

## Physical vs. Spiritual Israel

Sadly, many in the denominational world feel that having anything against the nation of **Israel** is akin to having something against **God**. In their minds the modern day **Jews** of the physical nation of **Israel** are still **God's** chosen people. But to the true "Israel of God" (*Gal 6:16*), the church, Palestine **should** stand as a strategic landmass where **Israel**, as nothing more than a nation unlike any other, is our ally in a critical position should war erupt in the Middle East. With this in mind, let's take a look at the difference between physical **Israel** and spiritual **Israel**. First, from where did the physical people of **Israel** originate?

Gen 32:24 And **Jacob** was left alone. And a **Man** wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. 25 When the **Man** saw that **He** did not prevail against **Jacob**, **He** touched his hip socket, and **Jacob's** hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with **Him**. 26 Then **He** said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." (*Jacob now leaning on the Person he has just wrestled with for support, it is now time for this Person to leave.*) But **Jacob** said, "I will not let **You** go unless **You** bless me." 27 And **He** said to him, "What is your name?" (*As though reminding Jacob of his name before bestowing on him a new name, thus authority.*) And he said, "**Jacob**." 28 Then **He** said, "Your name shall no longer be called **Jacob**, but **Israel**, for you have striven with **God** (*showing that the Person Jacob wrestled with was a manifestation of God.*) and with men (*his brother Esau at birth and when he stole his birthright.*), and have prevailed." 29 Then **Jacob** asked **Him**, "Please tell me **Your** name." But **He** said, "Why is it that you ask **My** name?" And there **He** blessed him. 30 So **Jacob** called the name of the place **Peniel** (*Heb 6439- face of God*), saying, "For I have seen **God** face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

- The reason **Jacob** could see "God face to face" in this case was because the **One** he wrestled with was not the **Father** but a pre-incarnate manifestation of **Christ**, the **Son** of the three **Persons** in the **Godhead**. **God** would appear to him a second time reminding him of his name change and the responsibility that would come with it.

Gen 35:9 **God** appeared to **Jacob** again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 And **God** said to him, "Your name is **Jacob**; no longer shall your name be called **Jacob**, but **Israel** shall be your name." So **He** called his name **Israel**. 11 And **God** said to him, "**I am God Almighty**: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. 12 The land that **I** gave to **Abraham** and **Isaac** **I** will give to you, and **I** will give the land to your offspring after you."

- **Jacob** had yet at that time to take on his new role as patriarch over the people **God** chose through providence. With such a name change meant a new status and responsibility. For **God** to give **Jacob** a name change was nothing new. Remember, **Abram's** name was changed to **Abraham** since he also had a purpose to fulfill in **God's** plan, as patriarch of the faithful, to save mankind from his sins.

Gen 17:5 No longer shall your name be called **Abram**, but your name shall be **Abraham**, for **I** have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 **I** will make you exceedingly fruitful, and **I** will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And **I** will establish **My** covenant between **Me** and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to** (*purpose*) **be God to you and to your offspring after you**.

- Long before the law was given to **Moses** on Mt. Sinai, a promise was made to **Abraham** that **God** would not go back on.

**Rom 4:13** For the promise to **Abraham** and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. **14** For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. **15** For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. **16** That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring--not only to the adherent of the law (*Jew*) but also to the one (*Gentile*) who shares the faith of **Abraham**, who is the father of us all (*Jew/Gentile*), **17** as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"--in the presence of the **God** in **Whom** he believed, **Who** gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

**Gal 3:7** Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of **Abraham**. **8** And the **Scripture**, foreseeing that **God** would justify the **Gentiles** by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to **Abraham**, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." **9** So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with **Abraham**, the man of faith.

- **Abraham** was given the good news that through his faith, the type others would imitate, the nations of the world would be blessed. The plan to do such had already been decided in eternity.

**1Pe 1:20** He (*Jesus*) was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times (*last dispensation*) for the sake of you **21** who through **Him** are believers in **God**, **Who** raised **Him** from the dead and gave **Him** glory, so that your faith and hope are in **God**.

- Before **God** "laid the foundation of the earth" (*Job 38:4*) **He**, through **His** all-knowing providential power, had **His** redemptive plan already set to save **His** creation from eternal punishment. Through **His** matchless love **He** gave man the choice between life and death, **Heaven** and **Hell**. Through this awe inspiring plan there was one role that had to be played by an entity **Who** shared **God's** essence, **His** character, **His** Deity. It had to be **His** Son. But what part would **His** Son play that would show man the **Father's** true love for **His** creation? What event in history would be remembered throughout the ages as the most important of all? And how would **His** Son be introduced in such a way as to be remembered as the most important **Person** to walk the face of the earth? It had to be both tragic and joyous if man was to remember it. It had to happen when the time was right.

**Gal 4:4** But when the fullness of time had come, **God** sent forth **His** Son, born of woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- **Daniel** prophesied "in the days of those kings the **God** of **Heaven** will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed" (*Dan 2:44*). The church, as this prophesied kingdom, was established during the rule of the **Roman** Caesars. The time was right for **God** to send **Jesus** according to the scheme of redemption to alter man's self-destructive course. **Rome** had built a system of highways for commerce and thus the news of the gospel was better able to travel throughout the then-known world, most of which **Rome** was ruling over. It was also a time when the **Roman** cross had come to perfection as a way to deter anyone from rebelling against the **Roman** government, which included its system of taxation. Any rebellion against **Rome** met with swift justice according to **Roman** law, including death as a means of deterring crimes against the state. Any who defied **Rome** and were not **Roman** citizens by birth or by purchasing their citizenship, suffered a long, excruciating death on the cross. Convicted as a criminal, "the crucifixion of **Jesus** is the central event in Christianity..."

*“Crucifixion was often performed to terrorize and dissuade its witnesses from perpetrating particularly heinous crimes. Victims were left on display after death as warnings to others who might attempt dissent. Crucifixion was usually intended to provide a death that was particularly slow, painful (hence the term excruciating, literally "out of crucifying"), gruesome, humiliating, and public, using whatever means were most expedient for that goal.” (...which was why Nicodemus had to request Jesus’ body for burial.)*

*“It was considered a most shameful and disgraceful way to die. Condemned Roman citizens were usually exempt from crucifixion except for major crimes against the state, such as high treason.” (Which was why Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded.)*

*“A cruel prelude was occasionally scourging, which would cause the condemned to lose a large amount of blood, and approach a state of shock. The convict then usually had to carry the horizontal beam to the place of execution, but not necessarily the whole cross. Crucifixion was typically carried out by specialized teams, consisting of a commanding centurion and four soldiers. When it was done in an established place of execution, the vertical beam could even be permanently embedded in the ground. The condemned was usually stripped naked—all the New Testament gospels describe soldiers gambling for the robes of Jesus. (Jesus was “relatively nude” [Gk.1131], He wasn’t striped naked.)*

*The 'nails' were tapered iron spikes approximately 5 to 7 inches long, with a square shaft 3/8 inch across.*

*Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, abolished crucifixion in the Roman Empire in 337 out of veneration [reverence] for Jesus Christ, its most famous victim.”*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Gal 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (*Deu 21:23*)-- 14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

- So when did “spiritual” Israel begin? We saw where physical Israel was already established in Gen 35 but only a remnant of them would be considered spiritual, those who had the faith of Abraham (*Rom 4:16*).

**Exo 19:3** while Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: 4 You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine; 6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

- Sadly, by the time we come to the New Testament timeframe, Israel was under Roman rule as punishment for their lack of worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” (*Jn 4:23*). And after Paul’s conversion he was sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles where he wrote to them concerning their attitude toward his fellow Israelites in the flesh.

Rom 9:3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

- “According to the flesh” had to do with the Law of Moses. Paul understood his dual status as both a physical and spiritual Jew. He only wished his fellow physical Jewish brethren would accept Jesus as the Christ and become his fellow brethren according to a spiritual understanding.

Rom 9:4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

- If Adam, according to Luke 3:38, “was the son of God” having been created by God, lost that Father/son relationship through his disobedience, only those in a covenant relationship with God could resume such a relationship by being “adopted” into it. God chose Israel, as His “firstborn” (Ex 4:22), through whom He would honor the covenant He made with Abraham and Isaac which was to continue the “seed promise” He made with Eve (Gen 3:15), to bring the “only begotten of the Father” (Jn 1:14) into the world. In Rev 1:5 Jesus then became the “firstborn of the dead” for the purpose of “bringing many sons to glory” (Heb 2:10).

Eph 1:5 He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, 6 to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved (in Christ).

- Our adoption today into spiritual Israel is only possible when Christ is our mediator. The adoption belonged to spiritual Israel all along, which made up a fraction of physical Israel. Concerning the “glory” Paul spoke of here, it had to do with God manifesting Himself through the cloud that appeared on Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:16) and over the tabernacle (Ex 40:34, Num 14:10) among other places. Such glory did not appear to the nations surrounding Israel. Only the Jews experienced and enjoyed God’s presence in this way. Concerning “the covenants”, there were different sacred pacts made with Israel throughout the O.T. from Genesis through Jeremiah. Especially Jer 31:31-34.

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their Husband, declares the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel (spiritual Israel) after those days (after the Mosaic dispensation), declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

- The writer of Hebrews explains this prophesy in Heb 8:8-12 as a fulfillment of Jeremiah 31. Physical Israel was a wife to God, as Jer 31:32 well states, just as spiritual Israel, the church, is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:32). The covenant God made in Jer 31 with the Jewish nation of Israel was to be continued with them as long as they remained in a spiritual relationship with Him, but now through His Son’s ultimate sacrifice which ended the O.T. sacrificial system. That system was under the Old Law that was delivered to Israel through the

Levitical priesthood. It was for them and no other so that through them God would then, as a “treasured possession among all peoples”, send the Messiah to save **all** of mankind.

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved **the world**, that He gave His only Son, that **whoever** believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

- And although the Old Law was given to Israel, the other nations of the world had favor with God as long as they followed His moral laws relevant to “their conscience” (*Rom 2:15*). But the one thing that pertained to the Jews only was the tabernacle system of worship and the O.T. priesthood. It was a shadow of something better that would later apply to every nation.

Heb 8:5 They (*tabernacle and O.T. law*) serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (*Physical O.T. mirrored spiritual N.T.*). For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." 6 But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

- The old system was a mere shadow of what Christ brought through “a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah” (*Heb 8:8*). Under the Mosaic law it was the high priest from the Aaronic lineage of the tribe of Levi that made intercession once each year within the Holy of Holies for the sins of the people (*Heb 9:7*). But under “the New Testament in [His] blood” (*Lk 22:20*), Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, “had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become [our] merciful and faithful High Priest in the service to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (*Heb 2:17*). Thus fulfilling all the promises, including the land promises of Palestine to the physical Jews, until the seed promise, “Who is Christ” (*Gal 3:16*), came.

Rom 9:5 To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ Who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

- The patriarchs here include all the Hebrew “fathers” who aided the nation of Israel in their status as God’s chosen among the nations. It was out of such a race of people that God willed His Messiah to enter into the world to save it.

Rom 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from (*p*) Israel belong to (*s*) Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

- By these statements the average Jew would have felt that God had forsaken His covenant with them thinking they were the only ones to receive such prominence. But in this passage Paul is explaining God’s ultimate intention has always been to save all people out of every nation who participate in Abraham’s conviction, which includes proof through works (*James 2:18*). Therefore, any Israelite who did not have Abraham’s level of faith would not receive the blessings his spiritual counterpart did.

Rom 4:16 That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to **all** his offspring--not only to the adherent of the law (*O.T. Jew*) but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, 17 as it is written, "I

have made you the father of **many nations**"--in the presence of the **God in Whom** he believed, **Who** gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

- Our being justified in **God's** sight begins with our faith/conviction in **Him**. That has been the case even before the nation of **Israel** was established or the **Mosaic** law even existed.

**Gal 3:17** This is what I mean: the law, which came **430** years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by **God**, so as to make the promise void. **18** For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but **God** gave it to **Abraham** by a promise.

- Every **Jew**, living under the law of **Moses**, that didn't have the faith of **Abraham**, was not considered justified by that system of rules. Just physically going through the motions did not satisfy the spiritual requirements to save him. Something else had to take the law's place that would fulfill such requirements.

**Rom 8:3** For **God** has done what the law, weakened by the flesh (*Gk.4561- human nature*), could not do. By sending **His** own **Son** in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, **He** condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh (*human nature*) but according to the **Spirit**. **5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the **Spirit** set their minds on the **things** of the **Spirit** (*H.S. breathed word of God*). **6** For to set the mind on the flesh is death (*our human nature won't save us*), but to set the mind on the **Spirit** is life and peace.

- What then is "the righteous requirement of the law" that is "to be fulfilled in us"?

**Mat 5:17** "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18** For truly, I say to you, until (*physical*) heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until **all** is accomplished.

- How did **Jesus** then do **His** part in the fulfilling the requirements under the law?

**Mat 3:13** Then **Jesus** came from **Galilee** to the **Jordan** to **John**, to be baptized by him. **14** **John** would have prevented **Him**, saying, "I need to be baptized by **You**, and do **You** come to me?" **15** But **Jesus** answered him, "**Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then he consented.

- **Jesus** first had to become one of us, **He** had to become "the **Son of Man**".

**Mat 17:10** And the disciples asked **Him**, "Then why do the scribes say that first **Elijah** must come?" **11** He answered, "**Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.** **12** But I tell you that **Elijah** (*John the immerser*) has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the **Son of Man** will certainly suffer at their hands."

- As **Jesus** stated here, **He** had to suffer and become the final sacrifice that **God** would be pleased with to save **all** of man. And since it took animal sacrifices to satisfy what the **Mosaic** law required for the atonement of sins, as the ultimate sacrifice, **Jesus** fulfilled the law's "legal demands" by "nailing it to [**His**] cross" (*Col 2:14*) through "**His** own blood" (*Act 20:28*). So how then do **we** fulfill the requirements of the **O.T.** law since we were never under it?

Mat 22:35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question to test Him. 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

- We fulfill the righteousness of the law when we love and obey God and want what's best for our fellow man, as God does, "that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet 3:9). Since we understand how the physical nation of Israel, without submitting to the authority of Christ, no longer carries the status of God's chosen people, how are we to think of them today with the understanding that Christians are the true "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16)?

Rom 11:24 For if you (*Gentile Christians*) were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree (*spiritual Israel*), how much more will these, the natural branches (*Jews*), be grafted back into their own olive tree.

- If the Jewish nation was given the first opportunity to accept Jesus as their promised Messiah, they could naturally be grafted into the "spiritual" vine they would have been separated from.

Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first** and also to the Greek.

- The gospel was first offered to the Jews. An Israelite became an Israelite by being born into the nation of Israel. They had to be "reborn" through obedience to the gospel in order to be "re-grafted" into the "spiritual" vine they were once part of.

Joh 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- Paul spoke of baptism as "the washing (*immersion for remission*) of regeneration (*new birth*) and a renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The first means nothing without the second in order to make the process complete. Renewal has to do with the Holy Spirit's influence on the mindset of the one who has now gone through the rebirth process.

*"It would be properly applied to such a change as the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, making one a new man; that is, a man new, so far as religion is concerned – new in his views, feelings, desires, hopes, plans, and purposes. He is so far different from what he was before, that it may be said he enters on a new life..."*

Albert Barnes

Eph 4:22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

- Paul then explains to his Gentile, Christian audience how they are not to be so boastful of their own newfound status as children of God through Christ at the expense of their Jewish neighbors who have not been reconnected yet to the vine from which they were severed. Their stubbornness was necessary until the Gentiles were added. Once the Gentiles became grafted into spiritual Israel, the scheme of redemption became complete.

Rom 11:25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel (*faithful Christians from every nation*) will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; 27 "and this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins."

- At this point there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile in the true "Israel of God", the church, the "ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" who are made "a kingdom and priests to our God, and [we] shall reign on the earth" (*Rev 5:9-10*).

Mat 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

- As the "meek" that Jesus said are so "blessed", Christians now reign as a royal priesthood with Christ (*1 Cor 15:25*) in a figurative thousand year respite (*Rev 20:6*) from global persecution. But things are changing and according to Rev 20, at the end of this rest will come the judgment. Satan will lose his final battle against good Jesus returns. To escape the "second death" you need to share "in the first resurrection" which is in reference to baptism.

Rom 6:3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

- Resurrection has to do with a "reanimation", a coming back from the dead to live a new life. Christians were once dead in our sins but now have been made alive through being risen with Christ in baptism, our present, first resurrection that imitates His.

Rom 6:11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive (*spiritual resurrection*) to God in Christ Jesus.

- If you wish to become grafted into spiritual Israel, from whatever background matters not, we would like to help you.

Charli Yana  
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