

Dichotomy or Continuity Between the Present and Past Dispensations

Response to Rebuttal

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Dispensationalism's View of Israel

Dr. Couch commented that the early dispensationalists had a love for the Jewish people, which may have been a factor in the development of dispensationalism. Certainly, one must admit that Darby's system was a vast improvement over the Catholic and Reformed view. Amillennialism and replacement theology denied Israel all of its covenants and promises, and even its future as a nation. Darby's dispensationalism admitted that all of the covenants and promises in the Old Testament would be fulfilled literally in the nation of Israel. As a progressive dispensationalist, I would agree completely.

Amillennialism's primary focus was a "heavenly destiny" for the Church. This concept was not based on literal promises in the Bible regarding the destiny of the Church. It was based on the allegorical interpretation of Old Testament promises, wrested away from the Jews, and applied spiritually to the Church. Nothing in either Testament indicates a heavenly destiny for the Church, when taken literally. I realize I have said a mouthful in that statement. But, I hope, as the debate progresses, to prove my assertion.

While Darby deserves a great deal of credit for returning to the literal understanding of Old Testament prophecy, and his system's restoring Israel her covenants and promises, he failed to see that the heavenly destiny concept of the amillennialists was just as flawed and baseless as the idea that the Church replaced Israel. Rather than reevaluating the real premise of amillennialism, Darby settled for a literal hermeneutic where Israel was concerned, and accepted an allegorical one where the Church is concerned. Darby wrote:

"First, in prophecy, when the Jewish church or nation (exclusive of the Gentile parenthesis in their history) is concerned, i.e., when the address is directly to the Jews, there we may look for a plain and direct testimony, because earthly things were the Jews' proper portion." "And on the contrary, where the address is to the Gentiles...there we may look for symbol, because earthly things were not their portion... When therefore facts are addressed to the Jewish church as a subsisting body ... I look for a plain, common-sense, literal statement.... On the other hand, as the church was a system of grace and heavenly hopes...it is...symbolized by analogous agencies." (MacPherson, Dave, The Rapture Plot, pp. 101-102 & Crutchfield, Larry, The Origins of Dispensationalism, pp. 149-51).

Darby's system was a hybrid formed from the "heavenly destiny" ideas of amillennialism (which he continued to apply to the Church), and the literal earthly Kingdom - chiliasm of the early Church Fathers - for Israel. Yes, Darbyism gives Israel back her ancient hope. That is certainly progress in the right direction. But, it is hardly fair, in my opinion, to portray Darbyism as being wholly loving to the Jews, when in fact his system made them second-class citizens, an "earthly people," while the Church is supposed to be a "heavenly people." Why is this not "apartheid of the elect?" Why would segregating the people of God into "earthly" and "heavenly" races be any less repulsive to Jews than segregation in the south was to blacks in the 1950s?

As a progressive dispensationalist, I affirm that Israel is the head, and not the tail. Gentile believers are not destined for some "heavenly" hope, apart from the Kingdom where Israel will be the head of the nations. Israel is the centerpiece of God's plan. She was never set aside so that God could do a new thing with the Gentiles.

The Early Church

Dr. Couch would rather not go into the views of the early Church in our discussion. Personally I believe this is a fruitful area of exploration, particularly since I believe I can demonstrate that unique features of progressive dispensationalism have discernable precedent in the views of the orthodox pre-millennial Christians of the first two centuries. This is particularly apparent when examining their views of the destiny and inheritance of the Church, which they saw as a Millennial hope, not a heavenly hope as the Gnostics and the amillennialists after them. Simply dismissing the early Church's testimony with the charge that they made mistakes, is insufficient. Everyone makes mistakes. We can find many mistakes among Christian writers from every generation, including modern dispensationalists. What is important, in my view, is looking at the consensus opinions of these ancient pre-millennialists, who had direct linkage to Apostolic oral tradition. Contiguous oral tradition may not mean much today, being two millennia removed from the Apostles. But, for those only one or two generations removed, oral tradition carried a great deal of weight. If the evidence shows (as I believe it does) that the early orthodox Church held a view very close to "progressive dispensationalism," if this view is a far cry from Apostolic teaching, that would imply the Apostles were miserable failures in transmitting sound doctrine to the next generation of Christians.

On the "Mystery"

Dr. Couch writes, *"Warner seems to say that some dispensationalists have the "mystery" view of the church that is but a "leftover" from Gnosticism. It is the apostle Paul that speaks of the "mystery" of the church in the sense that the truth of it was not revealed in the Old Testament. He did not mean spooky or mysterious in the Gnostic way. "*

My point was that creating a dichotomy between the Old and New Testament programs is shared by both Gnostics and traditional dispensationalists. That in and of itself does not make it wrong. However, the orthodox Fathers fought hard against the "dichotomy"

approach in their refutations of Gnosticism, by appealing to the "continuity" of a single program in both Testaments, and using a literal hermeneutic (which is what progressive dispensationalists seek to do). The issue of continuity vs. dichotomy (the main point of this discussion) was clearly an issue in the early Church's struggle against heresies. And the good guys (orthodox - using literal interpretation) held firmly to the "continuity" approach, while the mystics (Gnostics - using allegorical interpretation) held to the "dichotomy" approach. One would think modern dispensationalists would want to side with the literalists consistently. My personal opinion is that progressive dispensationalists (particularly with a post-trib eschatology) can be more consistent with the literal hermeneutic than traditional dispensationalists. But, that remains to be demonstrated.

Dr. Couch asserts that the term "mystery" implies something "unrevealed in the Old Testament." If he means the mystery was contained in the Old Testament but not understood, then I agree. But, I suspect he means wholly unknown and absent from the Old Testament Scriptures. If so, I must strongly disagree. Paul plainly wrote that the mystery was being made known in this dispensation through the "Scriptures of the prophets" (Rom. 16:25-26) . This could hardly be possible if the "mystery" was not contained in those Scriptures. The "mystery" was indeed contained in the prophecies to Israel, albeit the meaning was hidden. It was made known by "revelation." But, "revelation" was regarding its meaning, and how and where it was hidden in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The word "mystery" does not necessarily mean completely unknown. The same Greek word is used in Revelation 17:7. After seeing the vision of the woman riding the beast, an angel told Daniel that he would reveal to him the "mystery" of the woman. Clearly, the only thing mysterious to John was the meaning. The imagery itself was known to John, and had already been observed. Likewise, in 1 Cor. 15, Paul told the Corinthians "*behold I show you a mystery.*" He went on to tell them that not all believers will die, and those who do will be raised incorruptible. Was this "mystery" completely absent from earlier revelation? No. Jesus mentioned it to Martha in John 11:25-26. "*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*" (the resurrection) "*And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*" (those who survive until the rapture). It was simply not understood, so Paul explained this "mystery" to his readers. Jesus illustrated this concept clearly in the following verses.

Matt 13:10-11

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

(KJV)

The crowds heard the parables of Jesus. But they were enigmas to them. They could not understand because Jesus did not explain the meaning to the crowds, only to His disciples (Mark 4:34). Likewise, the topic of Jesus' parables was the "Kingdom of

Heaven," which traditional dispensationalists usually agree is the Millennial Kingdom. Certainly, this is found in the Old Testament, particularly in Daniel and Isaiah. A "mystery" can be something known, and even foretold, but purposely disguised so it would not be understood prematurely, or by those not privy to the meaning.

Jesus fully revealed the "mystery" to His disciples on the Sunday of His resurrection. On the road to Emmaus, the two disciples' hearts burned within them while *"beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself"* (Luke 24:27). Later the same day Jesus appeared to the rest of the disciples, *"And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures"* (Luke 24:45). Jesus said, *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (vs. 44) and "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things" (vss. 46-48).* Because of this (and the empowering of the Holy Spirit), Peter was transformed from an ignorant disciple to a great expositor of the Old Testament Scriptures. Just look at His sermon in Acts 2. He cited the Psalms several times, and expounded on precisely how the mystery was hidden in David's prophecies.

Paul was not privy to Jesus' expositional teaching that day, and so the "mystery" was revealed to him separately at a later date. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *"by revelation he made known unto me the mystery"* (Eph. 3:3), he was not claiming unique knowledge of the mystery. Rather, he was explaining how he came to have knowledge of the mystery without being personally instructed by Jesus, *"by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"* (vs. 4).

Dr. Couch writes, *"Paul speaks of several "mysteries" but specifically about the mystery of the church he writes:"* But, where is the "mystery of the Church" in Scripture? He then quotes Eph. 1:9, Eph. 3:2-9, 5:32, 6:19, Col. 1:26,27, 2:2. But, it is apparent from his argument that he is assuming a definition of the "Church" which he has not proven from Scripture. To Dr. Couch, the "Church" appears to be an entity totally distinct from God's program for Israel, and for which the disciples were trained to be missionaries to all the nations. But, that is his presupposition, not a fact. If we assume the progressive dispensationalist model for the Church (the believing Jewish remnant and the believing remnants of the Gentile nations), then all of the verses he cited fit nicely with progressive dispensationalism. They all also fit with our concept of the "mystery" being something contained in the Old Testament Prophets as an enigma, but revealed by Jesus, the Apostles, and lastly by Paul to the Gentiles.

Dr. Couch summarizes as follows:

"Putting together these passages with their contexts, the mystery is:

- (1) "the body of Christ" (believers placed into the spiritual body of Christ)*
- (2) Christ spiritually dwelling in believers;*
- (3) and, a future hope of glory.*

Thus, the dispensation of the church is extremely dramatic, extraordinary, profound,

and dynamic! The fact of the church is not in the Old Testament. It was a hidden dispensation!"

It appears to me that Dr. Couch is assuming what he is trying to prove. I agree that some of the items mentioned are dramatic, extraordinary, profound, and dynamic. But so is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. So is Israel's new covenant. None of these passages suggest that the Church is something completely severed from any connection with Old Testament prophecy given to Israel. Dr. Couch is simply assuming a dichotomy where none exists. He has yet to support his presupposition from a literal reading of any text.

The "body of Christ" is not exclusive to Gentiles. Nor are Jewish believers in Jesus cut off from the literal fulfillment of their own covenants and promises. Quite the contrary. The Jewish believers in Jesus retain their connection to the Old Testament promises, and the Gentiles are "brought nigh" to the "commonwealth of Israel" and the "covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:11-14). Traditional dispensationalists have this reversed, with the Jewish believers being cut off from the "commonwealth of Israel" and removed from the "covenants and promises," only to be joined to some alleged Gentile "Church!" How does Dr. Couch get from the "mystery" hidden in *"the Scriptures of the prophets"* to the Church being a hidden dispensation? That is a giant leap of logic and wholly unproven and unjustified by the texts he has presented.

The "mystery" was the whole redemption plan, contained in the Old Testament in the form of an enigma. It involved Christ's first advent and His crucifixion for the sins of the world. It included the salvation of the Gentiles, and their inclusion in the inheritance through one of Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16).

While prophecies of Christ's second coming and His Kingdom are quite plain in the Old Testament, and understood using the grammatical/historical approach, the prophecies of the atonement are cloaked in cryptic language. For example, Psalm 22 is a prophecy of Christ. Yet, it does not follow the normal rules of grammar. David wrote in the first person and in the past tense, as though these were things he personally experienced. Other prophetic Psalms display the same thing. Peter, in his first and second sermons recorded in Acts, gave his exposition of some of these Psalms, showing that even though David wrote in the first person and past tense, He was speaking of Christ. This is one of the grammatical devices for the mystery's being hidden in the *"Scriptures of the prophets."* That the "mystery" concerned Jesus' crucifixion, is stated plainly by Paul, including the reason these things were hidden and not openly revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

1 Cor 2:7-8

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

(NKJ)

The mystery was hidden, because it was necessary so the crucifixion could occur. Had God revealed His redemption plan clearly in the Old Testament, Satan would not have caused Judas to betray Jesus, or encouraged the Jewish leadership to plan His execution. Satan was defeated at the cross. Had Satan known the "mystery," he never would have caused the Jews to kill their Messiah. Satan did not understand the atonement, nor did he understand that Jesus never intended to set up His Kingdom at His first coming. Through the mystery, God turned the tables on Satan, and the rebellious Jewish leadership. In Satan's attempt to defeat the Jewish Messiah, he eventually found himself a pawn in the whole scheme. Ditto for the rebellious Jewish leadership (Acts 2:23).

Not only does the "mystery" include the atonement (of which the Old Testament sacrifices were merely illustrations), but also the gathering together of all saints in one body, through the atonement of Christ. This includes both Old Testament saints (those in heaven in the first century) and New Testament saints (those on earth in the first century).

Eph 1:9-10

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him.

(NKJ)

Eph 3:14-15

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (present tense)

(NKJ)

The gathering of the Old Testament saints into Jesus' Church is made possible by the death of Christ, and the new covenant. The new covenant and atonement was retroactively applied to the Old Testament saints (Heb. 9:15), so that they would not be made perfect apart from us (Heb. 11:39,40). The mystery also includes the joining of the Gentile believers with the Jewish remnant who received Israel's new covenant, as one body of the redeemed (Eph. 3:6). There is nothing in any of these passages to suggest that the "mystery" concerns a parenthetical "Church age" and a separate (heavenly) people of God. All that is implied by the term "mystery" is that something formerly not understood is now uncovered. The "mystery" is not the Church, nor a "Church age" (as defined by traditional dispensationalists). It is a body of truth formerly hidden in the "Scriptures of the prophets" but now made known "for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:25-26).

On Acts 2 and Joel 2:28

While I agree with Dr. Couch that the new covenant was not completely fulfilled, I do not agree that Acts 2 is the launching of the New Covenant. According to Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24, the new covenant was inaugurated by Christ's shed blood, some 7 weeks before Pentecost. Nothing in the prophecy of Joel 2 or Peter's citing it suggests any

direct connection to the new covenant. Joel 2:28 was a distinct prophecy made to Israel. It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost with Jewish believers in Jesus. All of the people affected were Jews. But it is extraordinarily difficult to attempt to maintain a dichotomy between a prophecy to Israel and its plain fulfillment in the New Testament, notwithstanding Dr. Couch's attempt to have his cake and eat it too. It is impossible to maintain the alleged parenthetical "Church age" totally apart from prophecy related to Israel, and yet acknowledge the plain literal language of the New Testament.

I would also like to point out that Dr. Couch's explanation of the new covenant's being "launched" but not "fulfilled" sounds strikingly similar to the "already not yet" approach for which progressive dispensationalists are chastised by traditional dispensationalists. At least all we mean by this expression is the new covenant is partially fulfilled in the remnant of Israel, but will be completely fulfilled when "all Israel" is saved at the second coming. Dr. Couch has the Gentiles receiving spiritual benefits from a covenant that is not yet in place with the proper party. While the new covenant was prophesied specifically for Israel, Dr. Couch seems willing to set Israel apart from her own covenant, yet admit that the spiritual blessings of this covenant flow to the Church. One wonders how any blessings can flow from a covenant that has not yet been cut between the parties involved! How can the overflow to the Church occur before the cup is full? This seems analogous to a wedding and reception without the groom being present for either!

On Hebrews 8

The fact is, the New Testament portrays the new covenant as being fully inaugurated with Israel (although not all of Israel receives its blessings, yet). This covenant was made between two parties, Jesus Christ and Israel. How? At the Last Supper, Jesus said to His disciples, "*This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many*" (Mark 14:24). Jesus cut the covenant with His twelve Jewish disciples that night, and spilled his blood the following day.

Heb 8:6-7

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

(NKJ)

The writer then proceeds to quote all of Jer. 31:31-34. The quote of Jeremiah plainly says the new covenant was to be made with Israel and was to replace the Mosaic covenant with Israel. In the above verses, the writer says this (new) covenant was (past tense) established on better promises. What promises could he be referring to other than those in the Old Testament associated with Israel's new covenant? He further states in verse 13, "*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*" The mechanism for the old covenant with Israel becoming obsolete was the establishment of the new covenant with Israel! Since the first covenant with Israel has been (past tense)

made obsolete, the new covenant with Israel has been (past tense) established with Israel.

The "already not yet" aspect is NOT that the Church benefits from the new covenant "already" but Israel does "not yet," as Dr. Couch seems to imply. Rather, part of the nation of Israel (the disciples and all Messianic believers) "already" enjoy the new covenant fully right now, but the nation as a whole does "not yet" partake in its blessings. The eventual goal of the new covenant is that Israel *"will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them"* (Jer. 31:34). Paul explains this concept fully in the Olive Tree parable, and says that after the times of the Gentiles, *"all Israel will be saved"* in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Likewise, Gentiles who believe the Gospel are "brought nigh" to the "commonwealth of Israel," and can share in the spiritual benefits of the "covenants and promises" (Eph. 2:12-13). All of the redeemed together become the "one new man" that Paul speaks of in vs. 15. The Jewish believers formerly under the Law, and the Gentiles who were formerly separated by the wall of partition, collectively become a "new man" because of the "new" covenant, which provides for eternal salvation through the shed blood of Christ and the joining of all of the redeemed in a single body. Paul did not say, "as opposed to the two (or distinct from the two) he makes one new man." Rather, he said, "of the two he makes one." This shows a clear continuity, not a dichotomy. It is accomplished by the removal of former obstacles to unity, the Law, by the coming of the new covenant (which makes the old one obsolete).

On Acts 3

Dr. Couch thinks I missed the fact that Peter's second sermon was delivered to Jews. Quite the contrary. My point depends on it. Peter, as a Jew who was part of believing Israel, had received the new covenant inaugurated by Christ on the cross. In fact, he was one of those with whom Jesus personally established the new covenant at the Last Supper. In preaching to his fellow Jews, Peter said *"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth [Gentiles] be blessed. Unto you first [Jews] God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."* (vss. 25-26). Peter's point was that the blessings of the new covenant promised through Abraham, were here! The promised blessings would eventually go to "all kindreds" (Gentiles from every nation). However, FIRST, the Jews to whom Peter was addressing were given the opportunity to partake of the Jewish covenants by faith in Jesus Christ. It was only fitting that those who were the direct descendants of Abraham should FIRST be given the benefits of the blessings. The implication was, the Gentiles were about to partake of the blessings. This corresponds with Paul's statements that the Gospel is *"to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16, 2:9,10). It also corresponds to Paul's practice, of entering the synagogues first in every town he visited, and only after the Jews rejected the Gospel did he turn to the Gentiles of that city.

Dr. Couch seems to be implying that Peter's sermon was not for the "Church." If not, then we need to establish exactly WHEN and HOW the "Church" came about in Dr. Couch's dispensational view. Were these Jewish converts (and those saved on Pentecost) part of the "Church" or "Israel" in Dr. Couch's view? This is certainly post-Pentecost! Does Dr. Couch think the Church began later? Through Paul alone perhaps? We'll have to hear from him on this point before I can continue. But, unless he is prepared to say that two radically different dispensations ran simultaneously through the book of Acts (one for Israel and one for the Church), sever the teachings of Jesus from the Church, sever the Great Commission from the Church, and even sever the 11 Apostles from the Church, it seems to me he is forced to admit that Peter was preaching Church doctrine, as he learned it from Jesus Himself! I don't see how Dr. Couch can accommodate these concepts without blurring the distinction between Israel and the Church.

Dr. Couch writes, *"We traditional dispensationalists are not afraid to stick with the Bible and make distinctions when the Bible does, and avoid them when the Bible avoids them!"* But, where has he drawn his distinctions from the Bible (literally interpreted) that he alleges? It is one thing to claim the high ground, it is quite another to demonstrate it with sound exegesis of specific passages. I have yet to see any specific passages that show the alleged dichotomy in programs between Israel and the Church. It is merely assumed by dispensationalists, based on a faulty understanding of the "mystery" and the purpose of the 70 weeks.

On Gal. 4

I agree with all of Dr. Couch's comments on this passage, including those of the New Jerusalem. But I think he has missed my point entirely. My point was that Paul speaks of the "two covenants" (meaning the Mosaic covenant - which he compares to the earthly Jerusalem, and the new covenant - which he compares to the New Jerusalem). Paul himself said these things are an allegory. He was not saying that the New Jerusalem is not a literal city. He was saying that he was using the earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem as an allegory to illustrate his point about the "two covenants." He also used Sarah's son, Isaac, and Hagar's son, Ishmael, as symbolic of unbelieving Israel (Ishmael) and believers (Isaac). He says, *"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free"* (vss. 28-31). Paul was writing to the Church which consisted of both believing Jews and Gentiles. He contrasted the Church to the unbelieving part of Israel, who refused the new covenant and chose instead to hold on to Moses and the Law. In doing so, Paul directly equated the Church with the new covenant and unbelieving Israel with the old covenant. That means the new covenant is directly related to the Church and finds its fulfillment in the Church! Progressive dispensationalism can accommodate this idea without any damage to the distinction between the terms "Israel" and "Church." Normative dispensationalists cannot. The reason is that our definition of the Church permits Israel's covenants and promises flowing directly into the Church via the believing Jewish remnant, with the

blessings spilling over to the believing Gentiles also in the Church. Normative dispensationalists must try to invent ways of having the blessings of the Jewish covenants without actual fulfillment. And benefiting now in the blessings of a covenant that has not yet been cut between the two parties for which it was intended!

Dispensationalists cannot have it both ways. Either the new covenant promised to Israel has been inaugurated between God and Israel, and the Gentiles partake of the overflow. Or else, if the Church is completely severed from God's program for Israel, we cannot partake in a covenant that is not for us, and has not yet been cut between the two parties involved (God and Israel). The mere fact that many dispensationalists have taken up the extremely awkward idea of two new covenants illustrates the extreme difficulty the new covenant puts on traditional dispensationalism. The new covenant is truly the straw that will break the camel's back.

Dr. Couch writes: *"But it is important to be reminded the church is not the key millennial people. The Jewish people, in a real national and locative sense (in the Holy Land) will have their spiritual eyes opened by the Holy Spirit, and will be blessed by the New Covenant as Jeremiah says (Jer. 31)."*

The Millennium is characterized by the Kingdom of God ruling physically on the earth, with Christ ruling in person from Jerusalem. That Jeremiah 31 or any other Old Testament passage mentions Israel in relationship to the Kingdom of God does not prove or even remotely suggest that the Church as a whole is any less involved in that Kingdom. Such an argument does not follow logically. One does not exclude the other. Neither are the ideas of believing Jews and also believing Gentiles inheriting the Kingdom mutually exclusive. The earth is a big place. And Israel's inheriting a certain portion of land by tribe still leaves a lot of land for the Gentile believers' inheritance. Dr. Couch is again assuming what he is trying to prove.

In fact, the continuity of the phrase "Kingdom of God" used throughout the Gospels as well as the Epistles indicates a common hope in the Kingdom for both national (believing) Israel and believing Gentiles. I would like to address this topic in more detail in another round in this debate. But, let me just mention a couple of passages for comparison. Speaking to the Jews, Jesus said this:

Luke 13:24-30

24 "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

25 "When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,'

26 "then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.'

27 "But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'

28 "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.

29 *"They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.*

30 *"And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last."*
(NKJ)

Where is this dichotomy between the Gentile saints of the "Church" and Israel? Nowhere! Jesus was speaking of His coming Kingdom, the one predicted by Daniel and the other prophets, the one the Jews hoped to attain, when Christ will sit on the throne of David (cf. Isa. 9:7 & Luke 1:23). Yet, Jesus told these unbelieving Jews their portion will be hell, and they watch the Gentiles come from the ends of the earth, and sit down with the Jewish Patriarchs in the Kingdom! Likewise, Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper, that they would eat at His table in His Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Luke 22:28-30). Was Jesus unaware of the alleged dispensational dichotomy between Israel and a Gentile Church? Are the Apostles not the elders of the Church? What are they doing in the Millennial Kingdom judging the 12 tribes of Israel? What are they doing at the Messiah's table? Jesus also, when instituting the "Lord's Supper" told these same men that He would not partake again of the wine until they do so together in His Kingdom (Matt. 26:29). As the Church went out with the Great Commission, their hope was the Kingdom of God, exactly as prophesied for Israel in the Old Testament. The Epistles nowhere introduce a "heavenly hope" in contrast to the hope proclaimed by the prophets and by Jesus in the Gospels. In fact, the Epistles continue to use precisely the same terminology for the hope of the Church. Paul says the reason we receive incorruptible bodies, is because *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 15:50). He says the wicked will *"not inherit the Kingdom of God"* (Gal. 5:21). Paul mentioned his *"fellowworkers unto the Kingdom of God"* (Col. 4:11). Paul told the Thessalonians that they were suffering persecution for the sake of the *"Kingdom of God"* (2 Thess. 1:5). He told Timothy that if we suffer for Christ, *"we shall also reign with him"* (2 Tim. 2:12). Peter said that if we add to our faith, we would have an *"abundant entrance"* into Christ's Kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11). James said to the Jewish Church that God has chosen the poor, who are rich in faith, as *"heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him"* (James 2:5). In Revelation, Jesus promised the overcomers of the church of Thyatira, that He would give them *"power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father"* (Rev. 2:26,27). And finally, to the overcomers of the church of Laodicea, Jesus promised they could *"sit with me in my throne"* (Rev 3:21).

In contrast to all these Millennial promises to the Church, where is a similar promise of a heavenly hope? Nowhere!

On Acts 26

Dr. Couch acknowledges that Paul taught Old Testament truths to the churches regarding Christ's death, resurrection, and the salvation of the Gentiles. Good. We agree there. However, Paul plainly said that ALL of his past teaching among the Gentiles "unto this day" was limited to ONLY what Moses and the Prophets said would come.

Acts 26:22-23

22 "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come--

23 "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

(NKJ)

That is an exclusive statement. It excludes the dispensational idea of a "mystery" program for the Church apart from God's general plan contained in Old Testament prophecy. *"To this day... saying no other things"* includes all of Paul's past missionary activity, and all of his Epistles already written by AD58. Paul said plainly that everything he had previously taught (to the churches) was contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, and was the "hope of Israel." That means Paul did not teach normative dispensationalism's "mystery program" or "parenthetical Church age." He taught the same thing Old Testament prophecy teaches, nothing more. He merely expounded the meaning of certain passages for which he had personally been given "revelation" by Jesus. And this is actually easily spotted in Paul's writings. He was constantly citing Old Testament prophecy to buttress his arguments about Church doctrine. This is particularly apparent in Romans. Also, in verse 23, Paul referred to Old Testament prophecy related to the salvation of the Gentiles, and applied it to His ministry! Therefore, the Gentiles saved under Paul's ministry fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the salvation of the Gentiles. Even the Gentile part of the Church is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

On Romans 11

Dr. Couch seems to have missed my point of "continuity." I did not mean to imply that there was any continuity where the Gentiles are concerned. Obviously, being removed from a wild olive tree and grafted into the good olive tree is the antithesis of continuity. I was referring to the Jews who lived before and after Christ. In a normative dispensational model, saved Jews living in this dispensation would belong to a different program than Jews living prior to Christ, whose Jewish hope was the Millennial Kingdom. My point is, the Olive Tree parable implies that there were branches already in the Olive Tree before Christ. I think Dr. Couch would agree this parable teaches that when the majority of Israel rejected Christ, they were broken off from the Olive Tree. That Paul says "some" of the branches were broken off, implies that others were not broken off, but remained in the Olive Tree both before and after Israel rejected Christ. These are the Jews who believed on Jesus and received the new covenant. The "continuity" I was referring to is the continuity of program for these Jews both before and after Christ. The Jews before Christ are in the same olive tree as the saved Jews after Christ. Yet, traditional dispensationalism requires a wedge being driven into the olive tree in order to sustain their "dichotomy" between programs.

On Ephesians 2

Dr. Couch denies that Paul meant Gentiles were "made near" to the "commonwealth of Israel" and the "covenants of promise." But I believe his exegesis of this passage is faulty. The clause "made near" implies an antecedent, and begs the question, "made near to what?" The proper antecedent could be "God" in verse 12, because Paul says Gentiles were formerly "without God." But, Paul has just listed four things that were formerly true of the Gentiles in this verse. And all four indicate separation (the antithesis of "made near") from something.

Gentiles were formerly:

1. without Christ
2. aliens from the commonwealth of Israel
3. strangers from the covenants of promise
4. without God in the world:

In contrast to this, Paul says that by being "in Christ Jesus" (the cause), Gentiles who were formerly "far off" are "made near" by the blood of Christ (the result). It would be utterly redundant for Paul to be saying that now by being "in Christ" we are made near to "Christ." What Paul was saying is that by now having #1 above cancelled (becoming "in Christ" after formerly being "without Christ") we are "made near" to the other three things listed in this verse 12. By cancelling #1, we cancel all 4. Therefore, by our now being "in Christ" we are "made near" to the "commonwealth of Israel," the "covenants of promise," and to God Himself.

Notice, I did not say we become part of Israel. "Made near" is not the same as "made into." Gentiles do not become Jews. The natural seed of Abraham (Israel) is always distinguished in Scripture from the Church at large. "Israel" includes all the natural seed (both saved and lost) but the "Church" includes ONLY the saved of Israel and the saved of the Gentile nations. What Paul is driving at here is that the Gentile believers have been "made near" to all the promises of Israel. By being "near" we enjoy the overflow of all the spiritual benefits of Israel as a whole. This is precisely the same thought Paul had in mind in Acts 26 in his defense before Agrippa. He recounted Jesus' commission to him, sending him to the Gentiles so they could have "*an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me*" (Acts 26:18). Again, the Gentiles are being added to the Jewish Church. And the Jewish Church maintained its continuity with the Old Testament "covenants and promises."

That the Gentiles are "made nigh" and receive "an inheritance among" the Jewish Church, does not necessarily mean we share specific promises to the individual 12 tribes that make up the whole. Israel is a nation, and will always be a nation. It is not a spiritual entity, but an ethnic one. The Church is a spiritual entity consisting of the believing remnants of all the nations, including Israel. The Jews were first in the Church, in fulfillment of her covenants and promises. Jesus came to the Jewish nation. Jesus called out of the nation a group of disciples. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was on the believing remnant of Israel. Only later were Gentiles included among the saints.

When Paul speaks of the middle wall of partition being broken down, he means the thing that divided Jew from Gentile in the past has been removed in Christ. God has made of the two, one new man. He did not say He made something completely separate from what was formerly Jew and Gentile. He said that out of the two, He made one, by removing the obstacle, the Law. The unity we share, both Jew and Gentile, is based on our common redemption through the blood of Christ. ALL saints share this common bond, and are included in the Church. That means "tribulation saints" are part of the Church. It means Old Testament saints are part of the Church.

On Dr. Couch's Comparison of Progressives & Traditional Dispensationalists

Dr. Couch writes: *"True dispensationalists are negative on the overall progress of the world, long term, and they put little faith in human institutions. They believe the Scriptures speak even of an apostasy of the church. They are, however, positive on the final outcome and course of history, because the Lord Jesus Christ will triumph during the last chapter of the human drama. Satan will be defeated, human government will be controlled by the Messiah, eternity will bring in a perfect peace and righteousness. But true dispensationalists are realists about any victory that flesh tries to accomplish."*

If that is what constitutes a "true dispensationalist," then I am among them, because I wholeheartedly agree with his assessment of the climax of history, and the importance of eschatology. In fact, as a post-tribulationist, I would venture to say it is MORE important to me because I know that I may potentially participate in the end-time drama, not just watch it from the grandstands, as Dr. Couch hopes to do.

On a "Heavenly Destiny" for the Church

Dr. Couch quotes me as follows: *"Warner in his conclusion writes, 'It is my contention that normative dispensationalism wrongly isolates the Church from God's progressive program with Israel because of a faulty presupposition that the Church's destiny is heavenly.'" And after offering some passages he believes indicate a "heavenly destiny," Dr. Couch closes with this comment: "Though the church's destiny is "heavenly" contrary to what Warner says, it still has a vital earthly mission, i.e., to share the gospel. Remember, Warner writes (read it) that true dispensationalists have "a faulty presupposition that the Church's destiny is 'heavenly.'" He adds, if we remove this assumption [that the church has a heavenly destiny], "the natural conclusion is progressive dispensationalism." I couldn't agree more!"*

I am glad that Dr. Couch and I agree on this point, that if the "heavenly destiny" concept is false, the natural reading of Scripture would lead to progressive dispensationalism. Actually, by his agreeing with this point, he has made my task here much easier. All I need to do in order for progressive dispensationalism to triumph over normative dispensationalism in this debate, is to dispense with the idea that the Church's destiny is heavenly (apart from Israel's destiny), using sound hermeneutics. I believe I can do that successfully, at least for the unbiased reader. But, since this paper is in answer to Dr.

Couch's rebuttal to my opening argument, I'll have to save that for a future round. However, I would like to address the proof that Dr. Couch offers for the "heavenly destiny" concept. Here are his proofs of the Church's "heavenly destiny," followed by my response.

- *"Waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23)."*

This passage says nothing about a "heavenly destiny." All agree that we receive resurrection bodies at Christ's coming. Only if we assume a pre-trib rapture would this verse have any relevance to the question.

- *"We hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it (v. 25)."*

Yes, we are waiting, but for what?

- *"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God (5:2)."*

OK, but what does this have to do with a "heavenly destiny" as opposed to receiving our inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom?

- *"The hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel (Col. 1:5) (the gospel is the hope of heaven?) " and "An inheritance ... reserved in heaven for you (v. 4). "*

Both of these verses says we have a reward laid up (or reserved) for us in heaven. But, it does not say we are going there to receive it, or that heaven itself has any connection to the reward. Just the opposite is true.

Rev 22:12

12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

(NKJ)

This verse is a bit odd in a pre-trib/heavenly destiny scheme. Notice, when Jesus comes back He will bring the reward with Him, and then reward every man according to his work. Why would Jesus haul all those crowns down here at His coming, only to haul them all back to heaven in order to reward us? Matt. 16:27 agrees, saying that Jesus will reward every man when He comes in glory with all the holy angels (post-trib, cf. Matt.

24:30) . That our reward is now "laid up for you in heaven" or "reserved in heaven for you" is speaking of the present location of our reward, and not our destiny as believers. At present, while we await the coming of the Lord from heaven back to earth, our reward is now laid up in heaven for us where Christ is. But, when Jesus comes back to earth, He will bring that reward here to us. We will not go there to receive it.

- *"The glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ, the hope of glory (v. 27)."*

I hope Dr. Couch is not using the term "glory" as a synonym for "heaven." That would be a big mistake. "Glory" is not a place in the Bible, despite the modern pre-trib (unbiblical) jargon, and the Baptist Hymnal. "Glory" is a state in which Christ will appear to the world at His revelation. It is the "glorious appearing" found in the following passages, in which we as believers will share with Christ at His appearing.

Rom 8:18

*18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
(NKJ)*

Matt 24:29-31

29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

*31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
(NKJ)*

Matt 16:27

*27 "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.
(NKJ)*

Col 3:4

*4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.
(NKJ)*

"Glory" is our hope, in the sense that we expect to accompany Christ when He comes, being revealed to the world in power and great glory.

- *"Rapture passage: Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13)."*

The "blessed hope" is the "glorious appearing." This is apparent from the Greek text when applying the Granville Sharp rule to the phrase, "thn makarian elpida kai epifaneian" (THE blessed hope AND appearing). The NIV captures it best, "while we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Since Christ's appearing in glory is the post-trib advent (Matt. 24:30), and since our "blessed hope" is the "glorious appearing," that means our "blessed hope" is the post-trib coming of Christ in power and glory. This verse has nothing whatever to do with a "heavenly destiny."

- *"Rapture passage: Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).*

Here is A.T. Robertson's comment on this passage. *"Our citizenship (hmun to politeuma). Old word from politeuon (# Php 1:27), but only here in N.T. The inscriptions use it either for citizenship or for commonwealth. Paul was proud of his Roman citizenship and found it a protection. The Philippians were also proud of their Roman citizenship. But Christians are citizens of a kingdom not of this world (# Joh 18:36)...."*

"Citizenship" or "commonwealth" refers to our relationship with Christ who is in heaven. There is nothing here that implies a future destiny. In fact, the second statement indicates that Christ is coming here, rather than our going there. Only by assuming a pre-trib scheme does this verse imply a heavenly destiny.

Phil 3:20-21

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

(NKJ)

Who changes location here, us or Christ? It is Christ. Nothing suggests that we relocate to heaven. Our "citizenship" being in heaven does not imply this, because the "Kingdom of heaven" is coming to earth when Christ returns (Matt. 8:11-12, Dan. 2:44). Paul was a citizen of Rome. But, this did not mean he was going to Rome, or had a future inheritance in Rome. It meant that he enjoyed certain benefits from Rome. The same is true of Christians. As citizens of heaven, we have certain rights and privileges granted us by heaven. Christ, who is presently the embodiment of the Kingdom, is now in heaven. Because of this, our citizenship is in heaven. But, when He returns to earth to take His rightful place as King, our citizenship will be in His Kingdom here on earth.

- *"Rapture passage: We are to be serving a living and true God, and to be waiting for His Son from heaven, ... that is Jesus the Rescuer from the wrath that is on its way (coming) (1 Thess. 1:10). (Greek text)"*

Once again, we are awaiting the arrival of Christ from heaven. One must exercise a bit of eisegesis to infer a return trip. While there are plenty of passages that refer to Christ's return from heaven, not a single one indicates a return trip!

Being delivered from the coming wrath does not necessarily imply a pre-trib rapture. "Ek" (from) normally indicates "out from among." So this verse could easily mean that we are waiting to be delivered by Jesus out from among the coming wrath (if in fact the "wrath" here is in connection to the tribulation). Otherwise, it could refer to the judgment and destruction of the wicked.

- *"Resurrection and rapture passage: We who are alive will be caught up together with [the resurrected] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words. (4:17-18)."*

Once again, a return trip to heaven must be forced into the passage. Jesus is coming to earth. And, upon His return, we will be gathered together by being caught up into the clouds. Nothing here about returning to heaven with Christ. The "clouds" is a far cry from heaven! Matt. 24:29-31 indicates that Jesus will dispatch His angels with the sound of the trumpet, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. This will occur "after the tribulation" (Mark 13:27). No one seems to be suggesting a "heavenly destiny" for Jesus' elect gathered in the sky in this passage. Why should 1 Thess. 4 imply anything different?

- *"A living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3)."*

I fail to see the relevance of this verse to the subject at hand.

- *"A salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (v. 5)."*

There is nothing specific here either.

- *"Light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (2 Cor. 4:17)."*

Same here.

- *"Longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven (5:2)."*

This verse refers to the incorruptible body we receive after the resurrection. Notice once again we have "from heaven" and not "to heaven" or "in heaven."

- *" We prefer to be at home with the Lord (v. 8)." and "I Paul have the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better (Phil. 1:23)."*

These verses are referring to the abode of the souls after death, while awaiting the resurrection. This is not a "heavenly destiny" unless Dr. Couch is willing to admit that the tribulation martyrs also have a "heavenly destiny," since upon their martyrdom their souls also wait in heaven for the resurrection (Rev. 6:9-11, Rev. 15:2-4).

Not a single verse Dr. Couch supplied, when taken literally, indicates that our destiny is "heavenly." The verses he supplied referring to the abode of the dead are true of all saints, and cannot be unique to "Church saints" in the normative dispensational sense. Therefore, Dr. Couch has not shown any proof at all of a "heavenly destiny" that is unique to "Church saints" apart from the hope of the saints in general, and the saints of Israel in particular.

Conclusion

Since Dr. Couch will have the final word on this round, I would like to summarize the major points I have tried to sketch in this session.

I. While the early orthodox Church trained by the Apostles was pre-millennial, and generally held to a literal interpretation of Scripture, it did not hold to a "dual program" kind of dispensationalism, but held that the "Church" consists of all of the redeemed, from both Israel and the nations. They saw a series of progressive dispensations, unfolding in a single plan of God for the redemption of mankind. The nation of Israel was a key component in this plan. The "dichotomy" between Old and New Testament programs found in modern dispensationalism is not found in the early orthodox Christian view, but was actually found in the Gnostic sects the early Church so vigorously opposed. The same is true of the "heavenly destiny" concept. The early orthodox Church saw its destiny as a horizontal hope, the Millennial Kingdom when Christ returns to earth, followed by the eternal state on a restored earth. It was again the Gnostics who imagined a "heavenly destiny." This concept was carried into Christianity by the writings of Origen, and later made mainstream by Augustine's amillennial view. The early premillennial Christians claimed that their view was handed down by Apostolic authority, and they were quite skilled in defending it using a literal hermeneutic. In today's terminology, the early orthodox Church was "progressive dispensational," "futurist," "post-tribulationist," and "pre-millennial."

II. In Darby's abandonment of amillennial historicism, and return to premillennial futurism, he failed to abandon a key element of amillennialism, the "heavenly destiny" concept. He was right to reject replacement theology. He was right to reject allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures related to Israel. But he was wrong to continue to maintain the "heavenly destiny" concept for the Church. The "heavenly destiny" concept of amillennialism being blended with the "chiliasm" (pre-millennialism) of the early orthodox Church, is what produced modern dispensationalism (and pre-tribulationism) with its dichotomy between God's program for Israel and His program for the Church. Darby was on the right track with Israel, but he did not go far enough in undoing the damage of amillennialism.

III. The new covenant was promised to Israel (Jer. 31:31-34). The literal interpretation of prophecy demands that it was inaugurated between God and Israel. Normative dispensationalists struggle to reconcile the New Testament abundant evidence that the new covenant is now in force, and that eternal salvation comes only through the new covenant. Some dispensationalists have claimed there are two new covenants, in an attempt to dodge the problem. Dr. Couch claims that the new covenant was "launched" but not "fulfilled." With all due respect to Dr. Couch, the new covenant is not a rocket or a ship. It is a contract between two parties, God and Israel. A biblical covenant demands the agreement and personal commitment of both parties, and requires a token. Therefore, before any blessings of the covenant can flow, the covenant must be inaugurated by both parties. This was true of the old covenant as well. It is similar to a bride and groom taking their wedding vows. More specifically, it was parallel to the Jewish betrothal ritual. Both parties commit to the covenant, and it is sealed with a token. The token of the Noahide covenant was the rainbow (Gen. 9:12-13). The token of the Abrahamic covenant was circumcision (Gen. 17:11). The token of the old covenant was the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13-17). The Bible is plain that the sealing of the new covenant between Jesus and His disciples occurred at the Last Supper. While instituting communion, Jesus referred to the cup of wine as "*the new covenant in my blood,*" and then asked all of His disciples to drink from it. When the disciples partook of the cup, they entered into the new covenant. Our Lord shed His blood the next day to seal that covenant. Every time we partake of communion, we are remembering the sealing of the new covenant that Israel and Jesus Christ entered into (1 Cor. 11:25). Yes, I said Israel. The new covenant was promised to Israel to replace the Mt. Sinai covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). The disciples were Jews. The blessing of the new covenant was "*to the Jew first.*" The Church was originally all Jewish. The 3000 souls added to the Church in Acts 2 were Jews. Ditto for the 5000 added when Peter preached the second time. Once all of Israel was invited to partake of the new covenant and largely refused, the opportunity was extended to the Gentiles to enter into the blessings of the new covenant. This was made possible by God's original covenant with Abraham, saying that through one of his offspring, all ethnic peoples of the earth would be blessed (Gal. 3:16,26-29 & Acts 3:22-26). Now that Gentiles have been "grafted into" the Olive Tree, we too can partake of the blessings of the new covenant. All of this means the early Church has a definite continuity with the Old Testament. The Church is the fulfillment of some Old Testament prophecies given to and through Abraham's physical seed.

IV. The Bible does not indicate a hope and destiny for the Church that is severed from Israel's hope and destiny. Quite the contrary. Our hope is Christ's Kingdom coming to earth at the second coming. The land promises to the twelve tribes will be fulfilled literally. The disciples and other Messianic believers do NOT forfeit their heritage and the link to the land promises within the Abrahamic covenant for the natural seed. "Israel" will receive that inheritance regardless of which dispensation one was born into. But, only those Jews who have kept the covenants will partake of the promises. The Jews who apostasized from the Mosaic covenant have forfeited their right to the promises. And Jews who refused the new covenant are also lost. The book of Daniel plainly says that at the resurrection, "many" of Daniel's people (Jews) will awake to their inheritance. But the rest (of the Jews) to eternal damnation. In both the old and new covenants made with Israel, individual Jews could cut themselves off from the

covenants and promises. Most Israelis, throughout their history, have cut themselves off through unbelief (Rom. 11:20, Heb. 3:19). Yet, within the nation at large there has always been a faithful remnant. Joshua and Caleb believed God at Kadesh Barnea. It is no different today. The faithful remnant of Israel is the Messianic Jewish community who have partaken of the new covenant with Israel by faith in Jesus Christ. Once the *"fullness of the Gentiles comes in,"* and Jesus comes in power and glory, and the remaining (surviving) Jewish nation looks on Him whom they have pierced, national repentance will occur, and *"all Israel will be saved."* At the beginning of the Millennium, one whole living generation of Israel will be saved at once (Zech. 12:9-10, 13:1 & Joel 3:21). The Jewish saints of the past dispensation, along with the Jewish believers of this dispensation, will inherit their portion according to tribe in Christ's Kingdom. And Israel will be the head of the nations. Daniel was specifically told that he would die, and be raised to stand in his allotted possession in the coming Kingdom of God (Dan. 12:2-3,13). That means, saints in resurrected bodies will inherit the Old Testament land promises (Ezk. 47:48). Jesus will take his place as the rightful King on David's throne, and *"rule over the house of Jacob (Israel) forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end"* (Luke 1:33). Once the final rebellion (Gog-Magog) occurs 1000 years later, and the earth is purged, the New Jerusalem will descend, and Christ's Kingdom will continue into eternity. All the while, the same ethnic distinctions between nations (of the saved) will continue. *"The nations (ethnos) of them that are saved"* will inhabit the city (Rev. 21:24). The *"glory of the nations"* (ethnos) will be brought into it (Rev. 21:26). The fruit of the trees will be for the *"healing of the nations (ethnos)"* (Rev. 22:2). And the names of the 12 Jewish tribes, and the 12 Jewish Apostles, will adorn the city (Rev. 21:12-14).

This, dear reader, was the eschatology (chiliasm) of the early orthodox Church. It is thoroughly biblical, based on sound hermeneutics in both Testaments, and was the oral tradition passed down by the Apostles to the next generation of Christians. In today's Evangelical jargon, it was pre-millennial, progressive dispensational, futurist, and post-tribulational.