture will be the new covenant community with kingdom authority.

He teaches that the church of today is comprised of Jews and Gentiles in equality, but he understands that equality will not continue into the millennial kingdom. Gentiles will be redeemed, but national Israel as the new covenant community will regain the supremacy that was experienced as the Mosaic covenant community before the cross.



Now the church is the custodian of the kingdom from Pentecost to the rapture, but in the millennium, Israel becomes the custodian of the kingdom once again.

Figure 41. Pettegrew’s view of millennial Israel with kingdom authority.

Robert Saucy takes care to show that OT prophecy of a Messianic community that experiences the new covenant and the outpouring/indwelling of the Holy Spirit during the millennium.⁴⁵ He explains that the outpouring of the Spirit as prophesied

⁴⁴ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 100.

⁴⁵ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 183.

in the OT to be synonymous to Spirit baptism spoken about by John the Baptist and Jesus. He writes that this Spirit baptism began at Pentecost and will be experienced during the millennium by Jews and Gentiles alike.⁴⁶ Saucy realizes that his understanding of the new covenant beginning at Pentecost and continuing into the Millennium, including both Israel and the Gentile nations, would result in a shift in dispensational thought:

The recognition that Spirit baptism belongs to all the participants of the new covenant, including the nation of Israel when it turns to the Messiah, raises the question how to apply the images and metaphors associated with the present work of God in the church. This question is especially important in relation to the metaphor of the body. According to the apostle Paul, baptism with the Spirit forms the body of Christ (1Co 12:13). The body, in turn, is frequently identified with the church (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18). From this we could conclude that all participants in the new covenant, including the nation of Israel, are included in the church as the body of Christ and therefore any distinction between Israel and the church—which is at the heart of the dispensationalism interpretation—is prohibited.⁴⁷

Saucy understands that Spirit baptism currently places the believer into the body of Christ; however, he explains that Spirit baptism could not also place millennial believers into the body of Christ because that would violate dispensational principles:

It is difficult to conclude that these same realities belong only to believers living during this church age. Surely the continuation of the new covenant salvation means that other believers will be indwelt by the Spirit . . . A study of the body metaphor therefore leads us to conclude that this image is applicable to others besides believers who are in the church.⁴⁸

Saucy teaches that believers currently experience the baptism and indwelling of the Spirit which is the foundation of new covenant, and also understands that millennial believers experience the same baptism and indwelling of the Spirit which is the foundation of the new covenant for them as well, but these “other believers” cannot belong to the church, because they do not live during the church age. Saucy cannot come to any other option than “the word ‘church’ is found only in reference to believers on earth during the present time between the first and second comings of Christ.”⁴⁹ He concludes,

⁴⁶ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 177-78.

⁴⁷ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 98-99.

⁴⁸ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 177-78.

⁴⁹ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 177-78.

In summary, the question of whether or not Israel should be considered as ultimately a part of the church rests on the biblical application of the term “church.” If the church ultimately signifies all of God’s people who are in Christ, then surely the saved Israel will become part of this body. By contrast, if “church” applies only to the present age, then it would seem not to encompass that future Israel that will turn to God in faith.⁵⁰

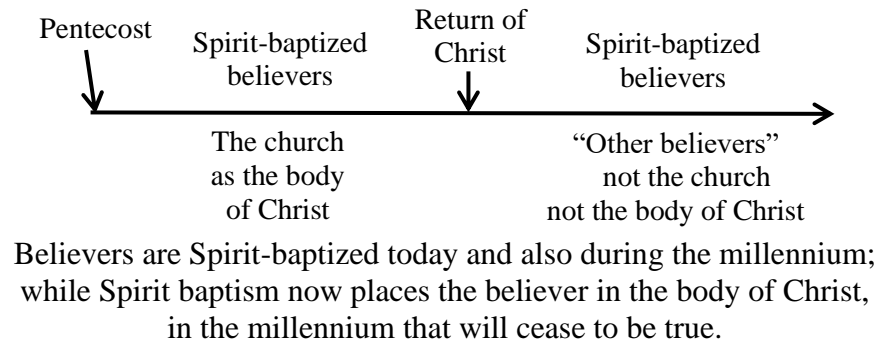


Figure 42. Saucy’s view of the church vs. millennial “other believers.”

Saucy cannot bring himself to come to the conclusion that millennial believers are in the church due to his narrow definition of the word *church*. If by *church* one means “Spirit-baptized and indwelt believers who are recipients of the new covenant,” then millennial believers would certainly qualify; but if by *church* one means “Spirit-baptized and indwelt believers who are recipients of the new covenant and who also live between Pentecost and the rapture,” then millennial believers become disqualified because of timing.

In response it must be pointed out that in one Spirit we are baptized into one body at this present time, then it must also true that believers who are Spirit-baptized during the millennium will also be placed in the same body. One equals the other. All who are Spirit-baptized become members of the body of Christ regardless of timing, or 1 Corinthians 12:13 loses all meaning. The apostle Paul did not write: “For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body only between Pentecost and the rapture.”

The problem with many dispensationalists seems to be theological baggage they attach to the English word “church.” If one’s definition of *church* is “all believers between Pentecost and the rapture,” then any further discussion concerning Spirit baptism

⁵⁰ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 98-99.

and new covenant recipients during the millennial kingdom becomes meaningless. The fact that believers following Pentecost, who are equally baptized and indwelt by the Spirit, and are equal recipients of the new covenant brings one to the conclusion that all are also equally placed in the body of Christ (which is the *ekklesia*, the church) as equal members of a new covenant community.

Progressive dispensationalists understanding that believers today and believers during the millennium receive the same new covenant, but they do not participate in the same new covenant community. Blaising and Bock state: “The church is precisely redeemed humanity itself (both Jews and Gentiles) as it exists *in this dispensation* prior to the coming of Christ.”⁵¹ Consequently, millennial believers who receive the same new covenant by the same Spirit baptism and indwelling are not members of the church. Ware understands that the current church and millennial Israel share theological commonality (the same new covenant), while maintaining distinct identities.⁵² Pettegrew writes that believers following Pentecost receive the same Spirit outpouring/baptism and the same new covenant both today and during the millennium, but not the same participation in the church. Believers today belong to the church, while millennial Israel does not belong. The church has kingdom authority until the rapture, then kingdom authority reverts to Israel for the millennium.⁵³ Saucy explains that believers are placed into the body of Christ by Spirit baptism at this time. While millennial believers are Spirit-baptized, they are not also placed into the body of Christ, because that is the church, and millennial believers do not belong in the church.⁵⁴

This position requires one new covenant, but two new covenant communities; new covenant community A exists from Pentecost to the rapture and new covenant community B to exist during the millennium. The reason this distinction is held so strongly

⁵¹ Blaising and Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 50. Emphasis original.

⁵² Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” 92-93.

⁵³ Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 100.

⁵⁴ Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 186.

is that dispensationalists reject the belief that the church is synonymous to Israel. If they understood the church to include millennial Israel, this distinction would be threatened.

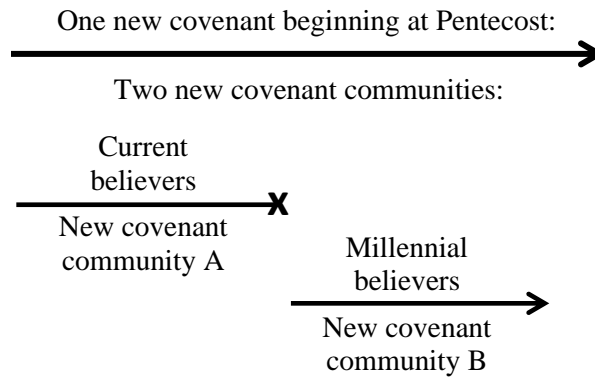


Figure 43. Progressive dispensationalist view of one new covenant but two new covenant communities.

One New Covenant—One New Covenant Community Position

In response to this progressive dispensational view, one new covenant demands one new covenant community. Believers are placed in the body of Christ by Spirit baptism. Millennial believers are Spirit-baptized, so they are also placed in the body of Christ, which is the *ekklesia*, the church. The church is the community of all new covenant recipients. Due to the fact that millennial believers are baptized and indwelt by the Spirit, they are new covenant recipients.

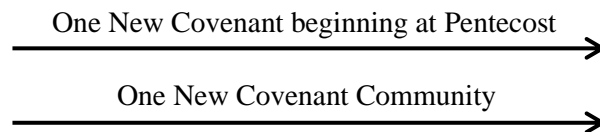


Figure 44. One new covenant and one new covenant community.

Redeemed Gentiles are not incorporated into Israel, even spiritual Israel. During the millennial kingdom, new covenant recipients among the many ethnicities will remain distinct from ethnic Israel in territory and populace. Ethnic Egypt and ethnic Assyria will remain separate from Israel; Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south

(Isa 19:23-24). The same situation is true today, many new covenant recipients among the many ethnicities now become kingdom citizens without incorporation into spiritual Israel. In OT times, redeemed Gentiles could become Jews through the proselyte process as they accepted the authority of the Mosaic covenant to become members of the Mosaic covenant community indistinguishable from ethnic Jews. This was not a requirement for spiritual life as many spiritual Gentiles remained separate from Israel, but they will all participate fully in future kingdom promises. This proselyte process ended at the cross as the Mosaic covenant ceased to exist, now spiritual Jews and spiritual Gentiles are equal citizens of one new covenant body. The apostle Paul could not be clearer in Ephesians 3:6, “That the ethnic groups are through the gospel participants of the same inheritance, of the same body and of the same promise in Christ.” As believers are Spirit-baptized, they are placed in one body of Christ, regardless of ethnicity. This body of Christ is ethnic neutral, gender neutral and status neutral—neither Jew nor Greeks, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free—but one in Christ. The Holy Spirit applies the sacrifice of Christ to all new covenant recipients equally. This is true today, and it will be equally true in the future.

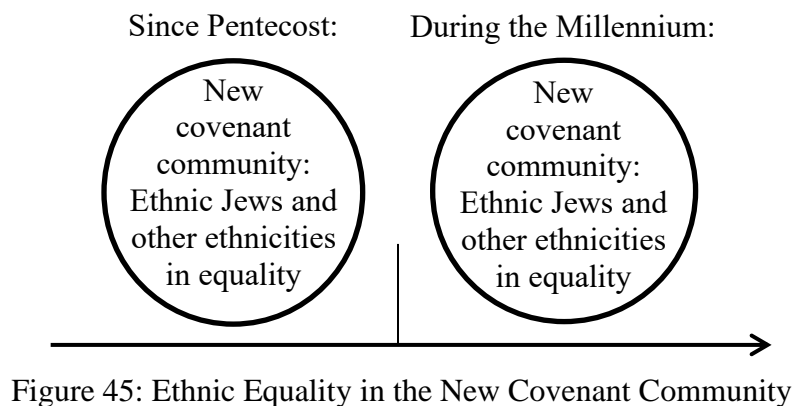


Figure 45: Ethnic Equality in the New Covenant Community

Vlach asks, “Has the church replaced Israel?” The position that the church replaced Israel in the program of God is called “supersessionism” or “replacement theory.” He answers to the negative, his view is that the church has not replaced Israel.⁵⁵ In response

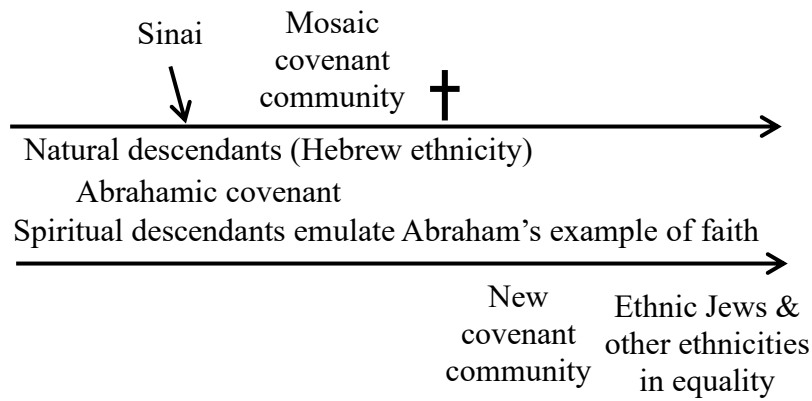
⁵⁵ Michael Vlach states, “Based on the arguments presented in this book, I conclude that supersessionism is not a biblical doctrine.” Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B & H, 2010), 203.

to this question whether the church has replaced Israel, the answer has two levels: first, the new covenant community has replaced the Mosaic covenant community. The Mosaic covenant and its covenant community ended at the sacrifice of Christ, and it will never again regain the kingdom authority it had between Sinai and the cross. Since the day of Pentecost, the new covenant is being ratified to each believer by the Holy Spirit, and its covenant community is the government of the kingdom of God. Since this new covenant community is the *ekklesia*, the church exercises kingdom authority both now and in the future. The Mosaic covenant and its covenant community will never be revived.

Second, the new covenant community has not replaced ethnic Israel. The church cannot replace any ethnicity. Ethnic Jews exist independently of the new covenant. As an ethnic Jew accepts Jesus as their Messiah, that believer is ratified into the new covenant and incorporated into the new covenant community as an individual. This process is true now and will remain in true in the return of Christ as every ethnic Jew alive will accept Him as their Messiah. All Israel on that day will receive the outpouring of the Spirit, which will result in Spirit baptism/indwelling to be ratified into the new covenant. In this way, ethnic Israel will be incorporated into the new covenant community.

The question for traditional dispensationalists is not “has the church replaced Israel?” but “will Israel replace the church?” Dispensationalists assert that the church will be completed at the rapture, and that the program of God will revert to national Israel. These traditional dispensationalists hold to “reverse supersessionism” that Israel will replace the church.

In conclusion, dispensationalists both traditional and progressive, emphasize *national* Israel instead of *ethnic* Israel. Ethnic Israel became the Mosaic covenant community at Sinai. At the cross, the Mosaic covenant became obsolete and its covenant community ceased to exist. In the death of Christ, ethnic Israel returned to the status that it had before Sinai. Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham that his physical descendants would be a people group, in their territory, through whom God would bless mankind. The Mosaic covenant did not add to or take away from God’s covenant to Abraham, as the apostle Paul explained in Galatians 3:15-17.



The Mosaic covenant was made with natural descendants from Sinai to the cross, while the new covenant is made with spiritual descendants following Pentecost.

Figure 46. Ethnic Israel with the Abrahamic, Mosaic and new covenants.

Between Sinai and the cross, the Mosaic covenant community was the custodian for the kingdom of God and the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. That all changed at the cross as the Mosaic covenant community ceased to exist, and beginning at Pentecost the church as the new covenant community came into existence as the participatory governmental of God's kingdom and the gateway to Abrahamic covenant promises. Now each new covenant recipient participates fully in the Abrahamic covenant and its promises for the kingdom of God. Believers alive today will sit down with Abraham during the millennial kingdom to enjoy God's goodness on this earth (Matt 8:11).

Dispensationalism is an honest system to explain the differences between the church of today with Israel before the cross and Israel in a future spiritual/physical aspect of the kingdom of God. There has been a welcome progression in understanding Spirit baptism and new covenant recipients during the millennial kingdom, although current dispensationalists hesitate to describe Spirit-baptized new covenant recipients of the future as belonging to the church. This project argues that the church as the new covenant community consists of all new covenant recipients in equality, as the Spirit applies the atonement of Christ to believers individually in His baptism and indwelling. This is true at this time, and it will continue to be true into the future forever.

CHAPTER 8

THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY AND COVENANT THEOLOGY

Covenant theology is a reaction by Reformers to the Roman Catholic teaching that infants must be baptized to remove the original sin inherited from Adam in the fall. The Reformers rightfully rejected this false doctrine that babies who die unbaptized are condemned to eternal punishment. At the same time, Anabaptists demanded believer's baptism, which alarmed local governments because infant baptism was both membership into the state church and citizenship into the state jurisdiction. Anabaptists suffered greatly for their biblical convictions, but the Reformers realized that they needed the protection that these local governments provided. Beginning with Zwingli, they accepted infant baptism, while rejecting Catholic arguments for this practice. Reformers proposed that circumcision to infants from the OT transferred into the NT as infant baptism. However, because the old covenant consisted of a mixed group of saved and lost, babies and adults, the same construct continued into the new covenant community. Anabaptists of the 1500s and Baptists of the 1600s disagreed with unredeemed recipients in the new covenant community.

Traditional Covenantalists

Covenant theology is a system of three covenants which explain God's relationship with humanity. The covenant of redemption was made between the Persons of the Trinity in eternity past. God the Father made a covenant with God the Son to save all who would be purchased by the atonement of the cross. The covenant of works was made with Adam by God on the sixth day of creation. God covenanted with Adam that if he would obey God's command, the blessing of eternal life would be the result; however, if Adam disobeyed, the curse of death would be the consequence. Adam broke God's

covenant of works and fell into sin, bringing all his descendants with him in this curse of spiritual, physical and eternal death, so God in His mercy made a covenant of grace to provide a way of salvation for the elect. Covenantalists explain that the covenant of grace is the same throughout God's interaction with mankind since the fall; there is only one plan of salvation.¹

In response to this introduction of covenant theology, the Scriptures reveal the federal (*foedere*, Latin: covenant) headship of Adam as well as the federal headship of Christ. Humanity was created in Adam and all participate in the universal effects of our forefather's fall into sin. The apostle Paul contrasts Adam with Christ as the last Adam; "So it is also written: 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul;' the last Adam is a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15:45). "In Adam all die, so all in Christ will be made alive" (1 Cor 15:22). Because of one man's disobedience, mankind experiences sin and death (Rom 5:12), and due to one Man's obedience, all who are in Him experience holiness and life.

Covenant theology understands this federal headship of Adam as the *covenant of works* and the federal headship of Christ is called the *covenant of grace*.² Simply, humanity is fallen in sin due to Adam's federal headship, and the work of salvation is to transfer the individual to Christ's federal headship, where they experience a personal relationship with God. It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring the believer from total depravity and spiritual death to forgiveness of sin and spiritual life. This process is the same for every child of God throughout all human history. This project accepts the federal headship of Adam as the covenant of works and the federal headship with Christ as the covenant of grace.

¹ J. Ligon Duncan, *Covenant Theology: A Biblical, Theological and Historical Study of God's Covenants* (e-book), accessed December 26, 2018, <https://www.monergism.com/covenant-theology-biblical-theological-and-historical-study-gods-covenants-ebook>.

² John Murray, "Covenant Theology," in *Collected Works of John Murray* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), 4:216-40; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1980), 53-56; Steven Wellum, "Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: B & H, 2006), 102-3.

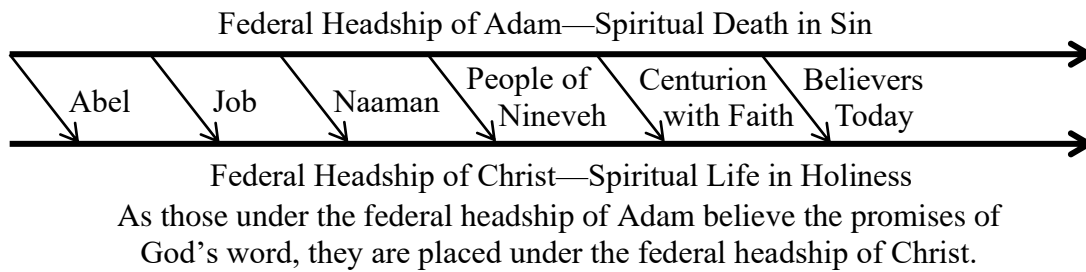


Figure 47. The work of salvation throughout human history.

However, covenant theology goes a step further and attempts to place biblical covenants within the federal headship of Christ framework, as these various biblical covenants (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and new covenants) become subordinate administrations in this baseline covenant of grace.

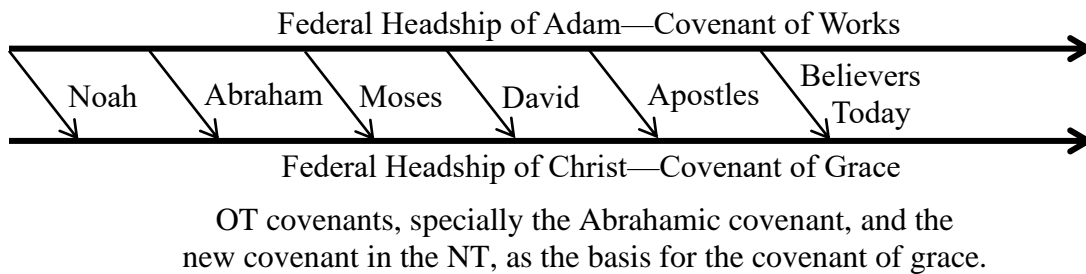
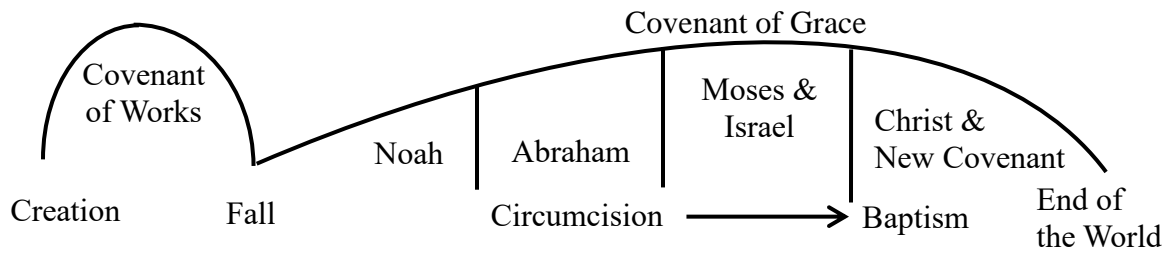


Figure 48. Biblical covenants within federal headship framework.

In response, recipients of the various covenants (except the new covenant) consisted of both saved and lost. It would be impossible to include lost and unredeemed covenant participants from OT covenants into the federal headship of Christ (covenant of grace). Unregenerate Israelites remained in the federal headship of Adam (covenant of works) all their lifetimes and died in their total depravity. Only the new covenant totally consists of participants under the federal headship of Christ; the only way to ratify the new covenant is for the Holy Spirit to apply the atonement of Christ in His baptism/indwelling. Unredeemed humanity without the application of Christ’s sacrifice and without the Spirit’s indwelling cannot be new covenant recipients in any consideration.

Overarching Nature of the Covenant Community



OT covenants, specially the Abrahamic covenant, and the new covenant in the NT, are the basis for the covenant of grace.

Figure 49. The framework of covenant theology.³

Covenant theology teaches this overarching covenant to have a community of recipients, consisting of all the redeemed of all human history; as the result, believers both before and after the cross are equal participants of this one covenant community, which is understood to be the church.⁴

Edmund Clowney discusses the church as the people of God. He explains that the story of the church began in the Garden of Eden as God promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The story continued with Abraham as God revealed His purpose to make him a great nation and to bless all the families of the earth. that God Himself must come to circumcise the hearts and renew His covenant. Jesus came to call His disciples and establish His assembly. After His resurrection, Christ commanded His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. "His coming to fill the assembled disciples at Pentecost establishes the church of the New Covenant."⁵

Clowney explains that the OT people of God became the Messiah's church. The new grew out of the old like a flower blooming out of a bud. God's promise to

³ "Three Forms of Covenant Theology," accessed December 26, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDHKvqtMysg>.

⁴ Duncan, *Covenant Theology*; Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 56. "The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages." First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, "What We Believe," accessed June 10, 2019, <http://www.fbcfw.org/about/what-we-believe>.

⁵ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 27-28.

Abraham was fulfilled in the coming of the Spirit, as all ethnic groups become children of Abraham without distinction. “Only in the coming of the Spirit is the body of Christ given its full reality, just as only in Christ’s redemption do sinners become the true people of God, sprinkled with the blood of the New Covenant.”⁶

Clowney understands that the NT equates the people of God before the cross with the people of God after the cross. The OT people of God were His covenant people, a special treasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5-6), and the apostle Peter used the same to describe the NT people of God “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a possessed people” (1 Pet 2:9).

Clowney points out that Peter is referring back to the prophet Hosea in 1 Peter 2:10, “At one time you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you did not have mercy, but now you have received mercy.” Hosea named his children *Lo-Ruhamah* (no mercy) and *Lo-Ammi* (not My people) (Hos 1:6, 8). This was the condition of covenant breaking Jews and also Gentiles outside the covenant, but Peter celebrated the fact that they had received mercy together as the covenant people of God.

Clowney shows that in the OT, Israel was God’s son (Hos 11:1), His spouse (Isa 54:5), His vine (Ps 80), His flock (Ps 100:3). In the NT, the new covenant believers are God’s sons (Rom 8:14), His bride (Eph 5:25-32), His vine (John 15:5) and His flock (Acts 19:28).⁷

Clowney discusses *ekklesia*, as the LXX translation of the Hebrew word *qahal*. “When Jesus speaks of the ‘church’, however, he uses a term rich with OT meaning.” He explains the importance of Israel as an assembly gathered before God and gathered in His presence (Deut 4:10). “Israel was God’s assembly in the great day when God assembled them before Him at Mount Sinai to make his covenant with them.” Israel would assemble before God for the feasts at Jerusalem, “but Hebrews reminds us that even Jerusalem is not the final city. ‘For here we do not have an enduring city, but we look for the city that is to

⁶ Clowney, *The Church*, 29.

⁷ Clowney, *The Church*, 29-30.

come' (Heb 13:14).” Now God’s people worship in heavenly Jerusalem. We boldly go to God’s presence in heaven, where Jesus is our High Priest and to the blood of the new covenant. When believers gather to worship on earth (Heb 10:25), we assemble in heaven where Jesus is. The people of God are already seated in heaven with Christ in the purposes of God (Eph 2:6). “Not only do we come to the assembly where our risen Lord is; he comes by his Spirit to the assembly where we are. Where two or three are gathered in his name, there he is” (Matt 18:20).⁸

Clowney explains the dramatic changes from Israel as the OT people of God to the church as the new covenant people of God. John the Baptist came to announce that the kingdom of God was near. God’s kingdom was realized in the presence of the Messiah, “the kingdom came with Jesus himself.” He points out that “God’s kingdom is the working of His power to accomplish his purposes in judgment and salvation . . . not so much his domain as his dominion, not his realm, but his rule.” Jesus gave His kingdom to those who gladly received it, the poor and humble listened to His teaching and put their faith in his promises, but the wealthy leaders and proud rulers could not accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. Israel as a nation rejected Him because he was a spiritual Messiah, not political, so Jesus declared that He would take the kingdom from them and give it to a productive nation (Matt 21:42-43).⁹

The Lord Jesus asked His disciples who they believed Him to be, Peter answered for the rest that He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus responded that God the Father had revealed that truth to him. “Because Peter knew on divine authority who Jesus is, Jesus acknowledged him to be the rock of foundation for the new form of the people of God. As Peter had acknowledged Christ, so Christ acknowledged Peter.”¹⁰

Clowney points out that Peter was given the authority of the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:18), not in contrast to the other disciples, because they had received the

⁸ Clowney, *The Church*, 30-31.

⁹ Clowney, *The Church*, 38.

¹⁰ Clowney, *The Church*, 39-40.

same revelation from God. The others were also given the same authority (Matt 18:18). Peter and the other apostles were the foundation to the new covenant community in contrast to the leaders of Israel. The Jewish rulers claimed to have the key of knowledge (Luke 11:52), to sit in Moses' seat (Matt 23:1-2), and to be seed of Abraham (John 8:33). God hid His truth from those who considered themselves to be wise and revealed it to uneducated and unskilled men (Matt 11:25-26; Acts 4:13). He understands that Christ took the kingdom from Israel and gave it to despised fishermen and other common people as the chosen elders of the new covenant. "The great Shepherd gathers the remnant of his people and established Israel anew to confess his name," as Christ builds his church in the power of his kingdom. Those who reject Christ also forfeit any position in the people of God, while many are gathered from the highways and hedges to partake in the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the eternal kingdom.¹¹

Clowney emphasizes that the church is the Israel of God. The apostle Paul wrote that the Gentiles were "separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship with Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). He understands that Gentile Christians are now included as citizens of spiritual Israel and heirs of God's covenant promises. "As Adam represented the old humanity, bringing death to all, so a new humanity is created in Christ (Rom 5:12). The sin of those represented by him is put to his account, and his righteousness is put to theirs." He explains,

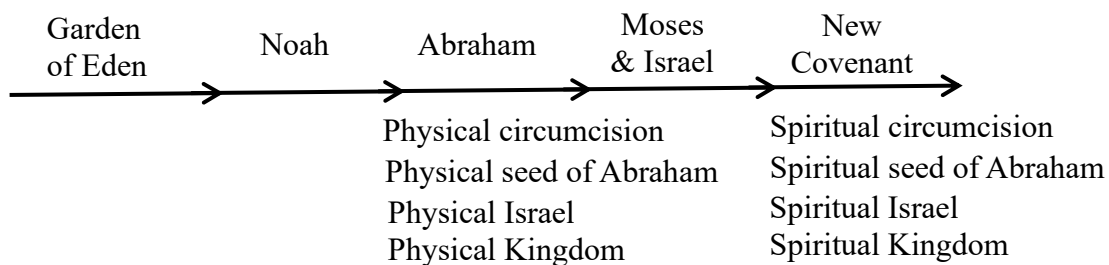
In the apostolic church, the controversy over circumcision took place only because both sides thought of the church as the true Israel. Those who required Gentile Christians to be circumcised obviously thought that those converts were being added to God's people. Paul never challenged this. He never explained that Christians were joining a new entity, the church and not Israel, and that circumcision was therefore inappropriate. On the contrary, he claimed for the church the true spiritual circumcision of Christ, gained by union with him (Phil 3:3).¹²

Clowney concludes that Christ is the Seed of Abraham, and He alone is the rightful heir of God's covenant. Both Jews and Gentiles in equality become Abraham's

¹¹ Clowney, *The Church*, 41-42.

¹² Clowney, *The Church*, 43.

spiritual seed and heirs of God’s covenant promises in Christ. Believers today are the new Israel, but spiritual rather than physical. However, he understands a future for ethnic Israel; God’s judgment is not total nor final. God is redeeming a remnant of Jews, He exchanges hearts of stone for hearts of flesh (Ezek 36:26-27) and ratifies the new covenant to them (Jer 31:31-34), as He promised by His prophets. The God of the OT in the Person of the Son will return to earth. He will claim His people and gather them into His eternal kingdom. The Messiah will welcome Jews and Gentiles into a final assembly through the new covenant, and all the redeemed will be one people of God forever.¹³



In covenant theology, the people under OT physical covenants are understood to be the same covenant community as those under the NT spiritual covenant.

Figure 50. The church as the one people of God.

Overarching Application of Covenant Signs

Robertson discusses circumcision as the seal of the Abrahamic covenant. In Genesis 15, God finalized His covenant with Abraham by passing alone through pieces of sacrifices, and in chapter 17, God instituted the covenant sign and seal of circumcision. “This is My covenant . . . every male among you shall be circumcised” (v. 10). “The seal of the covenant relates so closely to the covenant itself that the covenant may be identified as the seal.”¹⁴ This ritual was performed on a son eight days old, emphasizing the aspect of receiving the covenant through physical birth throughout the generations. Circumcision was accomplished on all who were placed under Abraham’s authority, to include foreign-born

¹³ Clowney, *The Church*, 42-43, 35-36.

¹⁴ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 148.

servants. It was a covenantal sign of those who participated in the blessings of Abraham, rather than an exclusive ethnic badge. Robertson explains that a severe judgment was given to the man who rejected this covenantal sign, as he was excluded from the blessings promised by the covenant.¹⁵

Those of other ethnicities who wished to participate in the Passover, must first be circumcised (Exod 12:43-49). Gentiles were welcomed into the covenant community of Israel and the blessings of Abraham through circumcision in the proselyte process. Those among the nations were considered to be unclean and defiled, in contrast to the ceremonial cleanness of God's circumcised people. Others were characterized as "uncircumcised." Goliath was an uncircumcised Philistine (1 Sam 17:26) and King Saul would rather die than be captured by the uncircumcised (1 Sam 31:4).¹⁶

Moses exhorted the people of Israel to "circumcise their hearts" (Deut 10:16). Receiving the covenant through birth as a physical descendant of Abraham did not automatically guarantee a heartfelt relationship with God. He must circumcise their hearts as individuals so that they could love Him (Deut 30:6). The outward sign of physical circumcision symbolized the internal cleansing necessary for a life of obedience and love for God. Robertson explains, "The application of the term 'circumcision' to a process of heart cleansing indicates that God's intention from the beginning by the rite of circumcision was to symbolize the inner purification necessary for the establishment of a proper relation between the holy Creator and the unholy creature."¹⁷

Concerning the new covenant fulfillment of the old covenant symbol, he points out that the Holy Spirit indwelt uncircumcised Gentiles beginning at Cornelius' house at Caesarea (Acts 10:44). These non-Jews received covenant provisions that God became their God and they became His people, apart from any external covenant sign, which

¹⁵ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 149.

¹⁶ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 154-56.

¹⁷ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 153.

surprised the circumcised Jewish believers. “The reality of the new covenant does not require that Gentiles become Jews before they may become Christians. Instead, it requires that both Jews and Gentiles become new creatures through their oneness with Christ by means of faith alone.”¹⁸

This radical principle was acknowledged by the new covenant community, and never again is there a distinction made between circumcised and uncircumcised. God knows the heart and He can bestow His Spirit upon any that He wills (Acts 15:8-9). Robertson understands that physical circumcision is no longer valid as a covenant sign under the new covenant; however, the reality of heart circumcision experienced spiritually remains prerequisite for the believer in Christ.

The apostle Paul explained in Romans 4:3, 9-12 that Abraham received righteousness by faith first while he was still uncircumcised, and subsequently participated in physical circumcision. This reveals two fatherhoods for Abraham, first, he is the father of those who are circumcised, as they follow in Abraham’s faith; and second, he is the father of all who exercise faith in God without being circumcised.¹⁹

Paul taught in Romans 2:25-29 that the old covenant symbol of circumcision has no value unless it is combined with saving faith which results in God’s righteousness. Only heart circumcision accomplished by the Holy Spirit makes a person acceptable to God. Believers who experience true righteousness are regarded as circumcised even though they may not have received the outward sign (vv. 26-27).

Circumcision in the Old Testament symbolizes the righteousness that comes through faith. In the epoch of the new covenant, the external rite of circumcision is not a requirement for God’s people. But the essence symbolized by the rite must have its true manifestation in the heart of the believer.²⁰

Robertson points to Philippians 3:3 to parallel heart circumcision with the presence of the Holy Spirit. “For we are the circumcision, who are worshiping in the

¹⁸ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 158.

¹⁹ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 159.

²⁰ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 160-61.

Spirit of God, and glorying in Christ Jesus, and not putting confidence in the flesh.”

He explains that both the rite of physical circumcision and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are called a “seal.” Abraham received the covenant sign of external circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he received by faith (Rom 4:11); however, Paul reveals that the Holy Spirit Himself is the seal of new covenant provisions (1 Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13, 4:30). He explains,

The application of the same terminology to circumcision and spirit-possession binds the two concepts together. The covenant ritual of sealing finds its fulfillment in the new covenant reality of sealing . . . The interconnection between the seal of circumcision and the seal of the Holy Spirit provides the formal basis by which the corresponding purification rites of the old and new covenants relate to one another. Circumcision under the old covenant is replaced by baptism under the new covenant. The cleansing rite of the one covenant is replaced by the cleansing rite of the other.²¹

Robertson understands Colossians 2:11-12 as confirmation of his position that old covenant circumcision has now become new covenant baptism. “You were circumcised . . . having been buried with him in baptism.”

The two actions are to be regarded as simultaneous. The rite of cleansing found in the old covenant finds its fulfillment in the rite ordered in the new. The thrust of Paul’s statement should be represented by coordinating the two actions. The meaning of the passage would be communicated best by a rendering such as “when you were buried with him in baptism, you were circumcised”; or “by being buried with him in baptism you were circumcised.” The net result of Paul’s statement is to bind together in closest possible fashion the two rites of circumcision and baptism. The apostle simply has laid the one act on top of the other. In the fullest possible sense, baptism under the new covenant accomplishes all that that was represented in circumcision under the old. By being baptized, the Christian believer has experienced the equivalent of the cleansing rite of circumcision.²²

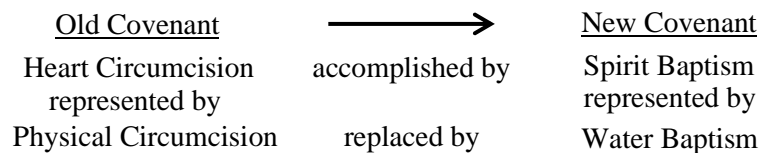


Figure 51. Old covenant circumcision equated to new covenant baptism.

²¹ Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 161-62.

²² Robertson, *Christ of Covenants*, 165-66.

Berkhof summarizes his view of infant baptism with five supporting statements: (1) The Abrahamic covenant had national aspects, but it was at its core a spiritual covenant based on spiritual realities, specifically circumcision as its sign and seal. (2) The Abrahamic covenant is still in force and is an expression of the covenant of grace with the same Mediator and the same blessings before and after the cross; to include regeneration, justification, spiritual gifts and eternal life. (3) Infants share in the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant, and they received circumcision as its sign and seal in the old covenant. Now in the new covenant, infants of believing parents receive the sign of the covenant which includes them in the covenant, as well as church membership. (4) The Abrahamic covenant and new covenant are essentially identical, but there are changes in administration. Circumcision has been substituted by baptism, both signs signify the need for regeneration. As circumcision was given to infants, so now baptism is given to infants as well. (5) Although there is no clear example of infant baptism in the NT, the unity of the covenant of grace demands that this covenant sign be applied to infants of believing parents in the new covenant era. Thus, infants are baptized to signify their incorporation into the church as the new covenant community.²³

Response

Wellum quotes B. B. Warfield's response to Baptist theologian A. H. Strong:

The argument in a nutshell is simply this: God established His church in the days of Abraham and put children in it. They must remain there until He puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still then members of His church and as such entitled to its ordinances.²⁴

He points out Warfield's two presuppositions: first, God's work of redemption throughout the various biblical covenants is an important unifying theme in revelation; and second, the biblical covenants are merely an expression of the one covenant of grace.

²³ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 632-34; Wellum, "Baptism and Covenant Relationship," 100-101; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 336-39.

²⁴ B. B. Warfield, "The Polemics of Infant Baptism," in *Studies in Theology*, 9:408, <https://www.monergism.com/studies-theology-ebook>. See also Wellum, "Baptism and Covenant Relationship," 101.

Covenant theology understands a strict continuity in God's work of salvation throughout redemptive history.

This is especially true in regard to their understanding of the nature of the covenant community (Israel and the church) and the essential similarity and application of the covenant signs (circumcision and baptism) to the covenant community throughout the ages.²⁵

Wellum discusses several issues which impact one's understanding of covenant theology. First is the *newness* of the new covenant. Most covenantists argue that the new covenant is a renewal rather than a replacement, better yet a fulfillment, and that the new covenant is a new administration which leaves the basic foundations of the covenant of grace intact. In this new administration, water baptism replaces physical circumcision as the form of the covenant sign and seal, but the spiritual significance of the meaning and application of a covenant sign remains essentially the same.²⁶ Under the new covenant, Christ's sacrifice fulfills animal sacrifices, a priesthood of all believers fulfills a tribal priesthood, the first day of the week fulfills Sabbath worship, but many covenantists believe that the mixed character of saved and lost together under the one covenant and in one covenant community remains unchanged.

Wellum explains that Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant with a *nature* and *structure* different than previous biblical covenants. The Mosaic covenant community prior to the cross consisted of a mixed population of covenant keepers vs. covenant breakers; however, everyone within the new covenant community has experienced regeneration and received full forgiveness of sin (Jer 31:29-34).²⁷

Those who practice infant baptism assert the covenant of grace to be both conditional and unconditional at the same time. On one hand, covenant theology affirms that God sovereignly establishes a covenant relationship with the elect by granting them

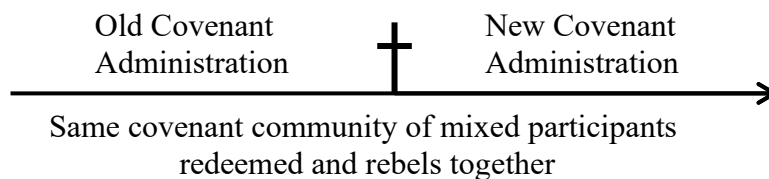
²⁵ Wellum, "Baptism and Covenant Relationship," 102.

²⁶ Wellum, "Baptism and Covenant Relationship," 104-5.

²⁷ Wellum, "Baptism and Covenant Relationship," 105.

grace to maintain everything necessary to fulfill God’s demands;²⁸ but on the other hand, most covenantists also contend that every biblical covenant throughout redemptive history, as subordinate to the covenant of grace, was conditional in that it contains blessings for all who obey and curses for those who disobey. They understand that the covenant community before the cross consisted of both the redeemed as covenant keepers and the rebellious as covenant breakers; this mixed nature of the covenant of grace continues into the new covenant administration, so that unsaved people are also included in the new covenant community as well, as infants on a conditional basis. Covenant community participation gives these unconverted people exposure to God’s word and access to the grace inherent in the sacraments, so that they may have the opportunity to respond to the gospel.²⁹

Covenant theology emphasizes that previous biblical covenants have always included believers and their children. Traditional covenantists conclude that inclusion of children into the covenant community is mandated because they were admitted under the old covenant administration, and this principle remains unchanged under the new covenant administration of the same covenant of grace.³⁰



The church as the community of the covenant of grace includes believers before and after the cross, both saved and lost, into the same covenant community.

Figure 52. Traditional covenant theology continuation model.

²⁸ C. P. Venema, “Covenant Theology and Baptism,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. G. Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003); Wellum, “Baptism and Covenant Relationship,” 106.

²⁹ Wellum, “Baptism and Covenant Relationship,” 107.

³⁰ Wellum, “Baptism and Covenant Relationship,” 109.

Progressive Covenantalism

Progressive covenantalism attempts to chart a course between dispensational and covenant theologies. Jason DeRouchie understands new covenant ecclesiology through the Abrahamic covenant. He views the Abrahamic covenant in two progressive eras, rather than a monolithic reality as presented by traditional covenant theology.³¹

DeRouchie points out that in this continuation model, the Abrahamic covenant was received in the OT era either through genealogy in a covenant family or as a proselyte by reorientation of spiritual loyalty. Traditional covenantists see no reason why this paradigm would not continue into the NT era, so that the makeup of the new covenant community would remain substantially the same as before, because both are expressions of the same covenant of grace.³²

In contrast, DeRouchie distinguishes between two progressive eras for the Abrahamic covenant, (1) a national covenant by means of physical birth with a sign of physical circumcision (Gen 17:7-8) and (2) an international covenant established by spiritual adoption (Gen 17:9-13), without an ethnic basis or the sign of physical circumcision (Gen 17:4-6). DeRouchie explains that Christ's sacrifice fulfilled the initial stage and inaugurated the second. Christ shifted the covenant community from physical genealogy to establish the new covenant community based on "corporate identification" in Him.³³ He quotes G. K. Beale to articulate this position:

When the Messiah came, the theocracy of Israel would be so completely reconstituted that it would continue only in the new organization of the Messiah (Jesus), the true Israel. In him Jews and Gentiles would be fused together on a footing of complete equality through corporate identification.³⁴

³¹ Jason S. DeRouchie, "Father of a Multitude of Nations: New Covenant Ecclesiology in OT Perspective," in *Progressive Covenantalism*, ed. Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker (Nashville: B & H, 2016), 7.

³² DeRouchie, "Father of a Multitude of Nations," 34.

³³ DeRouchie, "Father of a Multitude of Nations," 34-35.

³⁴ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 654. See also DeRouchie, "Father of a Multitude of Nations," 35.

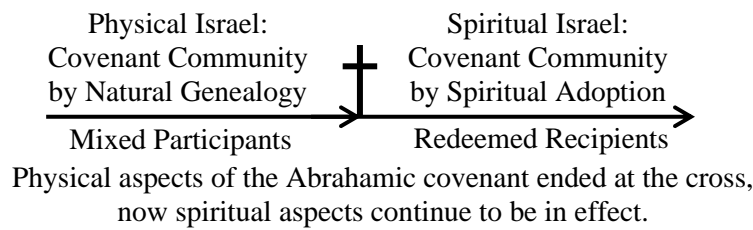


Figure 53. Progressive covenantalism two progressive eras for the Abrahamic covenant model.

Entrance into the new covenant is spiritual birth, not physical birth; because “the genealogical principle is no longer operative,” infants have no place in the new covenant community. Since the cross, covenant recipients spiritually identify with Christ, who is the Seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29). DeRouchie states, “The NT knows no new covenant community apart from this relationship; and, therefore, the church should apply the new covenant sign of baptism only to those who are reborn through faith in Christ.”³⁵

DeRouchie asserts that the church is spiritual Israel; “Christ fulfills in the church God’s long-range purposes given to Abraham.”³⁶ Because there can be no millennial kingdom in progressive covenantalism, global prophecies of a worldwide blessing, “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3) must be realized today. He explains that during the temporary Mosaic covenant stage, national Israel received physical land promises, but in the eternal new covenant stage, the church as spiritual Israel receives “land promises fulfilled in a way that includes the nations, yet without geopolitical barriers.”³⁷ He points to a current global witness:

Paul’s language of “inheritance” in Galatians 3:18 likely rooted in the OT land promise (e.g., Num 26:53-56; Josh 11:23), which marked the context wherein God’s global kingdom purposes first highlighted to Adam and Eve (Gen 1:27-28) would be realized. That is, the inheritance of Canaan always anticipated the expansion of the kingdom to include the world.³⁸

³⁵ DeRouchie, “Father of a Multitude of Nations,” 35.

³⁶ DeRouchie, “Father of a Multitude of Nations,” 30.

³⁷ DeRouchie, “Father of a Multitude of Nations,” 31-32.

³⁸ DeRouchie, “Father of a Multitude of Nations,” 32-33.

In response it must be stated that there is agreement to DeRouchie's affirmation of the new covenant community comprising only those who spiritually identify with Christ; however, this spiritual identification is established by the Spirit in His outpouring which results in baptism and indwelling. The church must administer the new covenant sign of water baptism only to those who have first experienced the new covenant reality of Spirit baptism. Believers throughout history have participated in new birth to spiritual life through the work of the Holy Spirit, this spiritual birth has always been received by faith; but Spirit baptism/indwelling began at Pentecost. New covenant ratification and new covenant community participation could only begin at that time.

In addition, current global witness cannot be equated to the rule of Christ over the nations as the vast majority of earth's populace currently remains in rebellion. God promised that Abraham and his Seed would inherit the world (Rom 4:13). Yahweh promised to give the ethnicities to His Son as an inheritance and the entire earth as a possession (Ps 2:8). Christ promises that He will rule the world with a rod of iron, and His church, now suffering and not reigning at all, will rule with Him in an application of the Davidic covenant in the future (Rev 2:26-27). There can be no stretch of imagination that realizes the new covenant community as reigning with Christ on earth today.

Brent Parker further explains concerning progressive covenantalism:

The nature of the church is essentially one with Israel, the relationship being one of substitution or fulfillment, thus viewing the church as the 'new Israel.' In other words, even if Romans 9-11 teaches a mass conversion of Jews in the future, all the prerogatives, promises and prophecies to OT Israel are translated to the church."³⁹

He takes the position that Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's identity and promises, so all the biblical covenants converge and climax in Christ and His Messianic people of God, which is the church:

The NT presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel and all the OT covenant mediators, for he ushers in the promises of Israel (restoration and return from exile, the land, etc.), embodies their identity, and completes Israel's role, calling, and vocation. All the institutions (the sacrificial system, tabernacle, temple, Sabbath, feasts, the law),

³⁹ Brent Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship," in Wellum and Parker, *Progressive Covenantalism*, 39-40.

identity markers (e.g., circumcision), offices (prophet, priest, king), and key events (e.g., the exodus) of Israel find their culmination in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.⁴⁰

Because Christ is the fulfillment of Israel, now the church, which is His covenant community, participates in this fulfillment in Him. Parker quotes William Kynes in explanation: “The relationship between the church and Israel . . . is neither one of direct succession nor radical disjunction, but one of mediated continuity. One may describe the church as the ‘true Israel,’ but its continuity with the rejected Israel is found in the representative figure of Jesus, who bridges salvation-history even while fulfilling it.”⁴¹

Parker states, “Therefore, the church is linked to Israel only indirectly through its relationship with Jesus.”⁴² In this way the church inherits the promises of Israel without incorporating the population of mixed participants which characterized the old covenant community. He explains, “The church does not displace Israel, but is the restored, new covenant community that Israel looked forward to.”⁴³

He asserts that the church fulfills Israel as a covenant community, but Israel as an ethnic people also becomes obsolete in this fulfillment of Christ. The church becomes the new Israel in Christ, so ethnic Jews who are unbelievers have no inheritance in the Abrahamic covenant, and their descendants have no claim as a people in a promised land in a worldwide kingdom. Parker asserts,

New covenant promises, like the typological aspects of national Israel, are channeled through Christ to God’s end-time people, Jew and Gentile alike. Thus the church does not replace or absorb OT Israel; rather Israel as a type of Jesus and, derivatively, of a new and regenerate covenant community.⁴⁴

In response to progressive covenantalism, there is total agreement that the

⁴⁰ Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” 44-45.

⁴¹ William L. Kynes, *A Christology of Solidarity: Jesus as the Representative of His People in Matthew* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 202. See also Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” 45-46.

⁴² Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” 46.

⁴³ Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” 47.

⁴⁴ Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Relationship,” 68.

church is the new covenant community that Israel looked forward to with kingdom expectations. We agree with Kynes' explanation: "Functions once assigned to Israel are transferred to a new community, but it is a transfer that takes place in Jesus."⁴⁵ It is also true that the old covenant community of Israel ended at the cross as Christ mediated a new and better covenant through His sacrifice. Now ethnic Jews and Gentiles are incorporated in equality into the new covenant community, as the Messianic people of God, also a transfer that takes place in Jesus. The church as this new covenant community is based on spiritual birth, not natural genealogy as was the old covenant community. Unlike Israel before the cross, as some were redeemed, but most rebelled against God and His revealed word to them, the new covenant community consists only of those who have received the indwelling Holy Spirit and His application of Christ's sacrifice to each believer individually.

However, there must be a distinction between Israel as Abraham's physical descendants and those as spiritual descendants, who followed Abraham's example of faith. Abraham's descendants, both natural and spiritual, did not begin nor cease to exist when the temporary Mosaic covenant began or ended. Abraham's spiritual descendants existed before the Mosaic covenant, and they continue afterwards as the post-Pentecost new covenant community. In the same way, Abraham's physical descendants as ethnic Hebrews existed prior to the Mosaic covenant, and they also continue to exist following.

The apostle Paul shared his heart concerning ethnic Jews, who he called "my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3). Paul asked rhetorically, "Has God reject His people? Certainly not!" (Rom 11:1). He did not think in terms of Christ as true Israel, so Hebrew ethnicity becomes meaningless as the church becomes spiritual Israel in Him. Paul used the word *Jew* 25 times in his epistles to refer to ethnic Jews. He used the word *Israel* 17 times in his writings to mean ethnic Israel. Only Galatians 6:16, "Israel of God" is there any controversy. He even used the word *Hebrew* 3 times to describe himself. "Are they Hebrews? So am I" (2 Cor 11:22); "a Hebrew of the Hebrews"

⁴⁵ Kynes, *A Christology of Solidarity*, 45.

(Phil 3:5). Obviously, the fact that Christ as true Israel did not make Paul, who came to salvation after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, any less an ethnic Jew. He is an example of a physical descendant of Abraham who also became a spiritual descendant.

Why this is important, simply God had a purpose for ethnic Israel in His first coming and still has a purpose for ethnic Israel in His second coming. Jesus and the apostles proclaimed that ethnic Israel features prominently in the events of Christ's return. Israel will be in the land with temple worship when a lawless leader revealed as the Antichrist will take over the temple to proclaim himself as god (2 Thess 2:4). This event will initiate a great tribulation of ethnic Jews that will prove to be the worst in human history (Jer 30:7; Dan 7:25, 12:1; Matt 24:15, 21). Christ will return from heaven (Acts 1:11) as both King of Israel and King of the world (1 Tim 6:14-15), and in His coming, He will ratify the new covenant to the Jewish people (as individuals, not as a nation) and all Israel will be saved, both physically and spiritually (Rom 11:26-27). In this kingdom context, the twelve apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28), while others of the new covenant community will serve as kings subordinate to Christ as King over the many ethnic groups worldwide (2 Tim 2:12, Rev 2:26-27).

Historical Considerations

Joshua Moon relates that Jerome and Augustine disagreed concerning the relationship between the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant around the year of AD 400. Augustine held that the new covenant simply promised salvation and was available to God's people in the times of both testaments. He believed that the old covenant showed unbelief and the new revealed faith in any era. Jerome understood that the old and new covenants mandated two successive eras of "letter" and "spirit," as two differing ways in which God dealt with His people. Both, however, understood the church to be the beneficiary of new covenant promises, and that the church had replaced Israel in God's outreach to the world.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Joshua N. Moon, *Jeremiah's New Covenant: An Augustinian Reading* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 6, 11; see also John Master, foreword to *Dispensational Understanding of the New Covenant*, ed. Mike Stallard (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Books, 2012), 16-17, 24-25.

In AD 330, the church began a new relationship with the Roman government. With the conversion of Constantine, the Roman emperor began to exercise authority over the church. The church became identified with the empire, as the result, many citizens of the empire belonged to the church. This created a mixed church membership of saved and lost together as the populace accepted baptism, and infant baptism became universally accepted. The emperor convened church councils and gave his authority to council proclamations. Dissidents who struggled for purity in their churches, such as Novatians and Donatists, felt the emperor's punitive power.⁴⁷

Augustine understood human history to be a struggle between the people of God and the people of Satan. He thought that the original church consisted of holy angels in heaven, and due to their apostasy, Satan and his fallen angels were cast out of heaven. God was redeeming man to replace the large number of evil angels, who had left a void in the heavenly realm. He also believed that a fixed number of redeemed humanity, known before the foundation of the world, belonged to the church, and that only God perfectly knows who constitutes the true church. Augustine proclaimed that visible churches were made up of both genuine Christians and false members. "For in that unspeakable foreknowledge of God, many who seem to be outside the church are in the reality inside it, and many who seem to be inside the church are really outside it."⁴⁸

Beginning in 410, the bishop of Rome gradually filled the power vacuum due to the collapse of the western half of the Roman Empire. They took to themselves the title *Pontifex Maximus* (Latin: Supreme Priest) which had been used by Roman emperors since Augustus Caesar in 12 BC. Originally of pagan religion, the term was Christianized by Constantine.⁴⁹ The Pope understood that his spiritual authority transcended the temporal power of human governments. This claim of papal superiority was codified by Pope Boniface VIII in his *Unam Sanctum* issued in 1302:

⁴⁷ Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 570.

⁴⁸ Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, 56-61, in *NDNF*, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1887), 3:255-257, Logos Software; see Allison, *Historical Theology*, 571.

⁴⁹ Clyde C. Smith, "Pontifex Maximus," in *NIDCC*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 792.

In this church and in its power are two swords; namely, the spiritual and the temporal. . . . both are in the power of the Church, that is to say, the spiritual and the material sword, but the former is to be administered *for* the Church but the latter *by* the Church; the former in the hands of the priest; the latter by the hands of kings and soldiers, but at the will and sufferance of the priest.⁵⁰

Roman Catholics teach that the Church consists of all who realize salvation through communion with God from the beginning of the world.⁵¹ The term *church* is a translation of the Latin *ecclesia*, which means a “convocation” or “assembly” of people. “*Ekklesia* is used frequently in the Greek OT for their assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his holy people. By calling itself *Church*, the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly.”⁵²

According to the *Catholic Catechism*, this gathering of God’s people began at the fall of man and continued to Israel through the call of Abraham. Israel broke God’s covenant with Abraham; as the result, Christ instituted the visible Church by committing the keys to the kingdom of God to Peter.⁵³ Through seven sacraments the Holy Spirit administers the grace of Christ to the Church, which is the body of Christ; especially by baptism, which unites the recipient to Christ’s death and resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which the participant shares the body of the Lord.⁵⁴ The Church will receive perfection in heaven as all the redeemed, from Abel to the last of the elect, are gathered in the universal Church in glory.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam* (1302), accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/bon08/b8unam.htm>. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 599-600.

⁵¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997). The Catholic Catechism quotes Clement of Alexandria: “Just as God’s will is creation and is called *the world*, so his intention is the salvation of men, and it is called *the Church*.” (200)

⁵² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 201. “In the Church, God is calling together his people from all the ends of the earth.” (198)

⁵³ “The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and instrument of the communion of God and men.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 205)

⁵⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 204, 209. The Catechism quotes Cyprian: “Outside the Church there is no salvation,” (224)

⁵⁵ The Catechism quotes Augustine: “Until that day, ‘the Church progresses on her pilgrimage amidst this world’s persecutions and God’s consolations.’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 202)

At the beginning of the Reformation in 1517, Martin Luther did not envision starting a new Christian denomination, he only wanted to make what he considered to be reasonable changes to the existing Roman Catholic system. His focus was salvation by faith alone and he desired to stop abuses, such as paying for forgiveness as penance and gross immorality among the Church leadership.⁵⁶ It became impossible for Luther to remain a Catholic after he was excommunicated and condemned as a heretic, he quickly came to realize what it meant to be outside the Church as he understood it. He explained the foundational criteria of a true church: holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy Word of God, by the sacrament of baptism and by the sacrament of the altar or the Lord's Supper.⁵⁷ Luther taught that faith for salvation was granted by God through His word, but God's word could also be received through sacraments. He understood that baptism is linked with the Word of God and faith, and that infants participate in faith through baptism.

In distinction to Catholic doctrine, Lutherans asserted that baptism was necessary, but not absolutely necessary, for salvation: "All true believers in the Old Testament era were saved without baptism. Mark 16:16 implies that it is not the absence of baptism that condemns a person but the absence of faith."⁵⁸

Luther explained that many of God's people through history has received infant baptism, and if this practice was wrong, then God could not have been present in their lives through the years. He writes,

If God did not accept the baptism of infants, He would not give the Holy Ghost nor any of His gifts to any of them; in short, during this long time unto this day no man

⁵⁶ William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963). Estep writes, "The Reformation was a revolt against papal authority but not against the Roman concept of the church as an institution. They believed that the old church needed to be cleansed from various abuses and errors, but they did not want to be cut off from its corporate solidarity." (182)

⁵⁷ "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." *The Augsburg Confession*, "Article VII: About the Church," accessed December 7, 2017, <http://bookofconcord.org/augsburgconfession.php#article7>; Allison, *Historical Theology*, 578-79n.

⁵⁸ Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, "Frequently Asked Questions—Doctrine," accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine>. See also Allison, *Historical Theology*, 625; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 359.

upon earth could have been a Christian. Now since God confirms baptism by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, as it is plainly perceptible in some of the church fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Hus, and others, who were baptized in infancy, and since holy Christian Church cannot perish until the end of the world. They must acknowledge that such infant baptism is pleasing to God.⁵⁹

At the time of the Reformation, Roman and Greek Catholics, as well as Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican Protestants, as the *magisterial* Reformation, required infant baptism for their entire population, so that the child would become both a member of the church and a citizen of the state. There was no difference between the church and state, as government officials controlled the exercise of religion.⁶⁰ These churches acquiesced to the authority of the magistrate because of protection they received from these local armed forces. Initially, Zwingli had understood a distinction between *inner* baptism of the Holy Spirit and *outer* baptism by water, and had warned that some had participated in external baptism without having first participated in its internal reality.⁶¹ However, when the city magistrates of Zurich became alarmed, Zwingli returned to the practice of infant baptism. He confessed that he had been previously in error: “For some time I myself was deceived by the error and I thought it better not to baptize children until they came to years of discretion.”⁶² The magistrates issued an order to baptize infants, instituting banishment or capital punishment for those who disobey.⁶³ It seems that magisterial Reformers accepted *Sola Scriptura* except when their convictions conflicted with the local government.

While Reformers could not renounce infant baptism, they rejected the teaching that infant baptism cleanses from original sin, and that infants suffer eternal punishment

⁵⁹ *The Large Catechism*, “Of Infant Baptism,” accessed December 7, 2017, <http://bookofconcord.org/lc-6-baptism.php#para50>; see Allison, *Historical Theology*, 624.

⁶⁰ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 580.

⁶¹ Zwingli explained, “Many who have no faith allow themselves to be baptized . . . for nothing is more foolish than to say that when a man is baptized he necessarily becomes a believer.” Huldrych Zwingli, “On Baptism,” in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Library of Christian Classics 24, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 139, quoted in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 625.

⁶² Zwingli, “On Baptism,” 137, quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 331; see Allison, *Historical Theology*, 626.

⁶³ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 627.

if they should die and their sin in Adam was not cleansed by baptism. This position was first proposed by Cyprian and remains a core doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church to this present day. Zwingli explained,

In this matter of baptism—if I may be pardoned for saying it—I can only conclude that all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles. This is a serious and weighty assertion, and I make it with such reluctance that had I not been compelled to do so by contentious spirits [i.e. the Anabaptists] I would have preferred to keep silence . . . but it will be seen that the assertion is a true one: for all the doctors have ascribed to the water a power which it does not have and the holy apostles did not teach.⁶⁴

Zwingli's solution was that the church was under one redemptive covenant, and that infant circumcision in the OT was replaced by infant baptism in the New. This appeal to a continuity between the old and new testaments was a defense against the Anabaptist understanding that water baptism is simply an external testimony of the internal grace of Spirit baptism.⁶⁵

Reformed churches, therefore, assert the old covenant as a covenant of grace. This conception had a significant and definitive impact on Reformed ecclesiology due to their view that the church was under the same covenant as Abraham's descendants, making OT Scriptures normative in defining the doctrine of the church. We find this predominant emphasis on the unity between the testaments in practically all of Zwingli's successors.⁶⁶

Reformed churches point to the ancient history of infant baptism in support of their position. Berkhof surveys the history of the doctrine of baptism to conclude that infant baptism was common by AD 200 and was taken for granted by the Councils of Carthage in the mid-third century.⁶⁷ However, Allison maintains this Reformed appeal to history is illegitimate. Reformed infant baptism does resemble Catholic infant baptism, in that they

⁶⁴ Zwingli, "On Baptism," 130; quoted in Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 351-52.

⁶⁵ Duncan, *God's Covenants*; Golding, *Key of Theology*, 20-21.

⁶⁶ Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism*, rev. ed. (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2013), 37.

⁶⁷ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 634-35. See also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 338; Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 797.

both baptize infants, but the Roman Catholic doctrine is based on a theology of baptismal regeneration, Reformed churches deny that baptism removes sin and understand that infant baptism recognizes the covenant status of the children of believers.⁶⁸

Seventeenth-Century Baptist Federalism

Federalists of the 1600s discussed among themselves whether the old covenant was the Mosaic covenant alone or if it referred to the whole of the OT era from the fall to the cross. Herman Witsius understood a cumulative aspect of the old covenant: “We begin the economy of the OT immediately upon the fall, and the first promise of grace, and the end of it in Christ.”⁶⁹ This teaching became popular in the 1500s, as Peter Lillibeck states: “Calvin explains the relationship of Abraham and Moses in terms of the single covenant of God in the progress of redemptive history.”⁷⁰

Reformed writers did not view the *covenants of promise* (Eph 2:15) as a series of individual covenants, but an accumulation. This does not mean that the old covenant would have been uniform in its administration, as they spoke of phases of development to coincide with biblical covenants. This cumulative aspect of the old covenant harmonized with the federalist position of the covenant of grace. For Presbyterian federalists, the Mosaic covenant (also called the Sinaitic covenant) was included under the covenant of grace in the *one covenant, two administrations* doctrine, but Baptist federalists considered the Mosaic covenant to be an expression of the covenant of works, which existed parallel and separate to the covenant of grace.⁷¹

England of the 1600s became the environment for the controversy between Presbyterian and Baptist federalists. These two movements had differing positions on the

⁶⁸ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 351.

⁶⁹ Herman Witsius, “The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man,” accessed June 14, 2019, https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/witsius/covenants_p.pdf. See also Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 104.

⁷⁰ Peter Lillibeck, “Calvin’s Interpretation of the History of Salvation,” in *Theological Guide to Calvin’s Institutes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2008), 187; Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 104.

⁷¹ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 105.

Abrahamic, Mosaic and new covenants, because they could not agree on the covenant of grace. The Presbyterian position was a strict unity of the *substance* of the covenant of grace within which only one gospel and one redeemed people of God were found; however, they held to a discontinuity in the *circumstances* (or administration) of the covenant of grace.⁷² Witsius explained,

If we view the substance of the covenant, it is but one, nor is it possible it should be otherwise . . . But if we attend to the circumstances of the covenant, it was dispensed “at sundry times and in divers manners,” under various economies, for the manifestation of the manifold wisdom of God.⁷³

This distinction between the substance and circumstance of the covenant of grace allowed Presbyterians to emphasize its unity, and at the same time recognize the differences between the testaments. This was important due their understanding of a mixed nature of the people of God in the covenant of grace, in both old and new covenant eras. Israel under the Mosaic covenant had constituted of a mixed group of both believers and unbelievers within the same covenant community. By distinguishing substance from administration, Presbyterian federalists found a place for unbelievers within the covenant of grace, which became the reason to include children in the covenant and provide baptism for them. They understood the internal substance of the covenant of grace to consist only of the redeemed, while the external administration of this covenant would include the saved and lost alike. The regenerate participated in the full blessings of the covenant through the internal presence of the Holy Spirit, and the unsaved benefited by exposure to the gospel and participating in sacraments.⁷⁴

This mixed nature of covenant people became the basis for the distinction between the visible vs. invisible church. The invisible church designates the internal administration of the covenant of grace to the elect, while the visible church designates

⁷² Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 47, 51.

⁷³ Witsius, “Economy of the Covenants,” 291; Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 51.

⁷⁴ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 51-52.

the external administration of the covenant including all professing people and their descendants, regardless of the condition of their hearts.⁷⁵

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) states that “the catholic, invisible church is the whole of God’s elect—past, present and future—gathered under Christ,” but the visible church “consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children.”⁷⁶ The confessing church is sometimes more, sometimes less visible, and particular churches that make up the visible church are sometimes more, sometimes less pure. Denault explains,

The organic unity of the covenant of grace was and remains the cornerstone of paedobaptist theology. Under the old covenant, natural descendants were included in the covenant: “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you” (Gen 17:7). If the new covenant is substantially identical to the old one, this principle of posterity must continue.⁷⁷

This principle allowed Presbyterian federalists to affirm that their children, as yet unregenerate, participated in the covenant of grace, who receive the seal, formerly circumcision, now baptism.⁷⁸

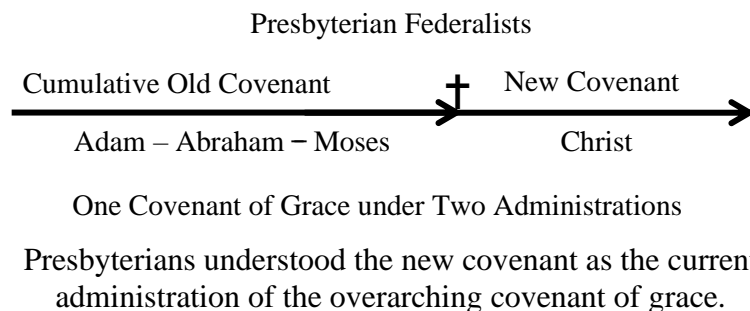


Figure 54. Presbyterian view of covenant theology in the 1600s.

⁷⁵ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 47.

⁷⁶ Presbyterian Church in America website, *Westminster Confession of Faith*, accessed December 7, 2017, <http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/WCFScriptureProofs.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 55.

⁷⁸ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 57.

Baptist federalists accepted the unity of the covenant of grace. *The Confession of 1689* clearly states,

Moreover, man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace, wherein he freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained to eternal life, His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.⁷⁹

Evangelical Baptists have always believed in one plan of salvation: “The justification of believers under the OT was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the NT.”⁸⁰ Although Baptist federalists affirmed unity of substance of the covenant of grace in one plan of salvation, they did not accept the same unity between the old and new covenants. Baptist rejected the *one covenant under two administrations* position. Nehemiah Coxe explained, “The old covenant and the new differ in substance and not only in the manner of their administration.”⁸¹

John Owen agreed that the old and new covenants differed in substance as well as administration, and understood that the old covenant with all its ordinances of worship was obsolete and ceased to exist at the cross, and the new covenant with a totally new system of worship was established. He points out the word ‘legal establishment’ (Heb 8:6) as evidence in this radical discontinuity between the old and new covenants. “The apostle intends the *legal establishment* of the new covenant, with all its ordinances of worship. . . . The other covenant was disannulled and removed; and not only the covenant itself, but all that system of sacred worship whereby it was administered.”⁸²

The *First London Confession of Faith* in 1644 equates the *covenant of grace* with *new covenant*, “Jesus Christ only is made the Mediator of the New Covenant, even

⁷⁹ *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, chap. 7, para. 2, accessed July 15, 2019, <https://www.the1689confession.com/1689>.

⁸⁰ *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, chap. 11, para. 6.

⁸¹ Nehemiah Coxe, “A Discourse of the Covenant that God Made with Men before the Law,” in *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ* (repr., Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 30. See also Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 68-69.

⁸² John Owen, *Hebrews: The Epistle of Warning* (repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1968), 143.

the everlasting covenant of grace between God and man.”⁸³ In the understanding of Baptist federalists, the new covenant equaled the covenant of grace. Baptists of the 1600s emphasized that the new covenant did not exist as a covenant before the cross of Christ, but it did exist as a promise. John Spilsbury explained, “Again, it’s called the promise, and not the covenant: and we know that every promise is not a covenant; there is a large difference between a promise and a covenant.”⁸⁴

The Baptist 1689 Confession of Faith stated, “This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by further steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the NT.”⁸⁵ They believed that the covenant of grace was not given before the new covenant was mediated on the cross, but it had been promised to the OT saints, beginning with the *protoevangelium* of Genesis 3:15.

Particular Baptists viewed the Mosaic covenant as radically different from the covenant of grace, so this covenant could not be understood as an administration of grace at all. The Mosaic covenant was contrary to the covenant of grace, and was understood as an expression of the covenant of works. Unlike the new covenant, the Mosaic covenant could not offer redemption, but could only point out the sin and guilt resident in humanity. Baptist federalists affirmed that the Mosaic covenant could not grant salvation, but OT saints were justified by faith due to the promise of the future work of Christ. Salvation was given during the time period of the old covenant, but not because of the old covenant.⁸⁶ *The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* states,

Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy and benefit thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages, successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those

⁸³ *London Baptist Confession of 1644*, para. 10, accessed June 10, 2019, <http://www.reformedreader.org/cc/h.htm>.

⁸⁴ John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawful Subject of Baptism*, 26; quoted in Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 72.

⁸⁵ *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, chap. 7, para. 3.

⁸⁶ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 75-77.

promises, types and sacrifices wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed which should bruise the serpent's head; the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, being the same yesterday, and today, and forever.⁸⁷

This paragraph is identical to that of the Westminster Confession, which reveals that differences between Presbyterian and Baptist federalists was not in the unity of the covenant of grace, but in the relationship between the old and new covenants.⁸⁸ Both believed that Christ's sacrifice was effective before it was offered; while Baptists affirmed the effectiveness of the atonement before the cross exclusively by virtue of the future new covenant, many Presbyterians considered that benefits of grace were received by believers through the old covenant.

Baptist federalists did not claim that the benefits of the atonement did not exist before Christ's sacrifice, but they understood that the sins of OT believers were forgiven totally because of the still future death of Christ alone. The atonement is eternal, Christ paid for all sins, past, present and future, in His one sacrifice on the cross (Heb 10:12).⁸⁹

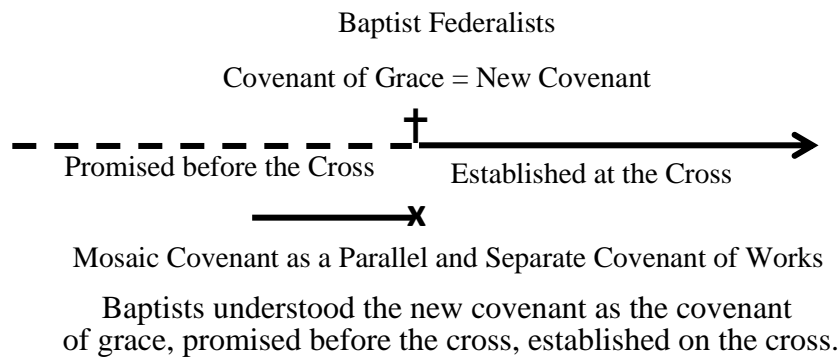


Figure 55. Baptist view of covenant theology in the 1600s.

Presbyterian federalists hold that the covenant of grace exists on two levels: (1) spiritual substance and (2) natural administration. These are not two different covenants, but two realities within the same covenant. This distinction allows Presbyterians to accept

⁸⁷ *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, chap. 8, para. 6.

⁸⁸ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chap. 8, para. 6.

⁸⁹ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 88.

believers (internal spiritual substance) and unbelievers (external natural administration) into the one covenant of grace. This mixed nature is necessary to accept children, who are still too young to believe, into the covenant. As the result, for Presbyterians there are two types of people in the new covenant, saved and lost; and there are two ways to enter the new covenant, physical birth and spiritual birth.⁹⁰ William Ames explains, “Faith and repentance no more constitute the covenant of God now than in the time of Abraham, who was the father of the faithful. Therefore, the lack of these ought not to prevent infants from being baptized any more than it prevented them from being circumcised then.”⁹¹

For Presbyterians, inclusion in the covenant of grace does not necessarily result in eternal life. Since participation in the covenant of grace determines church membership, in their understanding, saved and lost participate equally in the local congregation. Baptists could not disagree more; John Bunyan could not accept the inclusion of those without faith into the covenant. He asks, “How are these brought into this everlasting covenant of grace?” He responds that we enter the covenant through conversion and not by election. Baptists practice baptism and church membership of those who demonstrate conversion, to those who demonstrate their election by faith in their lives.⁹²

From a Baptist understanding, it is inconceivable to accept a church of a mixed nature, some saved by faith and cleansed by the blood of Christ, while others participate in partial benefits with natures of total depravity. Baptists affirm that the new covenant is fully effective to each recipient. If a person does not receive the total forgiveness of sins available in the sacrifice of Christ, that one is simply not a participant of the new covenant.

Concerning the Abrahamic covenant, the federalist interpretation was based on the apostle Paul’s revelation given in Galatians 3. Paul explained that the Mosaic covenant

⁹⁰ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 95-96.

⁹¹ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 211. Also see Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 89.

⁹² John Bunyan, “The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded,” in *The Works of John Bunyan* (repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1991), 541; Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 90-91.

given four hundred thirty years later did not add to or detract from Abraham's covenant at all. The Presbyterian view is that the Abrahamic covenant is an expression of the covenant of grace, through which God grants His grace to Abraham and his posterity, therefore it was a covenant of mixed nature which one enters at birth. Presbyterians applied the distinction between the substance and administration of the covenant of grace to understand that not all participants of the Abrahamic covenant received salvation, even if they were all under the same covenant of grace. Baptists taught that the covenant of grace was promised before the cross and fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice, so justification was given to Abraham's spiritual descendants, who followed Abraham's example to also place their faith in the promises of God.⁹³

Scriptures often presents truth in dualistic principles: concerning the Abrahamic covenant, he has both physical and spiritual descendants (Rom 9:6-8, Gal 4:22-31). There is external circumcision of flesh for physical descendants and internal circumcision of the heart for spiritual descendants (Rom 2:28-29). There is an earthly land inheritance promised on earth for physical descendants and also an ultimate heavenly inheritance promised for spiritual descendants (Heb 11:8-10).⁹⁴

Presbyterians also recognized this dualism, but within one covenant of grace. They considered that this one covenant had both a physical, external and earthly reality, combined with a spiritual, internal and heavenly reality. They taught that Abraham had only one mixed posterity, which included both saved and lost in one covenant; however, Baptists understood that Abraham had two posterities, the natural distinct from the spiritual, physical descendants would have a land inheritance promised on this earth, and while spiritual descendants would have an ultimate inheritance in heaven.⁹⁵ Cox explains,

⁹³ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 118.

⁹⁴ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 119.

⁹⁵ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 119.

Abraham is to be considered in a double capacity: he is the father of all true believers and the father and root of the Israelite nation. God entered into covenant with him for both of these seeds and since they are formally distinguished from one another, their covenant interest must necessarily be different and fall under a distinct consideration.⁹⁶

Baptists presented the two covenants that came from Abraham, illustrated in Hagar and Sarah (Gal 4:22-31), to be the old and new covenants. Hagar represents the old covenant of circumcision, a covenant of works established with Abraham’s physical descendants. Sarah represents the promise of freedom in the new covenant, the covenant of grace revealed to Abraham and established with Christ, as the ultimate Seed and the spiritual descendants of Abraham.⁹⁷

Baptist federalists understood that the natural descendants of Abraham could also become spiritual descendants, there are many biblical examples of ethnic Hebrews who followed Abraham’s example of faith. The apostle Paul, clearly both a natural and a spiritual descendant of Abraham, expressed a heart desire for the salvation of Abraham’s physical, who were not spiritual descendants. He called these of natural descent as “his relatives (συγγενής, *sungenes* ‘blood relatives’) after the flesh,” both he and they did not lose any ethnic considerations as physical descendants because Paul had become a spiritual descendant.

Denault points out that the two posterities of Abraham, physical from spiritual, were often intertwined in their manifestation, but they remained ontologically distinct. The same person could be both a physical and also a spiritual descendant of Abraham.⁹⁸

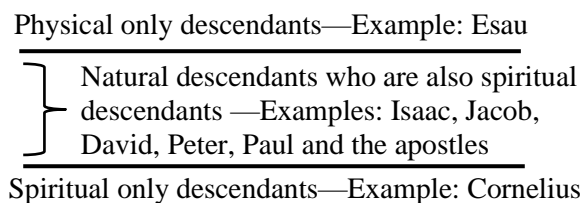


Figure 56. Abraham’s descendants.

⁹⁶ Coxe, “Discourse of the Covenant,” 72-73. See also Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 121.

⁹⁷ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 124.

⁹⁸ Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 128.

Particular Baptists of the 1600s believed that there could be no covenant of grace before the cross. Prior to Christ as the mediator of the new covenant, there was no covenant of grace, only a promise of grace. Parker comments that many Reformed Baptists of today accept multiple administrations of one covenant of grace, in contrast to *1689 Federalism* which equates the covenant of grace exclusively to the new covenant.⁹⁹

Although John Owen was not a Baptist, he correctly pointed out that before the establishment of the new covenant, the covenant of grace could not be formalized. “It lacked its solemn confirmation and establishment, by the blood of the only sacrifice which belonged to it. Before this was done in the death of Christ, it had not the formal nature of a covenant.”¹⁰⁰ He explained that before the formal establishment of the new covenant, it had no concrete manifestation, sacrificial service nor method of worship, only a promise illustrated by temporary types and shadows. “These are a shadow of things that were to come; the reality, however is found in Christ” (Col 2:17). Owen concluded that the new covenant “had before the confirmation of promise, which is an oath; it has now the confirmation of a covenant, which is blood.”¹⁰¹

Based on this biblical truth, there could be no new covenant community before the new covenant was formally established. There can be no foundation to the church as the new covenant community without the new covenant as a basis. Before the work of the Christ in His sacrifice and the work of the Holy Spirit in applying that atonement to each new covenant recipient, there was only promise.

Before the High Priestly ministry of Christ, there could be no subordinate priesthood. The priesthood of all believers is a new covenant reality. This subordinate priesthood is the basis for all new covenant worship and ministry. Believers before the cross uniformly practiced animal sacrifices, which was the mark of old covenant worship

⁹⁹ Brent E. Parker, “The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 97.

¹⁰⁰ Owen, *Hebrews*; 142. See also Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 68-69.

¹⁰¹ Owen, *Hebrews*; 143; Denault, *Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology*, 68-69.

and ministry. Christ became the Mediator and High Priest of the new covenant at the cross, and the new covenant community became the subordinate priesthood at Pentecost.

It would be impossible for this project to accept unredeemed or infant new covenant recipients and participants in the new covenant community. This is due to the fact that the Holy Spirit has not ratified the new covenant to these individuals. The Spirit applies the sacrificial atonement of Christ to the believer as He baptizes and indwells each recipient. God's people could become new covenant priests only after Christ our great High Priest accomplished His sacrifice and mediated the new covenant. Prior to Christ's sacrifice, God's people were justified by faith in God's promise. The atonement was effective to believers in the OT era, because the sacrifice of Christ cleanses all sin; past, present and future.

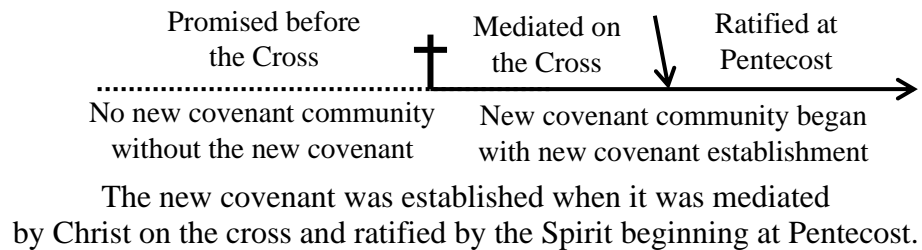


Figure 57. New covenant community began with new covenant establishment.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A common reaction to understanding that the new covenant is ratified as the Holy Spirit applies the sacrifice of Christ through His baptism and indwelling is “What about those who lived before Pentecost, or those who die as babies or other innocents before they had the opportunity to believe?” The Bible does not give any direct statements, but these questions deserve discussion.

Covenant theology understands the work of the Spirit to be the essentially the same between the old and new covenants; to a lesser extent before Pentecost and a greater blessing afterwards. Zacharias Ursinus (1534-83) listed fifteen similarities and differences between the two covenantal administrations in a commentary on his Heidelberg Catechism. He noted a “limited effusion of the Holy Spirit” under the old covenant vs. a “full effusion” during the new.¹

Curtis Crenshaw explains from a standpoint of covenant theology that baptism of the Spirit was given retroactively to previous believers, like the sacrifice of Christ.

We know there is no salvation apart from union with Christ. Therefore, all those who would be saved must have been in union with Him so that His death was effectual for them. And if they were in union with Him, by definition they were in the church . . . As a side comment, I should observe that dispensationalists say OT saints were not permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If this is so, then how did they live a life for God, by raw will power?²

John Stott states, “Of course the church did not begin that day, and it is

¹ Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, reprod. of 1852 ed.), 97; quoted in Willem VanGemeren, “Systems of Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988), 42.

² Curtis I. Crenshaw and Grover E. Gunn III, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Memphis: Footstool Publications, 1985), 53, 55.

incorrect to call the day of Pentecost ‘the birthday of the church.’ For the church as the people of God goes back at least 4,000 years to Abraham. What happened at Pentecost was that the remnant of God’s people became the Spirit-filled body of Christ.”³

In response it must be pointed out that the atonement Christ accomplished on the cross and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit He gave at Pentecost was transformative. Before His sacrifice, Christ could not be the Mediator of the new covenant; and before the glorification of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit could not be a reality; there was no new covenant Spirit baptism and indwelling of believers prior to Pentecost. OT believers from Abel to the thief on the cross received forgiveness of sins due to the fact that the atonement of Christ is eternal, it cleansed from all sins, past as well as present and future. Spiritual life is a work of the Spirit throughout human history; as individuals respond to God’s word by faith, they were justified because they believed the promises of God revealed to them.

The apostles and the other disciples who believed in Jesus were truly saved during the public ministry of Christ. This spiritual life was given by the Holy Spirit, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3. The apostle Peter experienced regeneration through the Spirit before the cross, but on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit applied the sacrificial atonement of Christ to Peter’s spirit and indwelt him in a personal and permanent way.

The apostles had been recipients of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants from birth until the Mosaic covenant ceased to exist at the cross. They remained physical descendants of Abraham, and they were also spiritual descendants because they followed the example of Abraham’s faith. Because they were spiritual descendants of Abraham, they were promised an inheritance during the Messianic kingdom. These apostles anticipated an earthly, eternal rule of Christ, but with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, they realized the spiritual aspect of this kingdom. The spiritual aspect did not negate or annul a future physical/political aspect of Christ’s kingdom on planet Earth. This current spiritual

³ John Stott, *The Spirit, The Church and the World: The Message of Acts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 81.

aspect is the foundation to further manifestations of the one and the same kingdom. After an intermediate time of a thousand years, God's kingdom will be further revealed in its eternal aspect of the new heaven and new earth.

Before the day of Pentecost, old covenant believers participated in conversion/regeneration by the Spirit, without receiving the baptism/indwelling of the Spirit. On Pentecost, all Jewish believers who already had spiritual life, also received the baptism/indwelling of the Spirit to become new covenant recipients. Before Spirit baptism began on Pentecost, there was no new covenant ratification, no new covenant community, no spiritual gifts, no indwelling of the Spirit, and no priesthood of all believers as subordinate to Christ in His role as the new covenant High Priest. The Holy Spirit ratified the new covenant to the apostles as individuals on Pentecost; and with this baptism and indwelling, the Spirit granted them unique spiritual gifts which placed them in foundational positions in the new covenant community, which is the church as the body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit indwelt each one and made their bodies His temple individually, He also made the body of Christ His temple corporately. These Jewish believers retained their physical Hebrew ethnicity, as natural descendants of Abraham, and they remained his spiritual descendants as well. From this time on, Jewish believers received conversion/regeneration and Spirit baptism/indwelling concurrently. What happened to the Jews also occurred to Samaritans (Acts 8) and Gentiles (Acts 10). On both occasions, conversion/regeneration happened first, and baptism/indwelling of the Spirit took place later; thereafter Spirit regeneration and Spirit baptism/indwelling were concurrent.⁴

In the case of the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:1-12), they had received second-hand baptism from a traveler who seems to have been baptized by John (or a disciple of John) during a pilgrimage to Judea. These disciples did not even know of the Holy Spirit, even though John the Baptist proclaimed that his water baptism symbolized the greater

⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 895.

Spirit baptism that the Messiah would accomplish in His kingdom. They received water baptism by the apostle Paul to testify that they were prepared for Spirit baptism, which they then received.⁵

Covenantists reject this understanding of the new covenant community because it seems to divide God's people before the cross from those who receive the atonement of Christ by Spirit baptism afterwards. They ask about believers who lived and died before the events of the cross and Pentecost. They wonder about babies and other innocents who lived and died without believing in Christ or receiving Spirit baptism.

Crenshaw and Gunn explain, "According to Reformed theology, the people of God in all ages are in union with Christ and are therefore united together in the universal church, which is the body and bride of Christ."⁶ They reject any teaching that Mary, the mother of Jesus, would be in the church, while Joseph her husband would not be, because he died before Pentecost. The apostle John is a member of the new covenant community, but John the Baptist is not because he never experienced Spirit baptism in his lifetime.⁷ This seems to result in a two-tier community of believers throughout eternity, the new covenant community who received the baptism of the Spirit, and other second-class believers who were not Spirit-baptized, to include all the OT heroes of the faith highlighted in Hebrews 11. They suggest that Spirit baptism is retroactive, as is the sacrificial atonement of Christ.

Was not the Spirit renewing, sustaining, illuminating and giving the people of God gifts before Pentecost? Was not this work in both ages based on the person, work and covenant headship of Christ? Before Pentecost the saving work of the Spirit was based on Messianic promises, and after Pentecost, the saving work of the Spirit is based on historically realized Messianic accomplishments. The Spirit's present ministry is superior to His old covenant ministry because is no longer relates to the Christ to come but to the Christ who has come and has been glorified and now reigns in power.⁸

⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 895.

⁶ Crenshaw and Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, 188.

⁷ Crenshaw and Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, 188.

⁸ Crenshaw and Gunn, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, 219.

In response it must be said that if there was no difference in the work of the Holy Spirit before and after His outpouring beginning at Pentecost, then the baptism ministry of John becomes meaningless. He proclaimed that his water baptism symbolized the Messiah's future Spirit baptism. Additionally, if the outpouring of the Spirit was already a reality in OT believers, then the prophecy of Joel would have no meaning, because there would be no difference between the experience of God's people during the OT era and the eschatological kingdom of God. If OT believers were already receiving Spirit baptism, beginning in the Garden of Eden, then water baptism testifying to that internal spiritual reality would have been an OT ordinance.

Dillard and Allen emphasize that this outpouring of the Spirit foretold by Joel and fulfilled in Acts was the same work of the Spirit as experienced by each OT prophet, and was the fulfillment to the prayer of Moses, "Oh that all Yahweh's people were prophets and Yahweh would put His Spirit upon them" (Exod 11:29). A common explanation is that this outpouring of the Spirit was limited to a few in the OT and was a temporary experience for most; however, in the NT this same work of the Spirit is given permanently to all believers.⁹

In response, the Holy Spirit enabled OT prophets the authority to speak for Him. The Spirit gave revelation so that the words the prophet spoke and wrote belonged to God in the process of inspiration. Lost people could even receive prophetic insight from the Spirit, such as Balaam (Num 22:18), King Saul (1 Sam 10:11, 19:24) and Caiaphas (John 11:49-50); however, in distinction to this OT prophetic endowment, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied by Joel and experienced beginning at Pentecost is new covenant ratification as the Spirit applies the atonement of Christ to each recipient. This new covenant outpouring of the Spirit results in ultimate prophethood, as the recipient receives an intimate revelation from God in a personal relationship. This ministry of the

⁹ Raymond Dillard, *Joel*, in *The Minor Prophets*, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 295; Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 102.

Spirit results in eternal indwelling, so that the body of the believer becomes God's temple. The only similarity between the old covenant and the new is that the same Person of Holy Spirit imparts the same spiritual life for the same eternal justification of all believers.

All Christ must do to include an individual into the new covenant community is to pour out the Holy Spirit on them, which results in Spirit baptism and indwelling. Christ could accomplish the outpouring of the Spirit at any time following His glorification (John 7:39). There is nothing to withhold Spirit baptism from saints who died previous to the cross or from innocents who died before they were accountable.

The Scriptures do not speak directly to this point; however, the author of Hebrews explains that although OT saints had faith, they did not receive all that God had promised. God had something better planned for the readers of the book of Hebrews, so that those older saints should not be made perfect apart from us (Heb 11:39-40). OT saints would not receive resurrection status and glorified bodies before new covenant believers. The book of Hebrews states that both categories of the people of God would receive covenant promises together, sometime in our future.

Joel prophesied on the great and awesome Day of Yahweh, He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (2:28). Everybody alive at the beginning of the millennium will receive this outpouring, which will result in Spirit baptism and indwelling. This outpouring will be upon all regardless of age, ethnicity, gender and social status. The Holy Spirit will qualify each individual as a kingdom citizen through the ratification of the new covenant. Every one of God's people, to include believers in normal bodies, will participate in this Spirit outpouring at that time to receive new covenant ratification and to participate equally in the new covenant community. Each OT saint from Abel to the thief on the cross will also be present and accounted for on that day in a glorified, resurrected body, as well as babies and other innocents throughout history. They would certainly be included in the designation of "all flesh" at the return of Christ to receive this outpouring of the Spirit.

The purpose of this project has been to explore the new covenant community. It is a conviction that the new covenant is ratified by the baptism/indwelling of the Holy

Spirit as He applies the sacrificial atonement of Christ to each believer. Simultaneously, new covenant recipients are incorporated into the church as the new covenant community as they participate in these two new covenant foundations. The purpose of this Messianic community is to provide a participatory form of government for the kingdom of God. This is true today as the new covenant community exercises authority in discipleship and discipline over new covenant recipients, although it remains a small minority in relation to the society around us. However, in the second coming of Christ, everyone alive will pledge allegiance to Christ as King. The same new covenant community will continue to exercise authority over new covenant recipients, and because all will be kingdom citizens, the *ekklesia* will serve as the millennial government, both in its global and local aspects.

Unto Him be glory in the *ekklesia*, the new covenant community, and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen (Eph 3:21).

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ABSTRACT

THE CHURCH AS THE NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY

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This project explores the new covenant community, identified by ἐκκλησία, and translated as *church*. Chapter 1 introduces the new covenant community which consist of all new covenant recipients. Chapter 2 surveys biblical covenants which provide the basis for the physical rule of Christ on earth. Chapter 3 explains the sacrifice of Christ and Spirit baptism as the foundations of the new covenant and its community. Chapter 4 relates new covenant foundations to congregational ordinances; the Lord's Supper symbolizes Christ's sacrifice and water baptism symbolizes Spirit baptism. Chapter 5 studies the participatory government authority inherent in ἐκκλησία. Chapter 6 develops new covenant community authority in the kingdom, both now and the future. Chapter 7 interacts with dispensational thought, while chapter 8 discusses covenant theology. Chapter 9 provides concluding comments concerning those who were not Spirit-baptized during their lifetimes.

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