

SECTION II

RELEVANT THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS & THE CONCLUSION TO PART I, SECTION I

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH (PART 1)

IN DEFENSE OF GOD'S ECONOMY RE: ISRAEL & THE CHURCH'S CORROBORATIVE WITNESS

Plainly there is great controversy surrounding the presence of both Israel and the Church and their interaction and joint witness, as presented by this author, throughout the entire Seventieth Week of Daniel. The majority of Premillenarians eschew the simultaneous administration of God's purposes through both during this concluding week. Harry Ironside encapsulates this Premillenarian, Pretribulational position as follows:

“From the close of chapter 3 (in the Revelation), we never see the church on earth again through all the rest of this solemn book. We read of ‘saints,’ but they are distinct altogether from the church of the present dispensation. Israel comes into view and a great multitude of spared Gentiles, saved out of the great tribulation; but no church, no body of Christ, no bride of the Lamb any more upon the earth! The fact is patent enough for every careful reader to notice it. What is the explanation of it? Simply this, I believe: we must understand the rapture, of I Thess. 4:16, 17, as transpiring between chapter 3 and chapter 4. Of this the rapture of the apostle is the symbol. He sees the door opened in heaven. His attention is turned from earth to glory. He is, in spirit, caught up, and far above all the mists of this lower scene he beholds a ‘throne set in heaven,’ and a Throne-sitter upon it.”¹

Thus, many a thoughtful Premillenarian place the Church during the final seven-year week raptured from the earth prior to the “Tribulation Period” and prior to Israel's period of testing known as “The Time of Jacob's Trouble.” The Church from Revelation 4 on is in the heavens, prior to her descension with Christ and victory over the Beast and False Prophet—again, she is raptured at the commencement of the Seventieth Week of Daniel's prophecy. Any consideration by staunch Premillenarians that God could “simultaneously” work through both

Israel and the Church during the Seventieth Week of Daniel—during either half of it—is theologically impossible. It blurs the distinctions of Israel and the Church, and is, for some, “Scripturally” repugnant!

Meanwhile, Amillenarian and Postmillenarian eschatologies virtually eliminate (aside from some Postmillenarians who accord national salvation to Israel of the flesh at the conclusion of this age) Israel’s placement in any end-time’s scenario and relegate all prophetic possibilities and contestations with the Antichrist to the Church’s exclusive purview. The difficulty for Premillenarians is to correlate or “dispensate” the two insofar as their witness to the Gentiles is concerned. If one places the Church in the Tribulation Period as a full-blown testimony and witness against Antichrist and the Apostate Mother of Harlots, then what of Israel? In addition to this conundrum, isn’t the Seventieth Week of Daniel written specifically to Daniel’s “people” (i.e., the Jews), and, therefore, concerns but them, not the Church?

In the text we did cover issues relative to what I call the final week of human history, as we have known it and the prophetic possibilities of God’s duality of simultaneously dealing with both Israel and the Church. This, I conclude, is mandatory in the scheme of prophetic necessity in that final judgment upon Babylon the Great requires, as in the Revelation, a courtroom atmosphere wherein witnesses are called forth to testify against the defendant, the accused, the Antichrist-Beast and his Image. The “Tribune” or “Divine Magistrate” as personified in the Lamb, is calling forth His witnesses to testify—the evidence has been gathered over the millennia, and a final deposition and verbal testimony from these “concluding witnesses” is in order; then, and then only, will the “Judge of all the Earth” (for His laws are irrevocable—the ground rules for such a “cosmic case” were laid down in the Pentateuch), after hearing and viewing all the evidence, shall give final deliberation and conviction upon the accused: Babylon the Great, and its King and co-conspirators, will receive the severest of sentences.

The Economy of God – or God’s Dispensation

How the Almighty “administers” His plan and purpose throughout human history is critical in the understanding of this end-time’s scenario. Several Scriptures deal with issues regarding the “administration” of the mystery or of God’s economy:

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship (Grk. “economy” or “administration”) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who

created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Ephesians 3:9-12).

The Englishman’s Greek New Testament (Griesbach, Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford and Wordsworth) affirms that the Greek extension of the word “koinonia” (as found in Ephesians 3:9) extends its meaning to “oikonomia” (i.e., from “fellowship” to “economy”).

“Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation (“oikonomia” or “economy”) of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:25-27).²

The Greek word “oikonomia” (“economy”) is translated in the King James Version as “dispensation” in I Corinthians 9:17, Ephesians 1:10; and in Ephesians 3:2. In each case there is the overriding sense of “dispensing” or “administration” or the dissemination of God’s plan and purpose. In essence, how God’s “economy” operates.

Clearly, God, through Paul and other New Testament believers in Messiah, dispensed His economy among the Gentiles, including them in on the “commonwealth of Israel” –

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh— who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:11-19).

All this to say that God’s economy, His methodology for dispensing of His grace and salvation, has been made known to the Gentiles, and this dispensation definitely includes the Gentiles into the “commonwealth of Israel” – making them partakers of His beneficence; an inclusion of immense prophetic significance.

Now, this author, along with sundry other brethren of like passion, contend that the administration of God’s economy within the concluding week of Daniel’s vision, justifies, what one theologian (Robert H. Gundry) describes as “Dispensational Transitions.”³

Gundry summarizes the restrictive understanding of hyper-dispensationalism as it delineates between the Church and Israel:

“In the chronological question concerning the rapture, the dispensational issue centers in the field of ecclesiology. An absolute silence in the OT about the present age, a total disconnection of the Church from the divine program for Israel, and a clean break between dispensations would favor pretribulationism: the Church would not likely be related to the seventieth week of Daniel, or tribulation, a period of time clearly having to do with Israel. But a partial revelation of the present age in the OT, a connection (not necessarily identification) between Israel and the Church, and a dispensational change involving a transitional period open the door to the presence of the Church during the tribulation.”⁴

This is precisely what this author has attempted to do—amplify that connectivity between Israel and the Church, which clearly involves a “transitional period” known as the Seventieth Week of Daniel wherein both Israel and the Church find themselves as the Two Witnesses in the Revelation; participants in God’s economy and, if you would in the affirmative sense, co-conspirators in the administration of divine justice against Babylon the Great.

Purposefully, this author has not conjectured *how* the Almighty will collaborate the testimonies of His Two Witnesses—that shall be left to His divine prerogative. It would, as I quote Gundry later in this Appendix, conjure up possibilities of such collaboration—but little is said in the Scripture about such pursuits. Just as there were the faithful in Israel who perceived of His coming and

knew Him to be the Messiah, and wholly embraced the Savior—even so, they who “transitioned” from Law to Grace at His First Advent, shall, I believe, find their counterparts, prior to His Second Advent.

God’s work of preparation, even in the lives of believers today, is always a work of preparation. Circumstances, upbringing, and the divine calling—all converge in the salvation of the soul. Truly, the calling of the Lord always involves His sovereign hand arranging and making ready the heart of the penitent. “Prepare ye the way of the Lord” is, in and of itself, a transitional epiphany that from the least to the greatest is experienced among the faithful.

Even so, the current regathering of Israel to their ancient homeland—where we now behold a “Valley of Dry Bones” (Ezekiel 37), full of unbelief, having little spiritual vitality—are gathered, bone-to-bone, until the Spirit of God shall breath into them His life and they shall stand as “*an exceedingly great army*” (Ezekiel 37:10b)! The New Testament is full of such preparatory realities—from the Ethiopian eunuch to Cornelius the Centurion, from Lydia the businesswoman to the Macedonian jailer—all were prepared by the Lord for His coming into their lives. Indeed, in most cases there were clear “spiritual stirrings” – a work of the Lord had already begun in them before they met Him in His fullness.

Is it so difficult to believe, that in both the Church, and assuredly in Israel, that God’s sovereign hand is now at work in such a preparatory manner—bringing the two together for “such a time as this?” Is it so impossible for the God of impossibilities to orchestrate such a miracle among His peoples? I think not—for the history of the Scriptures is replete with such preparation and transition.

Yet, our Pretribulationist brethren find it outside their theological pale to ascribe such eschatological possibilities to the future and final week of human history, as we now know it—when such has repeatedly been the case when the Age of Law passed into the Age of Grace.

Excluding the Church based on Mystery?

Yet, Pretribulationism demands the rapture of the Church just at or immediately prior to the commencement of the Seventieth Week of Daniel; hence, God’s administration with the Church is severed from His administration with Israel. To justify this severance, pretribulationism identifies certain church doctrines that are missing from the Hebrew Scriptures as “mysteries.” One could therefore conclude that the rapture of the Church prior to the tribulation period (or the Seventieth Week of Daniel) is shrouded in mystery (which they do); therefore, the Church does in no way participate in this concluding time frame—God uses it to refine and purify the sons of Levi.

What complicates, for pretribulationism, this clean break in administration, is the large number of Gentile saints who will live on earth during the tribulation period (*vide*. Revelation 7:9-17). Both sides (pretrib. and posttrib.) concur the presence of such large numbers of believers—be they a part of the Church or not! The quandary of such salvific phenomenon among the Gentiles is compounded when an unequivocal search for Old Testament passages (aside from the allusions to which I have given) is made mentioning Gentile saints involved in the Seventieth Week of Daniel. Hence, for Pretribulationists to argue from the posture of “mysterious silence” in the Old Testament concerning the Church, they must also face the fact that that same Old Testament is overtly silent relative to Gentile saints whom we’ve identified in Revelation 7:9-17.

John Walvoord (Dallas Seminary), and champion of dispensationalism and of the Church’s rapture at the commencement of the Tribulation Period, does not equate any of the “mysteries” which are distinctive of the Church to the tribulational saints, such as the Jews and Gentiles as members of the Body of Christ, the Church as the Bride of Christ, and of the indwelling of Christ in believers.⁵

Why does the burden of proof rest upon Posttribulationists to determine whether or not the tribulation saints are members of the Body of Christ, the Church—to the contrary, that burden of proof is laid at the doorstep of pretribulationism who must prove that these tribulation saints are NOT members of the Church!

Alas! Even a stalwart Pretribulationist like Dr. John Walvoord welcomes these tribulation saints into the Body of Christ, the Church, as he addresses the issue of the endurance of the believer, arguing that this “endurance” is not a matter of salvation but of physical preservation until the time of Jesus’ Second Advent:

“Some problems have arisen from Matthew 24:13 where it states, ‘But he who stands firm to the end will be saved’ (cf. Mark 13:13). A common interpretation that those who stand firm will endure to the end of the Tribulation is contradicted by the fact that thousands of *Christians* in the Great Tribulation will be martyred (Rev. 7:9–17).”⁶ (Emphasis, mine).

How could the New Testament writers preclude such a vast audience of Gentile believers from the One Body? Are we talking about a “mystery within a mystery?” Neither the Posttrib nor the Pretrib positions on this issue are conclusive—because the burden of proof is found *elsewhere*.

Why is it that these “church mysteries” by definition, though expounded upon in the New Testament, somehow extinguish any possibility that the Church is *persona non grata* from OT prophecy, especially from the Seventieth Week of Daniel, the tribulation, in particular? There are “mysteries” which are found in the New Testament that pretribulationists concur pierce the Seventieth Week of Daniel:

- (1) “The mystery of lawlessness,” even now working, will climax in the Tribulation Period (II Thessalonians 2:7).
- (2) “The mystery of God” terminates very late in the Tribulation Period (Revelation 10:7).
- (3) The mystery, “Mother of Harlots, Babylon” will persist until the very terminus of the tribulation (Revelation 17:5-7, etc.).

Hence, the “argument from mystery” is hardly sufficient as a defense of the Church’s disappearance prior to the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

In point of fact—how can you have “tribulation saints” – as some pretribulationists conclude they occupy a “special place” outside the Church, without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit—this is sheer theological nonsense and flies in the face of the salvific revelation through Christ and of the “regeneration?” The “end product” of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Age of Grace, through regeneration of the human spirit (“from death to life”), is the Church of the Living God—***those called out from among the Gentiles.*** Those in the Tribulation who are obviously called out from the Gentiles and ***“who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth”*** are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, and are members of the Body of Christ, the Church—they can be nothing less!

Likewise, the argument that the Holy Spirit—(i.e., “the Restrainer” cf. II Thessalonians 2:6), Who allegedly has departed, along with the rapture of the Church, prior to the commencement of the 70th Week of Daniel—is no longer active upon the earth in ministry is “theologically bogus.” He, the Comforter, the Restrainer, the One Who baptizes, the Regenerator (if you would) and all His indwelling presence, is and shall be throughout the entire 70th Week of Daniel, empowering His Two Witnesses and accomplishing the “gospel of the kingdom” to be preached through ***“all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come”*** (Matthew 24:14).

Most Pretribulationists assert that the Church’s commencement occurred on the Day of Pentecost—but the mysteries of both the incarnation and earthly ministry of Jesus predate the Church’s inception. Likewise, when the “Mystery of God” is summed up in Christ, wherein all “things in the heavens and things upon the earth” (Ephesians 1:9, 10) are concluded in Him, it shall transverse

beyond the pale of this present dispensation. **(Please see page 458 in the Conclusion.)**

Therefore, the prophetic chronologies of Israel and the Church are not mutually exclusive simply because of these mysteries. The argument of Israel's exclusivity within the Seventieth Week of Daniel, predicated upon chronology, is spurious if its basis is founded upon "mystery" – for the Church, *per se*, is never designated a mystery—and neither is the rapture and the body of truth contained within the Church (although Paul does designate the "translation" of living saints at the time of the rapture to be a "mystery" in I Corinthians 15:51, 52).

It is the conclusion of this author that, concomitant with the on-going aforementioned mysteries and their continuance throughout the Seventieth Week of Daniel, they fully justify the inclusion that any mysteries accorded the Church will succeed throughout this same period as well—i.e., the "Church as a mystery (revealed)" will, with the other mysteries, penetrate the veil of the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

Israel and the Church—Together in Transition

Throughout this text, I have provided ample Hebrew Scriptures to validate connectivity between Israel and the Church. To say that the literature of the Old Testament is vacuous relative to the Church, while the "Spirit of Christ" was within the Old Testament prophets (I Peter 1:10) attesting to the "*glories that would follow*" circumvents the obvious—i.e., that the Church, those called out from both Jew and Gentile into One Body, through the prophets is "revealed to us" – "*that they without us should not be made perfect*" (Hebrews 11:40).

Indeed, according to Deuteronomy 28:25, 64, 65 and 30:1-4, the Church at the present occupies a future time frame foretold about Israel. So, considering this on a dispensational level, if the Church is domiciled juxtaposed to Israel's dispersion, she most certainly could find herself within the time frame of Jacob's Trouble—i.e., Israel's final tribulation.

Both camps concur that the time interval between the 69th and the 70th Week of Daniel (i.e., "*Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off*") reveals the "Church Age." But in those same passages of Daniel (Daniel 9:26) the destruction of Jerusalem's temple is predicted. Its demise in 70 A.D. clearly falls within the Church Age; therefore, one simply cannot unilaterally exclude other Old Testament predictions, such as the tribulation itself, to fall outside the Church Age as well—no, the entire 70th Week of Daniel does not obfuscate the Church's prophetic participation on this earthly clod!

The old dispensation, prior to Israel's rejection of the Messiah, clearly signaled the commencement of the Church Age—especially poignant is the passage found in Matthew 16:18. Therefore, how can the Church Age be considered “prophetically obscure” within Israel's dispensation and outside her chronological timetable?

One of the strongest passages that validate the Church Age as predicted by the Old Testament prophets is found in Acts 2:16-21. Peter says, “***This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.***” Some would like us to hear: “This is like what was spoken” – but this is simply what I call “pretribulation reconstructionism” (i.e., a futile attempt to conform Scripture to one's eschatology; in this case, pretribulation).

Friends, the most significant event of the present age, the birth of the Church, is prophesied by the Hebrew prophet Joel totally within a Hebrew context—therefore, why would it seem odd that the Church's involvement during the 70th Week of Daniel is somehow out of place? Their context, as in Joel, may be from a Hebrew perspective, but aren't predictions from the very commencement of the Church Age interrelated to Old Testament predictions relative to Israel? We are not hindered dispensationally from concluding that this will likewise be the case during the 70th Week of Daniel's prophecy.

In “turning to the Gentiles” Paul finds Old Testament validation for such an emphasis by quoting from Isaiah 49:6 (Acts 13:46, 47; *vide.* Acts 26:22, 23). Premillenarians would like us to believe that Paul was using this Scripture “as if” it were in the present Church Age, although its real application is the millennium, involving the salvation of Gentiles during the Messianic reign.

However, taken in its context, Paul is not making a veiled comparison or allusion to Gentile salvation during the future millennium—he has commanded us:

“For thus has the Lord commanded us, I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles.”

If it is not meant for us in the present age—the forcefulness of the command is lost.

Again, quoting from Gundry's work, *The Church and the Tribulation*:

“Paul establishes the duty of Jewish and Gentile Christians to receive one another (Rom. 15:7-13) by quoting four separate OT prophecies (2 Sam. 22:50, parallel Ps. 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 117:1; Isa. 11:10), which he applies to the present conversion of Gentiles.

One of these prophecies, Isaiah 11:10, comes from a prominent millennial passage. Hence, the evangelization of Gentiles predicted in the OT has a fulfillment in the present dispensation as well as in the millennium. The subsequence of the revelation that Gentile converts should compose one body with the Jews (Eph. 3:3, 6) does not alter the fact that OT prophets predicted the salvation of Gentiles during the Church age.”⁷

The entire issue of the New Covenant as quoted from Jeremiah by the author of the book of Hebrews, raises yet another conundrum for pretribulationists—i.e., if the author of Hebrews applies this Jeremiah prophecy to saints in the Church Age (Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-17), then does this necessitate a distinction between TWO New Covenants? No. The author of Hebrews in no way signifies two separate new covenants. Though Jeremiah had in mind Israel, the contrasting details simply reveal subjective applications that apply to the Church and to Israel, in that order.

To categorically announce the Church’s chronology as shrouded in mystery, insofar as the Old Testament prophets are concerned, is the clearest definition of hyperdispensationalism found today. Once you embrace such a fallacy, you must conclude that the Church was totally unforeseen in the Old Testament, while simultaneously acknowledging the relevance of numerous Old Testament texts that have their fulfillment in Acts, the epistles (at least the pre-prison epistles); therefore, the Church Age could only have commenced at the conclusion of the book of Acts. You will collide with this deduction unless you marginalize these New Testament references to Old Testament prophetic passages—or you must surmise that the Church’s involvement in Old Testament prophecies and its association with Israel is Biblically plausible. Hence, the door is fully opened for the Church’s presence during the Seventieth Week of Daniel’s prophecy.

Hyperdispensationalism would have us believe that a clean break occurred at the commencement of the Church’s birth at Pentecost; therefore, a clean break will again occur at the conclusion of the Church Age at the pretribulation rapture of the Church prior to the 70th Week of Daniel’s prophecy.

In Mark 2:21, 22 Jesus informs the Pharisees that the reason His disciples do not fast, as required by the law, was indicative that a period of transition from the old dispensation to the new dispensation was taking place. The concept of a “clean break” from Israel’s dispensation under the law, to the Church Age under grace can find little Scriptural credibility—there was clearly a “transitional period” between the dispensations.

Matthew (Matthew 11:13 and Luke 16:16) suggests that the “prophets and the Law” ceased during the ministry of John the Baptist—and, of course, in John 1:17 we hear these words from John the Baptist: **“Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ”** (and that includes the entire public ministry of Jesus by John the Apostle). In sum, the terminus of the period of Law and the commencement of the Age of Grace does NOT commence at Pentecost, but finds its source in the ministry of Jesus, especially at the time of His introduction.

Jesus foresaw and declared “all foods clean” in Mark 7:18, 19—but the actualization of this did not take place until the cross (Colossians 2:14, 16); which clearly provides transition during his public ministry.

Roy L. Aldrich explains the need for a transitional period:

“It is simply the necessity of a prolonged time period to reach all the living believers of the former age with the Pentecostal message . . . Only 120 received the initial baptism at Pentecost. There is no record of any simultaneous coming or outpouring of the Spirit upon individuals or groups in other places . . . The evidence seems to point to the conclusion that all living believers, except those at Jerusalem in the upper room, passed into the new dispensation without the baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit was ministered to them later as they came in contact with the apostles or their associates. Paul speaks of one who had ministered the Spirit and worked miracles among the Galatians (Gal. 3:5).”⁸

Further, the transition to the “Age of the Holy Spirit” was two-fold:

- (1) The initial reception (inwardly) of the Holy Spirit (or “Holy Breath”) took place PRIOR to Pentecost in the upper room, empowering the disciples to become, in essence, a “Holy Priesthood” – **“So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on (lit. “into”) them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’”** (John 20:22). It was not until Pentecost that the disciples were . . .
- (2) **“Clothed with power from on high”** – The fact that the disciples in the Upper Room were enabled to sustain a ten-day session of prayer prior to the Baptism of the Spirit, and the establishment of the Church, bears witness to the “infilling” work of the Holy Spirit: **“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon (outwardly) you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued (“clothed”) with power from on high”** (Luke 24:49). This outpouring, or Baptism of the Spirit, constitutes the

“authority” or outward manifestation of the Body of Christ and is indicative of the “Royal Priesthood” –

“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:5 & 9).

The reception of the “Holy Breath” breathed (i.e., the Holy Spirit) “into” (*Grk. ἐνεφύσησεν* – ***“breathed into them”***) the disciples constituted what Peter referred to as the “holy” priesthood in that it “separated” the disciples unto the Lord, enabling their “inner life” to sustain their prayer life; and then shortly thereafter, at Pentecost, the outpouring or “enduing” (i.e., “clothing”) from on high by the Holy Spirit (i.e., the Baptism of the Spirit “outwardly” upon the disciples) constituted the commencement of the Lord’s outward manifested authority or the “royal” aspect of the priesthood. The upper room experience inwardly filled the disciples with the Holy Breath, but when they were “presented” to the people on the Temple Mount at Pentecost, they were “clothed with power from on high” and bore witness to the authority of the Holy Spirit—they were the Church!

Is not this a marvelous transition to the Age of the Spirit? I believe so, and it further substantiates the “transitional” aspects of the dispensations, moving from Law to Grace.

Peter’s healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful is justified by incorporating the words of the Hebrew prophets, which foretold the happening:

“Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:19-21).

By implication, Peter renews the offer of the kingdom to Israel—with full restoration if they would turn to their Messiah. How could such an offer be made in “good faith” since the Church had just come into being, if, indeed, we are not looking at a “transitional period of time?” Clearly, God appears to be moving on two tracks: Israel AND the Church.

It is not “Scripturally irrational” to conclude that the termination of the sacerdotal rites, with the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., and subsequent dispersion of the Jews, connotes a period of transition wherein the Almighty was dealing with Israel, while simultaneously bringing the Old Testament dispensation to a close—the vestigial remains of the Law economy fell off.

Gundry concludes:

“That the change in dispensations at the dawn of the Church age was gradual, extending over a period of years, rather than immediate and clean-cut may lead us to expect a similar transitional period in the twilight of the Church age. This future period of transition might well be the tribulation, during which God finishes His dealings with the Church and prepares Israel and the nations for the millennial kingdom of Christ.”⁹

United in Messiah

The deepest level of unity, of all believers, is found in the branching out of the Branch—in Messiah, the Christ. When we differentiate within the economy of God, between God’s separate peoples (pre-Abrahamic, Israel, the Church), we must realize such distinctions are merely administrative and transitory. Only in Messiah is there a unity so deep, so inclusive—that it surely overshadows all dispensational differentiations.

Paul calls Abraham, “*the father of all who believe*” (Rom. 4:11). Through the imputation of Christ’s sacrifice, righteousness is afforded to all Old Testament saints (Rom. 3:25, 26). Furthermore, the grafting in of the wild olive branches (the Gentiles) into the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11:16) is a supreme picture of such unity. How can one say the Church occupies a discretionary position when verses like this militate against such a description?

“(The Gentile believers) *were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise,*” but now “*brought near by the blood of Christ*” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

Now, this author has in general outlined an overall “heavenly” orientation for the Church, and an “earthly” witness for Israel; however, even in this “spherical description” of God’s economy, there abides the subtle intrusion of unity in Messiah, for we read:

“He (Abraham) was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God All these died in faith . . . having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one . . . for He (God) has prepared a city for them” (Hebrews 11:9, 10, 13-16).

If this does not allude to the New Jerusalem, that ultimate manifestation of the unity of all believers, then what does? Again, Revelation 21:12, 14 and the Holy City’s proper nouns of 12 Gates bearing the Names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel and whose 12 Foundations bear the Names of the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb is simply too overwhelming to deny that the Almighty cannot move in sync with both during the conclusion of this age.

In sum, those who espouse a pretribulational mindset tend toward the administration of the Church and her distinctions; those who affirm the oneness of all saints within the Church and identify her with saints from previous ages, foresee the Church within the context of the 70th Week of Daniel as a culmination of believers in unity at the conclusion of the age.

God’s Economy in the Tribulation

Once the theological possibility persists that the Church’s positioning in the Tribulation does not extinguish, but enhances, God’s administration through both Israel and the Church, then the Almighty’s simultaneous efforts through both covenant peoples presents little difficulty.

How can Millenarians of all persuasions deny such synchronized dealings? Isn’t it true that the Church will rule with Christ upon the earth (I Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 5:10) along with all other saints—including those martyred during the Tribulation, as well as all the saints from the Old Testament?

As the “way of the Lord” was prepared at His first coming—and saints like Mary, Joseph, Simeon, etc.—let alone scores of disciples mentioned during His earthly ministry who recognized Who He was—were prepared by the Lord, even so, does this not prove His simultaneous dealings in the preparation of His people? And what of the entire rebirth of the State of Israel and the regathering of the today’s exiles in preparation for His Second Advent? Yes, they are returning in unbelief as was prophesied—but they are returning. Is this not a testimony in and of itself of God’s faithfulness to His brethren according to the flesh? Is He not working with both Israel and the Church right now? Absolutely!

Both Israel's dispersion and regathering have occurred at the beginning and near the ending of the Church Age. Listen, as Gundry goes way out on a limb concerning this issue:

“But it is not merely a matter of dealing with two groups at once. It is a matter of dealing simultaneously with, and through, two groups of redeemed people and witnesses. Will two diverse groups of saints, those who belong to the Church and those who belong to Israel coexist on earth and perhaps live according to different regulations? If so, will the tribulational Church be composed exclusively of Gentile believers? Will two distinct companies of witnesses preach the Gospel, maybe variations of it? Such questions arise quite naturally if we take the tribulation as transitional. But the mere existence of these questions does not preclude the possibility of the presence of the Church in the tribulation. For we might ask similar questions about the saints who we know came out of the Mosaic dispensation into the Church.”¹⁰

The Book of Daniel: Israel, the Church, or Both?

There is absolute agreement amongst those who hold to the premillennial view that the Millennium is an initial stage in the everlasting kingdom of God. Robert D. Culver, formerly professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana and who served as Bible and Apologetics professor at Wheaton College and at Trinity Seminary in Chicago, sums up the major tenets of Premillenarian eschatology:

“*First*, there is an everlasting kingdom promised to Christ (Messiah) in the Old Testament. *Second*, Christ claimed those promises for Himself when He came. *Third*, Christ and the apostles made it clear that in certain important aspects that kingdom was entirely future up to the time of our Lord's ascension and would remain so till the second coming. *Fourth*, the Bible places the future Millennium within that future kingdom, and places it at the very beginning of it”¹¹

Culver, whose classical Premillenarian eschatology demands a distinction between Israel and the Church, sides with dispensationalists, by concluding that vast portions of Old Testament prophetic Scriptures were written with Israel's restoration in mind and future earthly kingdom with their Messiah reigning on the earth (omitting even a veiled reference to those called out from among the Gentiles, the Church). Of course, the Messiah (Jesus Christ) is clearly the Second Advent.

Unfortunately, and this is an oversimplification of the topic, Culver, in the main, excludes the Church's involvement in the prophecies of Daniel, and, I am confident, other Hebrew passages, and in so doing, deflects the assaults of Amillenarian and Postmillenarian upon the major pillars of Premillenarian eschatology; namely, Israel's pivotal role in the unfolding of the future Millennial reign of Christ on the earth.

In his argument with those who arrogate these same Scriptures (in Daniel) to the Church's purview, he, along with scores of well-meaning Premillenarian expositors, "throw out the baby with the bath water" (i.e., exclude what the Apostle Peter called "*the glories which shall follow*"). It is the conviction of this author that the Church's mystery was "embedded" in many of these same Hebrew Scriptures, and that to adjudge such in no way compromises premillennial eschatology, but enhances the fundamentals thereof.

An example of this insistence is Culver's elaborate defense of Daniel's use of the terms "saints" or "people of the saints of the Most High" or "the holy people." Culver is convinced that his reading, as well as the exegesis of scores of Premillenarians, of these passages in Daniel, which deal with these terms, unequivocally place them in a purely Jewish context, and, consequently, must refer to Israelites of the future, and not the Church—plain and simple; whereas, it is the repeated insistence of Amillenarians and Postmillenarians to ascribe most of these passages to the Church, exclusively. This author hastens to add, however, that Culver's exposition of Daniel's writing to both Hebrews and Gentiles is masterful. He outlines the book via its Original languages in which it was written:

"The *first section*, then, is chapter one (and a very brief portion of chapter 2) written in Hebrew . . . The *second section*, chapters two to seven, forms a distinct section in subject matter. Every portion of the section primarily concerns a Gentile nation *per se* and its rulers, relations, and history. Israel *per se* does not once clearly enter the picture till the very last, and then in rather oblique and enigmatic references (Daniel 7:18, 21, 25, 27). As might be expected, the entire portion (addressing the Gentiles) is the common language of the Gentile nations of that area—Aramaic, the *koine* of the Middle East till long after the conquest of Alexander and the prevalence of his Greek . . . The *third section*, chapters eight through twelve, which constitute the final section of the book is another distinct portion in subject matter. It has primary reference to Israel's future, a future which is intimately connected with the destruction of all Gentile powers, and in conflict with those powers to the end.

This appropriately in the Hebrews' own language (from Daniel 8 on).”¹²

Thus, Culver's ultimate conclusion forms a basis of understanding the prophetic from a Gentile perspective from the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar until the end of the Seventieth Week of Daniel, i.e., the Time of Jacob's Trouble or the Great Tribulation Period (New Testament). Or, put another way, and because of the incredible descriptions given between Daniel 9:24 through 27, we must conclude that the Aramaic intimately involves, not only those events peculiar to the Gentiles—but intensely relative to Israel; for the prophetic events of Israel's entire Seventy Weeks are covered.

Included in this time frame are events surrounding the introduction and crucifixion (“cutting off”) of Messiah; the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus of Rome; the dispersion and even desolation/persecution of the Jewish people up until the conclusion of “the war”; the final seven-year time frame (i.e., Seventieth Week); the “coming prince” (i.e., Antichrist) who “confirms a covenant” (i.e., *lit.* “treaty”) with Israel in the Latter Days, and who shall break this treaty in the midst of the Seventieth Week, at which time shall be revealed the “***one who makes desolate***” (i.e., “The Abomination of Desolation” spoken of by both Jesus and Paul).

From Daniel 8, until its conclusion, Daniel's writing is in Hebrew. Now, the argument that the Aramaic, on the one hand, is appropriate in that it “was a message of judgment and final defeat to the Gentile world, of whom the chief representatives of the time were Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus” (quoting Culver); and that the immediate introduction of the book and its final five chapters are in Hebrew, because it afforded “a message of hope and deliverance for God's oppressed, but precious holy people, the Hebrews” bears a great deal of justification; however, and especially within the Aramaic portion, categorically precluding any and all prospects for a called out remnant from among the Gentiles, in order to enhance the Premillenarian understanding of the text, stretches the inductive reasoning to the max. The same argument can be submitted that since the Aramaic is used, there could be a message of hope and salvation for Gentiles—the entire prayer of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 surely connotes such (the entire chapter is written by Nebuchadnezzar)!

The purposeful ambiguity of the term “saints” or “the people of the saints of the Most High,” appears no less than five times (in Daniel)—primarily juxtaposed to that final conflict and ultimate manifestation of Gentile World Power in Antichrist. Indeed, I do not think it strange that thick adumbrative passages which reveal to us powerful allusions to “another witness” – other than

Israel – appears within the context of the Seventieth Week, even at its very conclusion, to wit:

“Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:5-7).

Why “two others” – and, obviously, there is an issue of “witness” which bespeaks of the TWO, and certainly their interest is mutual in the prophetic unfolding. The phraseology reappears in the Revelation (e.g., Chapter 11) of Jesus Christ by John the Apostle. We have repeatedly confirmed in this text that the Church’s prophetic destiny is inextricably bound to that of Israel’s, as both are brought together in Zechariah and in the Revelation to bear witness to God’s eternal plan and purpose before and against the Image that arose upon the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers; as the Holy City (whose 12 gates bear the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and whose 12 foundations, the 12 Apostles of the Lamb), the Two Lampstands and Two Olive Trees, the Two Witnesses, the Two Prophets, the Two Mountains of Brass, the Two Women with wings of a stork, and the Two Sons of Oil.

Specifically, the time frame used in Daniel 12:7 and 7:25 (“***time, times, and half a time***”) refer to the persecution of “***the saints of the Most High***” (in 7:25 in Aramaic and in 12:7 in Hebrew). In particular, Daniel 7:25 is saturated with Gentile understanding regarding the persecution under Antichrist and amplifies the fourth beast’s rise to power, the ten horns, and is absolutely clear regarding the persecution or “wearing out” of “***the saints of the Most High.***”

“***Time and times and half a time***” reappears in Revelation 12:14 where “***the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.***”

Let us consider the implications of this “Woman” of Revelation 12 in the second part of our Anthology of Israel and the Church and their simultaneous experience.