

ISRAEL & THE CHURCH

Introduction

Here is where I try to justify your mental anguish...

Thesis: Israel and the Church are different and distinct in God's plan and purpose for the ages, and this distinction is clearly seen in the differences in their soteriology and resulting eschatology.

1. Eternal salvation (the taking away of sins and eternal life) is the ***past experience*** of a ***Christian*** based on repentance and faith alone.
2. Eternal salvation (the taking away of sins and the promise of eternal life) was offered to ***Israel*** as a ***future inheritance*** based on their devotion to God.

Contention: Dispensationalism is a system of theology that consistently recognizes and maintains the biblical distinction between Israel and the Church.

Terms:

- **Soteriology** refers to the study of salvation.
- **Eschatology** refers to the study of things to come (the future).
- So what? If the eschatology of one people (their future) is different from the eschatology of another people, then to that same degree their soteriology is different (how they obtain salvation and what their salvation includes).

Our Focus: Salvation as it deals with the taking away of sins and the gift of eternal life.

Salvation in the Church Age

What does the Bible say about our salvation today?

Past: A Christian was saved from the ***punishment*** of sin.

Present: A Christian is being saved from the ***power*** of sin.

Future: A Christian will be saved from the ***presence*** of sin.

Let's ask ourselves some questions to prime the pump...

- Was an individual Israelite in the Old Testament saved the same way as you?
- Was he saved in the same time frame as you?
- Was he guaranteed the same things as you?
- Was his salvation conditioned the same as yours?

Anachronisms: The word anachronism is the combination of two constructs from Greek:

- The prefix (loan word from Greek) *ana-* means *backward, up, or against*.
- The root *-chronism* which comes from the Greek word *khronos* means *time*.
- Together, *ana-chronism*, means ***to make a wrong time reference***.

"In the Old Testament, the English word *salvation* presents a latitude of meaning ranging from deliverance from enemies to right relations with God." [Chafer]

An Israelite's salvation under the Old Testament was not received in the same way a Christian received salvation under the New Testament.

"The Old Testament will be searched in vain for record of Jews passing from an unsaved to a saved state, or for any declaration about the terms upon which such a change would be secured." [Chafer]

Salvation for Israel **What does the Bible say about the salvation of Israel and of Israelites?**

Israel's forgiveness of sins and eternal life was a future hope.

Israel's "Past" Salvation: Covenant Relationship

- The Abrahamic Covenant: Genesis 12.1-3
- The Mosaic Covenant: Exodus 19.5-8

When an Israelite living in the Old Testament thought about his "salvation" in the "past," he never thought about his "decision" to follow God or about his "conversion" to follow God.

Those are uniquely Christian concepts under the New Testament.

An individual Israelite under the Old Testament looked to God's covenants and promises given to his forefathers. He looked to his participation in those covenants and promises by his physical birth.

Israel's "Future" Salvation: Romans 11.26-27

The New Covenant with Israel: Isaiah 59.20-21

- An unconditional covenant of eternal life & blessing
- Two Key Concepts:
 1. God provided a future eternal salvation for Israel in the New Covenant and His promises in that covenant are ***unconditional***.
 2. Entrance into the New Covenant, however, was ***conditional***.

Israel's "Eternal Salvation" is Found in the New Covenant:

- Full Mention: Jeremiah 31.31-34
- Eternal Life: Ezekiel 36.24-28
- Receive the Spirit of God: Ezekiel 37.1-14
- The Regeneration of the Nation: Matthew 19.28

SUMMARY QUESTIONS:

1. How did an individual Israelite living under the Old Testament of the Mosaic Law "get in" to the New Testament (the New Covenant that promised complete forgiveness of sins and eternal life)?
2. What were the terms and conditions of eternal salvation that God placed on Israelites living under the Law?
3. What did an Israelite have to do to be saved?

Israel's Eternal Salvation: A Future "Inheritance"

KEY STATEMENT (don't miss this):

Eternal salvation (the taking away of sins and the promise of eternal life) was offered to Israel as a **future inheritance** in the Messianic Kingdom.

Not so key of a statement (but still important):

This future inheritance of eternal life was **inextricably tied** with the promise of the future Messianic Kingdom on earth (the "land"; Gen 13.14-15; Jer 33.7-8, 15-17).

SUMMARY STATEMENT (if you miss this, you lose big):

For an Israelite under the Old Testament, when he thought of "eternal life," he immediately thought about **the future** and his **inheritance** of complete forgiveness of sins and of eternal life **in the land** under the Messiah; **he thought about the Kingdom.**

Israel's Eternal Salvation: Conditioned in the Palestinian ("Land & Life") Covenant, Deuteronomy 29-30

This is "the big one" so you really should pay attention here...

Israel's promise of "life" with God in the future was conditioned in the Palestinian Covenant. That means...

- Their participation in the future kingdom (that was later revealed to be based on the New Covenant) was **conditioned** by the Palestinian Covenant.
- The Palestinian Covenant gives the **conditions** under which the individual Israelite received the **land** and eternal **life** as his inheritance under the New Covenant (read that again).

When? WHEN? WHEN?!?!?

The realization and fulfillment of the "life and land" promises of the Palestinian Covenant is **the second coming of the Lord** (when the Lord returns to restore Israel in the land).

1. This is the time of Israel's final and permanent restoration to the land: Deut 30.4-5, 16, 20.
2. This is the time when Israel receives the circumcision of the heart: Deut 30.6a
3. This is the time when Israel is regenerated by the Spirit of God: Deut 30.6b.

By this, therefore, we understand that the Palestinian Covenant establishes the **conditions** each individual Israelite had to meet in order to participate in the **New Covenant**.

Israel's Future Salvation: An Inheritance Conditioned on Complete Devotion

- This is the strait gate and the narrow way: Matthew 7.13-14
- This is why there will only be a remnant saved: Rom 9.27-29
- This is why we read in the Gospels that faith alone is NOT enough; it must be a **faith that works**: Mat 7.21-23; Lk 13.24

An Israelite will inherit eternal life **if** he is fully and completely **devoted** to God: Luke 10.25-28

Chafer: "...the lawyer... is told by Christ in the most absolute terms that eternal life for him is gained by the keeping of that contained in the Mosaic Law—"this do, and thou shalt live."

For an Israelite, eternal life was something yet **future** and something to be **inherited**: Luke 18.18-22

Eternal life for an Israelite was not a present possession (as it is today for a Christian). It was a future inheritance to be hoped for and for which he had to work.

Chafer again: "...to this sincere man our Lord quoted the Mosaic commandments; but when the young man declared that these things had been kept by him from his youth, Christ did not chide him for falsehood but took him on to the ground of complete surrender of all he was and all he had as the way into that state which Christ termed perfect (Matt. 19:21)."

Almost there...!

Israel's Future Condemnation: The Rebels Are "Purged Out"

- The alternative to future, inherited eternal life for Israel: the everlasting fire of hell. Matthew 18.8-9
- God makes the New Covenant with those Israelites who turn from transgression: Isaiah 59.20-21
- The covenants guarantee that "all Israel" will be saved but not all the physical descendants of Israel are counted as true or spiritual Israel.
- According to the Palestinian Covenant, only those who were devoted to God will inherit eternal life. These are those faithful few who enter through the strait gate and walk the narrow way unto life.
- The rebels will be purged out of Israel: Ezekiel 20.37-38

Conclusion

Was an individual Israelite in the Old Testament saved the same way as you? Was he saved in the same time frame as you? Was he guaranteed the same things as you? Was his salvation conditioned the same as yours? **No**.

Thesis: Israel and the Church are different and distinct in God's plan and purpose for the ages, and this distinction is clearly seen in the differences in their soteriology and resulting eschatology.

Conclusion: Dispensationalism is a system of theology that consistently recognizes and maintains the biblical distinction between Israel and the Church (as is seen in the dispensational analysis of each people's soteriology and eschatology).

J. Dwight Pentecost: "Scripture is unintelligible until one can distinguish clearly between God's program for his earthly people Israel and that for the church."

That means Scripture is unintelligible to any but those who hold to a dispensational system of theology.

The point of our mental gymnastics: "These systems do set up conflicting and opposing principles; but since these difficulties appear only when an attempt is made to coalesce systems, elements, and principles which God has separated, the conflicts really do not exist at all outside these unwarranted unifying efforts; in fact they rather demonstrate the necessity of a due recognition of all God's different and distinct administrations. The true unity of the Scriptures is not discovered when one blindly seeks to fuse these opposing principles into one system, but rather it is found when God's plain differences are observed. The dispensationalist does not create these differences as he is sometimes accused of doing... **Instead of creating the problems, the dispensationalist is the one who has a solution for them.**" [Lewis Sperry Chafer]