

Israel in the New Testament

Steve's PowerPoint notes from the Debate between Chris Date & Steve Gregg (Sept 2020)

I. Israel is a term used many ways in scripture, but the sense that is significant in terms of salvation or the fulfillment of covenantal promises is in reference to the faithful remnant of Israel, which the New Testament calls the Church;

2. Israel was a type of Christ—so many of the titles that once applied to Old Testament Israel are now applied to Christ;

3. Those who are in Christ are His Body, and share in His identity—so that the titles once applicable to Israel (including the term “Israel”) now apply to the Church, which is Christ's Body. Even the word Church—Gr. *ecclesia*—was a word that referred to Israel in the Greek Old Testament.

I. The meaning of Israel in the Old Testament

A. A man (individual)

Genesis 32:28

“He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”

B. A family (racial)

Genesis 34:7

“Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter...”

C. A large family of 12 tribes (racial)

Exodus 12:3

“Speak to all the congregation of Israel...”

Exodus 14:30

“Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians.”

D. A nation (covenantal)

Exodus 19:5-6

[Yahweh said to Moses] “if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

- A mixed multitude was at Sinai (Exodus 12:38)
“A mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.”
- A proselyte is like a native of the land (Exodus 12:48)
“But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land.”
- Covenant breakers cut off from Israel (Exodus 12:15)
“Whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”

E. A land (geographical)

1 Samuel 13:19

"Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel..."

1 Kings 1:3

"So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel..."

F. A nation distinct from Judah (political)

1 Kings 14:14

"Moreover, the Lord will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who will cut off the house of Jeroboam..."

G. A remnant (spiritual/covenantal)

Isaiah 46:3

"Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, And all the remnant of the house of Israel..."

II. Only the remnant have been given promises;

Psalm 50:5, 16

"Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" ...But to the wicked God says, "What right have you to tell of My statutes and to take My covenant in your mouth?"

Isaiah 10:21-22

A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return...

Joel 2:32

And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved...Among the remnant whom the Lord calls.

III. Israel's titles applied to Christ

A. The Servant of Yahweh

Isaiah 41:8

"But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend..."

Isaiah 42:1-4

"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles."

Matthew 12:15-18

And great multitudes followed [Jesus], and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

"Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!

I will put My Spirit upon Him,

And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

B. Yahweh's Firstborn

Exodus 4:22

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn."

Psalms 89:27

"Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth."

Hebrews 1:6

"But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

C. Abraham's Seed

Isaiah 41:8

"But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend."

Galatians 3:16

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ."

D. The Vine

Isaiah 5:1-2, 7

My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine...For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.

John 15:1

"I am the true vine..."

IV. Titles of Israel applied to those in Christ

1 Corinthians 12:12

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all

A. Abraham's seed

Galatians 3:27-29

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

B. Children of God

Hosea 1:10

And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.'

Isaiah 63:16

Doubtless You are our Father, Though Abraham was ignorant of us, And Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O Lord, are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name.

Isaiah 64:8

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.

Romans 9:8

That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

Galatians 4:28

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God

1 John 3:1-2

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God... Beloved, now we are children of God...

C. The Circumcision

Philippians 3:3

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh...

Romans 2:26, 28

Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law [see Rom.8:4], will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?... For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose ^[a]praise is not from men but from God.

D. Jews inwardly

Romans 2:28-29

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly... but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

E. A kingdom of priests and a holy nation

Exodus 19:6

"And you [Israel] shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..."

1 Peter 2:9

"But you [Christians] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..."

F. The olive tree—Israel of God

Jeremiah 11:16

"The Lord called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit. With the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken."

Romans 11:16-20

"if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith... "

G. Zion (Jerusalem)—meaning the holy city, and or its people

Isaiah 51:16

And say to Zion, 'You are My people.'

Isaiah 28:16

Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation...

Hebrews 12:22-23

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem... to the general assembly and church of the firstborn ...

H. Israel

Isaiah 44:5

One will say, 'I am the Lord's'; Another will call himself by the name of Jacob; Another will write with his hand, 'The Lord's,' And name himself by the name of Israel.

Isaiah 45:17

But Israel shall be saved by the Lord With an everlasting salvation...

Romans 11:25-26

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved..."

Galatians 6:16

"And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God."

Note: The word "and" (Gr. *kai*) in the above verse also can mean "even" (as it is rendered in some translations. The debate is whether *kai* means "and" (as if Paul has two groups in mind) or "even" (as if Paul is calling the first group—i.e., the Church— "the Israel of God"). The latter seems most natural, since a contrast between two groups would raise the following difficulties:

- 1) Paul would then be dividing between the "Israel of God" (i.e., the Jewish believers) and the Gentile believers—which would be reaffirming the very difference in racial identities among believers which he has spent so much of his epistle denying (e.g., Gal.3:26-29; 5:6; 6:15);
- 2) The implication would be that the Gentile believers "walk according to this rule" while the Jewish believers, a different faction in the Church, did not.

Summary:

1. Israel is a term with a variety of meanings in the scripture.
2. Titles that belonged to OT Israel are applied in the NT to Christ, of whom Israel was a type
3. Those in Christ are His body and share in His identity, and so also share in the titles that once belonged to national/ethnic Israel