

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Class 12: Biblical Survey Of Messianic Ecclesiology

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE EKKLESIA

- A. Ecclesiology is simply “the knowledge or study of the church (Gk. *ekklēsia*).” The initial difficulty with this definition involves the definition of “church”—that is, what is the *ekklēsia*? Historically, interpretation of the *ekklēsia* has been bound within a Christonaturalistic worldview. Thus, the *ekklēsia* is composed of those who are the supernatural (or “spiritual”) people of God, while Israel is composed of those who are the natural (or “physical”) people of God. This has produced two basic ecclesiological interpretations:
1. Covenantal Theology
 - a) Classically the Church (Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) has viewed itself as the “new Israel,” the inheritors of the promises and covenants made with the patriarchs. Since the Church is the Kingdom of God (or the manifestation thereof), which was promised in the Old Testament and which Jesus began to establish at his coming, it logically “replaces” Israel in God’s redemptive plan.¹
 - b) Logically, however, Israel was never really part of redemptive history in the first place, since it was only a *type of the Church* to come (which is now the prophesied Kingdom). It was the physical shadow of the true spiritual principles that the Church/Kingdom would later embody.
 2. Dispensational Theology
 - a) In the 19th century, however, dispensationalism began as a movement with one of its primary distinctions being a sharp division between the Church and Israel.² God has two different redemptive programs and thus two different redeemed peoples.³ Israel is the “earthly” people who will receive the “earthly blessings” (which await a future fulfillment on the earth), while the Church is the “heavenly” people who will receive the

¹ Though some may object to such a sweeping generalization, I believe Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the various denominations of Protestantism all generally believe the Church has replaced Israel in redemptive history—if not in theory, definitely in practice. This is based on the overarching view of salvation ending in “heaven,” which is assumed to be the domain of the Church, since Israel was promised things relating to the earth (cf. Gen. 17:8; Deut. 30:5; 2 Sam. 7:16; etc.)

² Others including the dividing of biblical history into seven periods (or “dispensations”) of God’s administration of grace to humanity, the pretribulation rapture of the church into heaven, a future literal fulfillment of OT prophecies concerning Israel, and the church age as a parenthesis (or “intercalation”) inserted into redemptive history when the Jews rejected God’s Messiah. The most extensive dispensationalist systematic theology is by the first president of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 7 Vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-48).

Dispensationalism began in the 1830’s in the Plymouth Brethren movement with the writings of John N. Darby (1800-1882) in Great Britain. It spread to North America organically until its adoption by evangelist Dwight L. Moody (1837-1872) and lawyer Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921), who published the widely read *Scofield Reference Bible* (1909), which became the leading Bible used by independent Evangelicals and Fundamentalists in the U.S. for the next sixty years. Scofield in turn mentored a young man, Lewis S. Chafer (1871-1952), from 1903 until his death in 1921, who later moved to Dallas, TX and founded Dallas Theological Seminary in 1924, which has become the flagship of Dispensationalism in America.

³ “As related to premillennial interpretation, normative dispensationalism tends to emphasize certain important distinctive. One of the most significant is the contrast provided between God’s program for Israel and God’s present program for the Church. The Church composed of Jew and Gentile is considered a separate program of God which does not advance nor fulfill any of the promises given to Israel. The present age is regarded as a period in which Israel is temporarily set aside as to its national program. When the Church is translated however, Israel’s program will then proceed to its consummation.” [John F. Walvoord, “Dispensational Premillennialism,” *Christianity Today* 15:13 (September 1958).]

“heavenly blessings” (which will be fulfilled in an immaterial heaven).⁴ This will begin to be fully seen in the millennium, when the Church is translated and reigns in heaven, while Jesus fulfills the promises to Israel on the earth.⁵

What is it exactly that makes a person a dispensationalist? What are the indispensable ingredients of dispensational theology? As Ryrie puts it, “What is the sine qua non of the system?” It is not the issue of distinguishably different economies in God’s governance of world affairs, for nondispensationalists frequently employ the term “dispensation” in the development of their own dispensational schemes... The number of dispensations to which one holds and the question of premillennialism—belief in Christ’s return to reign over a literal thousand year earthly kingdom—are not the deciding factors either... Neither are the doctrines of the pretribulation rapture of the saints and the parenthetical nature of the church the essential ingredients of dispensational theology... they are not that which reduces it to its lowest common denominator. They are not the heart of the system. Ryrie suggests that there are three essential factors—the sine qua non of the system—in determining who is and is not a dispensationalist. First, a dispensationalist makes a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. It is the dispensationalist’s belief that throughout history, God has purposed two distinct purposes. One program involves the earthly people—Israel (Judaism), while the other involves a heavenly people—the church (Christianity). According to Ryrie, this distinction between Israel and the church “is probably the most basic theological test of whether or not a man is a dispensationalist, and it is undoubtedly the most practical and conclusive.”⁶

- b) According to dispensationalists, the church thus did not exist in the Old Testament and did not begin until the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Accordingly, the Old Testament promises to Israel cannot be fulfilled in the Church, and thus there must be two redemptive plans in God’s economy (which is ultimately based on the foundation of metaphysical dualism), which logically results in a soteriological parenthesis, or “intercalation,” in the redemptive plan of God.⁷
- c) Thus, unlike traditional Western theologies, which hold to one plan of immaterial “heavenly” salvation, dispensationalism engages in *soteriological dualism* based on its

⁴ See Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:45-53.

⁵ This view has been significantly modified by “progressive” dispensationalists, such as Craig Blaising, Darrell Bock, and Robert Saucy, etc., who argue for a progressive relationship between dispensations and more continuity between Israel and the Church. However, progressive dispensationalists do not equate the church as Israel in this age, and they still see a future distinct identity and function for ethnic Israel in the coming millennial kingdom [e.g. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Victor, 1993), 49.].

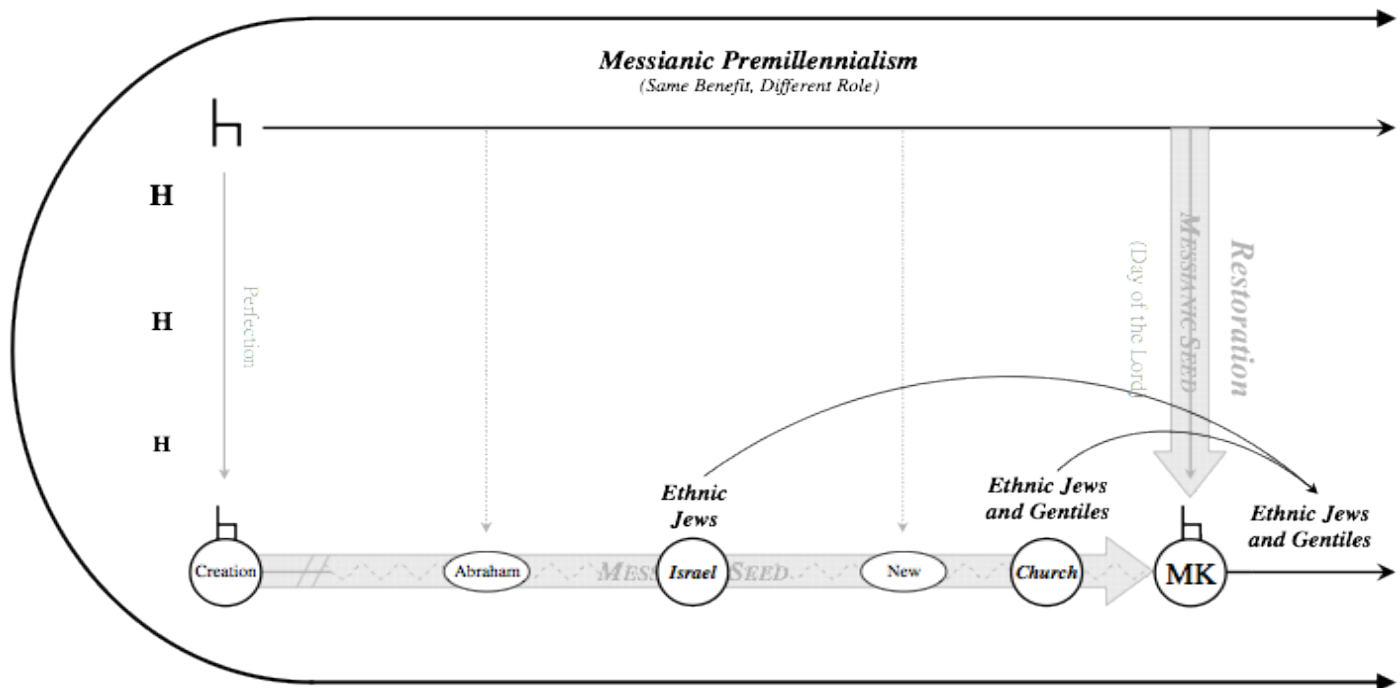
⁶ Larry V. Crutchfield, *The Origins of Dispensationalism* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), 28-29. Ryrie goes on to summarize the three aspects of the *Sine Qua Non*: “The essence of dispensationalism, then is the distinction between Israel and the Church. This grows out of the dispensationalist’s consistent employment of normal or plain interpretation, and it reflects an understanding of the basic purpose of God in all His dealings with mankind as that of glorifying Himself through salvation and other purposes as well.” [Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 47.]

⁷ “The ultimate proof of the teaching that the present age is a parenthesis is in the *positive revelation concerning the church* as the body of Christ, the study of which will be undertaken next. The evidence for a parenthesis in the present age interrupting God’s predicted program for Jew and Gentile as revealed in the Old Testament is extensive, however. The evidence if interpreted literally leads inevitably to the parenthesis doctrine. The kingdom predictions of the Old Testament do not conform to the pattern of this present age.” [John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 230; emphasis added.]

eternal *metaphysical dualism*.⁸ Though the modified dispensationalists of the 1950s and 60s rejected this eternal bifurcation of reality, they still practically engaged in soteriological dualism by focusing the majority of their study on the “Millennial Kingdom” which is practically indistinguishable from its traditional counterpart.⁹

3. George Eldon Ladd’s proposal for “historical premillennialism” is now termed by dispensationalists as “covenantal premillennialism.” As a mitigation between dispensationalism and postmillennialism, covenantal premillennialism sees one eternal soteriological plan finding fulfillment on the New Earth. However, attention to ethnicity is lacking and as such has drawn the criticism of modern dispensationalists.¹⁰
4. This work seeks a unified soteriological plan of the restoration of creation, while retaining ethnic distinctions in the age to come. The Church is made up of *righteous* Jews and Gentiles who will receive a common inheritance in the resurrection, but will function in different governmental roles in the Messianic Kingdom (cf. Is. 14:2; 49:22f; 60:10ff; Jer. 31:7ff; Acts 1:6; Rom. 11:11-12). **(see supplemental diagrams next pages)**

Messianic Ethnicity Diagram

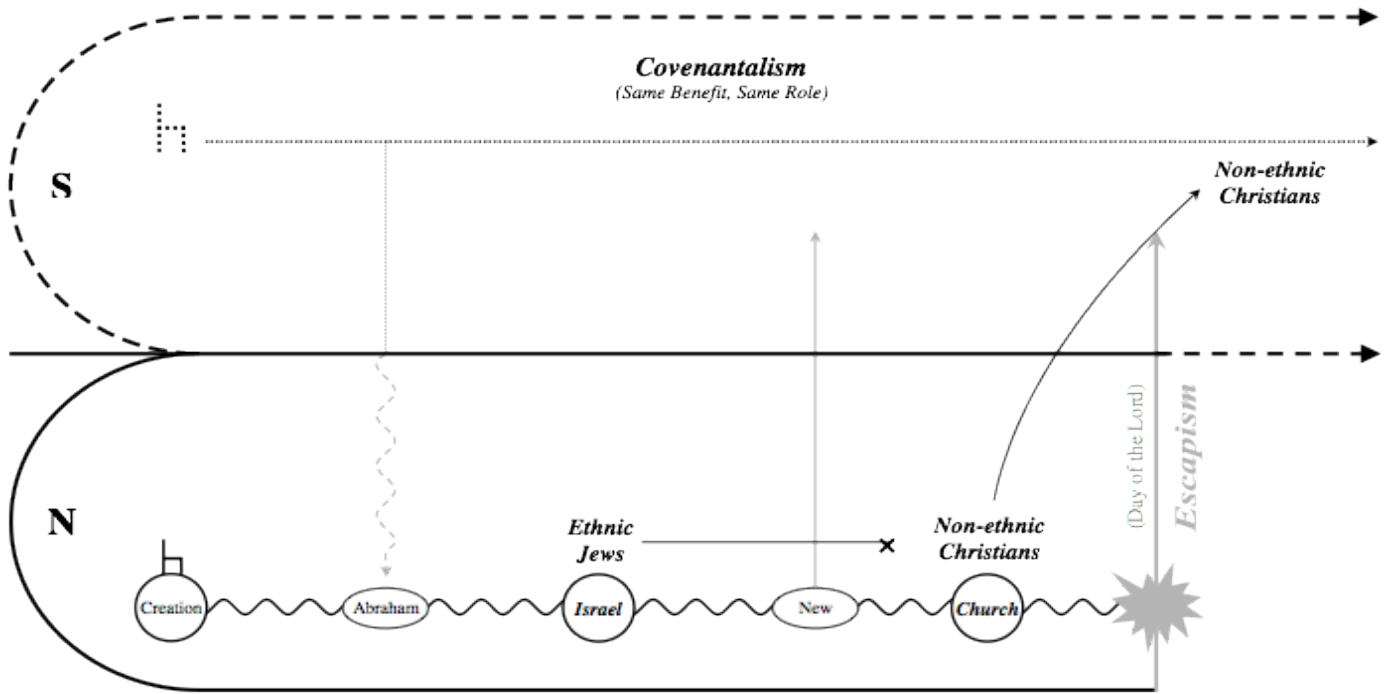


⁸ As Chafer spells out, “Every covenant, promise, and provision for Israel is earthly, and they continue as a nation with the earth when it is created new. Every covenant or promise for the church is for a heavenly reality, and she continues in heavenly citizenship when the heavens are recreated.” [Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:47.]

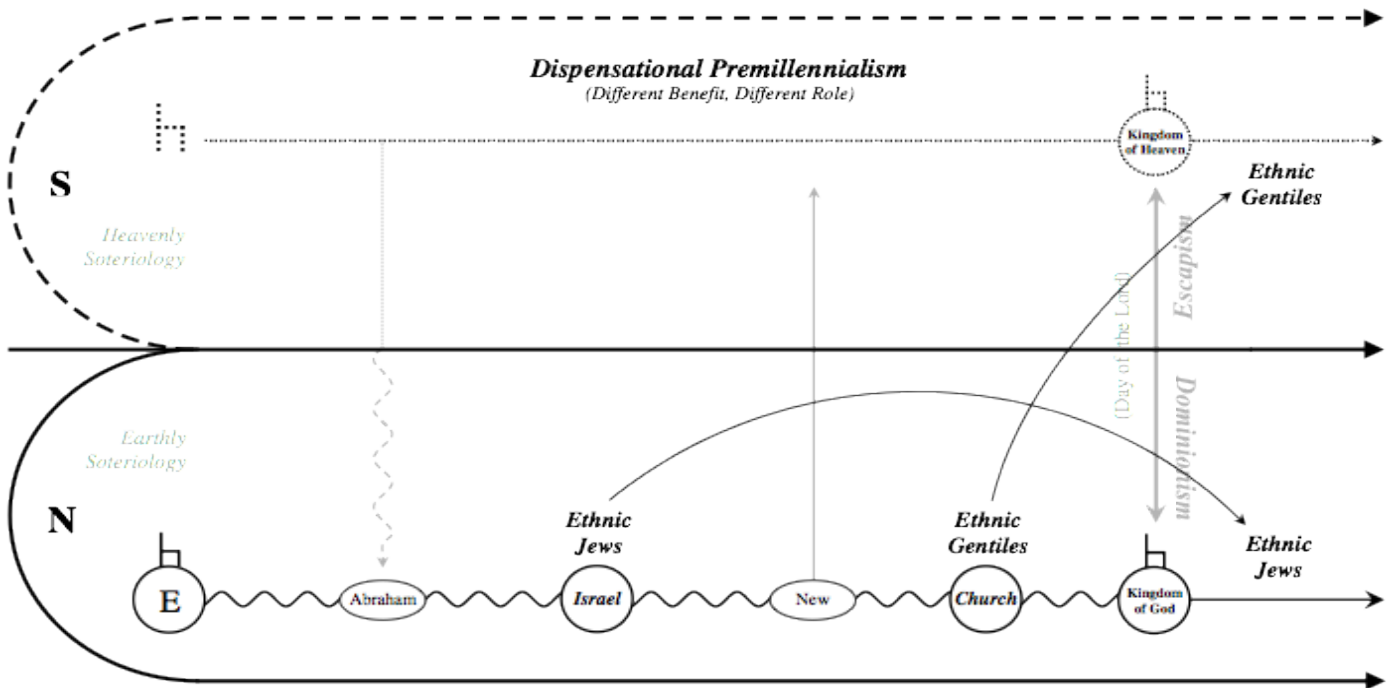
⁹ The modified dispensationalists held to a unified eternal destiny for the redeemed, though there was disagreement where this would be. Ryrie puts them in “heaven” (see *Dispensationalism Today*, 147), while J. Dwight Pentecost places them on the “new earth” (see *Things to Come* [Zondervan, 1958], 561-562).

¹⁰ See Craig A Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1992), esp. 37-67, 377-394.

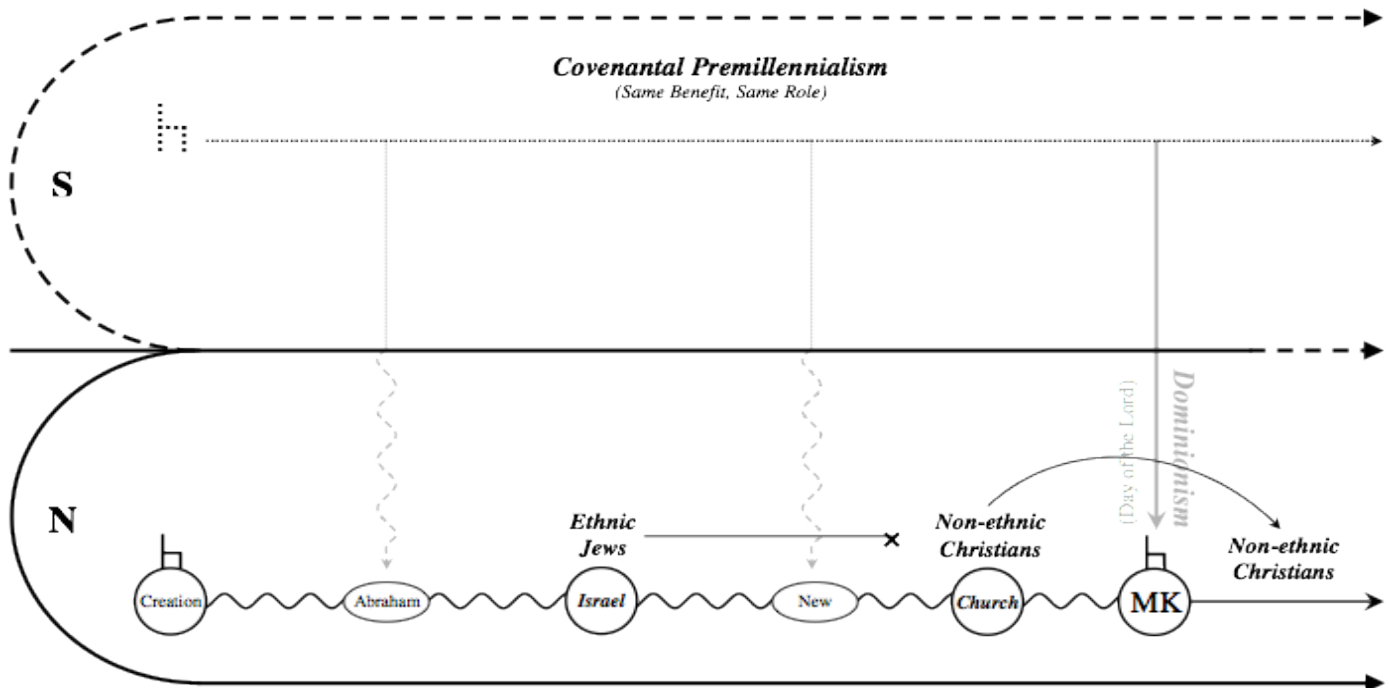
Christonaturalistic Ethnicity Diagrams



Christonaturalistic Ethnicity Diagrams



Christonaturalistic Ethnicity Diagrams



B. The Greek word, *ekklēsia*, is a generic word meaning “church, congregation; assembly, gathering (of religious, political, or unofficial groups)” (UBS).

- <1577> evkklhsi,a *ekklēsia* {ek-klay-see'-ah}

Meaning: 1) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly 1a) an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating 1b) the assembly of the Israelites 1c) any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously 1d) in a Christian sense 1d1) an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting...

Origin: from a compound of 1537 [Gk. *ek*, “from out of”] and a derivative of 2564 Gk. *kaleo*, “to call”; TDNT - 3:501,394; n f

Usage: AV - church 115, assembly 3; 118

Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company (Gk. *ekklēsia*, LXX, “group” NKJV/NIV/NLT) of the prophets prophesying... they also prophesied. (ESV 1 Samuel 19:20)

Now some (in Ephesus) cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly (Gk. *ekklēsia*) was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. (ESV Acts 19:32)

1. It is used 114 times in the NT, generally referring to the gathering of believers in Messiah.¹¹ However, it is also used 77 times in the OT (LXX) to translate Hb. *qāhāl*, and *edāh*, referring to the gathering, assembly or congregation of Israel.¹² In this light, the NT uses *ekklēsia* to refer to the assembly of Israel in the OT (Acts 7:38; Heb. 2:12).

This is he (Moses), that was in the church (Gk. ekklēsia, “congregation” ESV, NASB, NKJV; “assembly” NIV, NLT) in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us. (KJV Acts 7:38)

So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. ¹² He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation (Gk. ekklēsia, “church” KJV) I will sing your praises.” (cf. Ps. 22:22) (NIV Hebrews 2:11-12)

2. Similarly, the Greek word, *sunagōgē*, is a common word meaning “synagogue, Jewish place of worship; congregation; assembly, meeting (for worship)” (UBS). It is used 57 times in the NT, generally referring to Jewish synagogues.¹³ However, it is used 299 times in the OT (LXX) interchangeably with *ekklēsia* to translate Hb. *qāhāl* and *edāh*, referring to the gathering, assembly or congregation of Israel.¹⁴

These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly (Gk. sunagōgē LXX) at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness... (ESV Deuteronomy 5:22)

Take the staff, and assemble (Gk. ekklēsia, LXX) the congregation (Gk. sunagōgē, LXX), you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. (ESV Numbers 20:8)

¹¹ Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 5:11; 7:38; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3f, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 19:32, 39f; 20:17, 28; Rom. 16:1, 4f, 16, 23; 1 Cor. 1:2; 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16, 18, 22; 12:28; 14:4f, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33ff; 15:9; 16:1, 19; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8:1, 18f, 23f; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Gal. 1:2, 13, 22; Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23ff, 27, 29, 32; Phil. 3:6; 4:15; Col. 1:18, 24; 4:15f; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14; 2 Thess. 1:1, 4; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15; 5:16; Phlm. 1:2; Heb. 2:12; 12:23; Jam. 5:14; 3 John 1:6, 9f; Rev. 1:4, 11, 20; 2:1, 7f, 11f, 17f, 23, 29; 3:1, 6f, 13f, 22; 22:16.

¹² Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1ff, 8; 31:30; Josh. 9:2; Judg. 20:2; 21:5, 8; 1 Sam. 17:47; 19:20; 1 Kgs 8:14, 22, 55, 65; 1 Chr. 13:2, 4; 28:2, 8; 29:1, 10, 20; 2 Chr. 1:3, 5; 6:3, 12f; 7:8; 10:3; 20:5, 14; 23:3; 28:14; 29:23, 28, 31f; 30:2, 4, 13, 17, 23ff; Ezra 2:64; 10:1, 8, 12, 14; Neh. 5:7, 13; 7:66; 8:2, 17; 13:1; Psa. 21:23, 26; 25:5, 12; 34:18; 39:10; 67:27; 88:6; 106:32; 149:1; Prov. 5:14; Job 30:28; Mic. 2:5; Joel 2:16; Lam. 1:10. Since the Septuagint (LXX) was the Bible most used by the Apostles and early Christians, it stands to reason that its use of *ekklēsia* primarily informed the understanding of NT believers.

¹³ Matt. 4:23; 6:2, 5; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:6, 34; Mark 1:21, 23, 29, 39; 3:1; 6:2; 12:39; 13:9; Luke 4:15f, 20, 28, 33, 38, 44; 6:6; 7:5; 8:41; 11:43; 12:11; 13:10; 20:46; 21:12; John 6:59; 18:20; Acts 6:9; 9:2, 20; 13:5, 14, 43; 14:1; 15:21; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 7, 19, 26; 19:8; 22:19; 24:12; 26:11; Jam. 2:2; Rev. 2:9; 3:9.

¹⁴ Gen. 1:9; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4; Exod. 12:3, 6, 19, 47; 16:1ff, 6, 9f, 22; 17:1; 23:16; 34:22, 31; 35:1, 4, 20; 38:22; 39:2; Lev. 4:13ff, 21; 8:3ff; 9:5; 10:3, 6, 17; 11:36; 16:5, 17, 33; 19:2; 22:18; 24:14, 16; Num. 1:2, 16, 18; 8:9, 20; 10:2f, 7; 13:26; 14:1f, 5, 7, 10, 27, 35f; 15:14, 24ff, 33, 35f; 16:2f, 5f, 9, 11, 16, 19, 21f, 24, 26, 33; 17:7, 10, 12; 19:9, 20; 20:1f, 4, 6, 8, 10ff, 22, 25, 27, 29; 22:4; 25:6f; 26:2, 9f; 27:2f, 14, 16f, 19, 21f; 31:13, 16, 26f, 43; 32:2, 15; 35:12, 24f; Deut. 5:22; 33:4; Josh. 9:15, 18f, 21, 27; 18:1; 20:3, 9; 22:16f, 20, 30; Judg. 14:8; 20:1; 21:10, 13, 16; 1 Kgs 12:20f; 2 Chr. 5:6; Esth. 10:3; Psa. 7:8; 15:4; 21:17; 39:11; 61:9; 67:31; 73:2; 81:1; 85:14; 105:17f; 110:1; Prov. 5:14; 21:16; Job 8:17; Obad. 1:13; Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 9:12; Isa. 19:6; 22:6; 37:25; 56:8; Jer. 6:11; 27:9; 33:17; 38:4, 13; 51:15; Ezek. 26:7; 27:27, 34; 32:22; 37:10; 38:4, 7, 13, 15; Dan. 8:25; 11:10ff.

James is even comfortable using *sunagōgē* interchangeably with *ekklēsia* to refer to the assembly of messianic believers, “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into *your assembly* (Gk. *sunagōgē*), and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in... Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be *rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom*, which he has promised to those who love him?” (ESV James 2:1-5)

Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; ¹⁶ gather (Gk. sunagō, LXX) the people. Consecrate the congregation (Gk. ekklēsia, LXX); assemble (Gk. eklēgō, LXX) the elders; gather (Gk. sunagō, LXX) the children, even nursing infants. (ESV Joel 2:15-17)

3. Moreover, the Greek word, *plēthos*, is also used to refer to the assembly of messianic believers (cf. Acts 4:32; 6:2, 5; 15:12, 30).

And the congregation (Gk. *plēthos*, "multitude" KJV/NKJV) of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. (NASB Acts 4:32)

The men were sent off (from the Jerusalem Council) and went down to Antioch, where they gathered (Gk. sunagō) the church (Gk. *plēthos*, "congregation" ESV, NASB) together and delivered the letter. (NIV Acts 15:30)

II. THE FOUR-FOLD USAGE OF "ASSEMBLY"

A. Assembly of Israel

Then Moses spoke the words of this song until they were finished, in the ears of all the assembly of Israel... (ESV Deuteronomy 31:30)

And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and from the LORD our God, let us send abroad to our brothers..." (ESV 1 Chronicles 13:2)

Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven... (ESV 1 Kings 8:22)

And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you and from the LORD our God, let us send abroad to our brothers..." (ESV 1 Chronicles 13:2)

B. Assembly of the Nations

I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them-- all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger. (NIV Zephaniah 3:8)

On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it. (ESV Zechariah 12:3)

Now many nations are assembled against you, saying, "Let her be defiled, and let our eyes gaze upon Zion." ¹² But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor. (ESV Micah 4:11-12)

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. (NIV Revelation 19:19)

C. Assembly of Righteous

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. ⁶ For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (NIV Psalm 1:5-6)

I will tell of Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You. (cf. Heb. 2:12) ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise Him... ²⁵ From You comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. (NASB Psalm 22:22)

Praise the LORD! I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. (NKJV Psalm 111:1)

Praise the LORD. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints. ² Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. (NIV Psalm 149:1-2)

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. (NIV Daniel 7:27)

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? ... ⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? ... ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (ESV 1 Corinthians 6:1-11)

D. Assembly of Wicked

I do not sit with deceitful men, nor do I consort with hypocrites; ⁵ I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. (NIV Psalm 26:4-5)

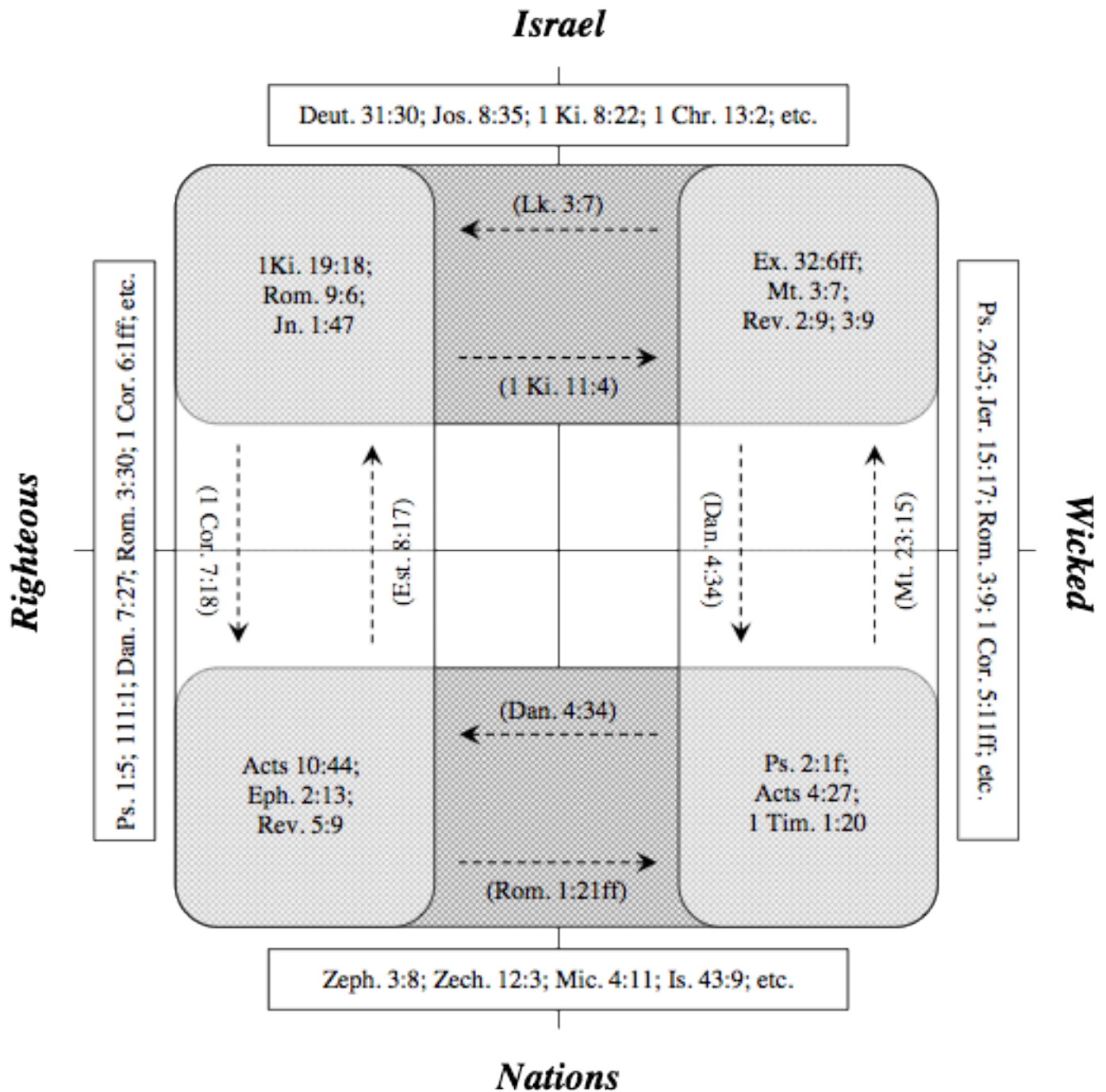
He (Moses) warned the assembly, "Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins." (NIV Numbers 16:26)

I did not sit in the assembly of the mockers, Nor did I rejoice; I sat alone because of Your hand, For You have filled me with indignation. (NKJV Jeremiah 15:17)

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." (cf. Deut. 13:5; 17:7; 21:21; 22:21)(NIV 1 Corinthians 5:11-13)

(see supplemental diagram on next page)

Assembly Quadrilateral



III. THE ASSEMBLY OF THE RIGHTEOUS COMPOSED OF JEW AND GENTILE

- A. The basis of all the covenants is righteousness, which is based simply on repentance and faith. The main point of the covenants is that only the righteous receive the benefits of the covenants—only the saints inherit the age to come in the Messiah.

The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (NIV Revelation 21:26-27)

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints (Gk. *hagios*, LXX), the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." (NIV Daniel 7:27)

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints (Gk. *hagios*)? ² Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world (under the leadership of Messiah)? And if the world is to be judged by you (eschatologically), are you incompetent to try trivial cases (in this age)? ... ⁴ So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church (Gk. *ekklēsia*)? (NIV 1 Corinthians 6:1-4)

- B. Though the Church of the Righteous technically began at the Cross (since it was only at the Cross that righteousness was truly accomplished), the Church has existed since the world began of those righteous in God's sight. The "Church of the Firstborn" (Heb. 12:23) is thus composed of all believers in the Messiah for all time.¹⁵

These (Abel > prophets) were all commended for their faith (in Messiah), yet none of them received what had been promised. ⁴⁰ God had planned something better for us so that only together with us (having the same faith, hope and destiny) would they be made perfect (in the resurrection). ^{12:1} Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses (to Messiah), let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles (cf. diligence vv. 2-6; discipline vv. 7-13, ungodliness vv. 14-17) ... ¹⁸ You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire (cf. Mount Sinai)... ²² But you have come (with eschatological faith, cf. 10:37; 11:1ff) to Mount Zion (cf. Ps. 2:6; 48:2; 110:2; Is. 51:11; 60:14; Joel 2:32), to the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Is. 2:1ff; 40:2ff; 62:7; 65:18; Jer. 23:6; 33:16; Mic. 4:8; Zeph. 3:16; Zech. 12:2ff; Mal. 3:4), the city of the living God (i.e. Jerusalem of the Messianic Kingdom, cf. Ps. 132:13; Dan. 9:25; Zech. 14:8ff). You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly (at the coming of the Messiah, cf. Dan. 7:13; Zech. 14:5; Enoch 1:9), ²³ to the church (Gk. *ekklēsia*, OT and NT messianic believers) of the firstborn (i.e. Messiah, cf. Acts 26:23; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5), whose names are written in heaven (in the book of the resurrection, cf. Is. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 20:15). You

¹⁵ This thus incorporates the key value of the covenantalist position, that the Church is a universal institution and that salvation is based on righteousness alone, as Grudem articulates: "The church is the community of all true believers for all time. This definition understands the church to be made of all those who are truly saved... that must include all true believers for all time, both believers in the New Testament age and believers in the Old Testament age as well... both the usage of the term 'church' in Scripture and the fact that throughout Scripture God has always called his people to assemble to worship himself, indicate that it is appropriate to think of the church as constituting all the people of God for all time, both Old Testament believers and New Testament believers." [Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 853-854.]

have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect (in the resurrection), ²⁴ to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant (accomplishing righteousness), and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (NIV Hebrews 11:39-12:24)

- C. This righteous assembly has always included both Jew and Gentile, because it is foundational to the covenants. The Adamic Covenant assumes the blessedness of the resurrection upon all peoples, and the Abrahamic Covenant clearly articulates how this blessedness will function between the peoples, all in context to the righteous who have faith and continue in repentance.

I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. (NASB Genesis 12:2-3)

As for me, behold, my covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. (NASB Genesis 17:4-5)

God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." Thus He called him Israel. ¹¹ God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations ("community of nations" NIV) shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. (NASB Genesis 35:10-11)

- ***Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, ³⁰ since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith... ^{4:1} What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ... ³ What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ... ⁶ David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷ "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." (Ps. 32:1-2) ⁹ Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? ... ¹¹ So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. ¹³ It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith... ¹⁶ Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷ As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed-- the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. (NIV Romans 3:29-4:17)***
- ***Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ... ⁵ Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the***

law, or because you believe what you heard? ⁶ Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁷ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸ The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ⁹ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith... ¹⁴ He redeemed us (Jews) in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (^{NIV} Galatians 3:2-14)

1. Before the New Covenant, it was assumed that the Gentiles would have to convert and become Jews in order to receive the Abrahamic blessing. Throughout the Old Testament, this inclusion was under the conditions of circumcision and sacrifice (cf. Ex. 12:44-49; Num. 9:14; 15:13-16), unto a common law (cf. Lev. 17:10; 19:34; 24:22; Num. 15:29; Deut. 10:19).¹⁶

The people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds... ⁴³ This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, ⁴⁴ but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him... ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ If a stranger shall sojourn with you (cf. Gen. 15:13; 17:8; 20:1; 21:23, 34; 23:4) and would keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. ⁴⁹ There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you. (^{ESV} Exodus 12:43-49)

All who are native shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD. ¹⁴ If an alien sojourns with you, or one who may be among you throughout your generations, and he wishes to make an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD, just as you do so he shall do. ¹⁵ As for the assembly (Gk. *ekklēsia*, LXX), there shall be one statute for you and for the alien who sojourns with you, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the LORD. ¹⁶ There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you. (^{NASB} Numbers 15:13-16)

¹⁶ During the Intertestamental Period (c.420-20 BC) as synagogues spread throughout the Greco-Roman Empire, proselytism and the inclusion of Gentiles became a paramount issue. During this time an additional prerequisite of baptism was included, signifying their cleansing from their old heathen ways. Though commonly debated, Edersheim comments concerning the reality of Jewish baptism before the New Testament, "That *baptism* was absolutely necessary to make a proselyte is so frequently stated as not to be disputed (See *Maimonides*, u. s.; the tractate *Masseketh Gerim* in *Kirchheim's* Septem Libri Talm. Parvi, pp. 38-44 [which, however, adds little to our knowledge]; Targum on Ex. xii. 44; Ber. 47 b; Kerith. 9 a; Jer. Yebam. p. 8d; Yebam. 45 b, 46 a and b, 48 b, 76 a; Ab. Sar. 57a, 59 a, and other passages)." [Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, New Updated Ed. (Hendrickson, 1993, c.1886), 1014.]

"From the law that proselyte and native Israelite should be treated alike (Num. xv. 14 et seq.) the inference was drawn that circumcision, the bath of purification, and sacrifice were prerequisites for conversion (comp. 'Yad,' Issure Biah, xiii. 4)." (Joseph Jacobs and Emil G. Hirsch, "Proselyte," *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*; available at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=556&letter=P>.)

"The rite of reception [of proselytes] consists of circumcision, baptism, and a sacrifice... Rabbis find a basis for the three conditions in the conditions of the Sinai covenant in Ex. 12:48; 24:5; 19:10. When the conditions are fulfilled, converts are regarded as in every respect Jews." [Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 945.]

Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were in Israel, after the census his father David had taken (cf. 1 Chr. 22:2); and they were found to be 153,600. (NIV 2 Chronicles 2:17)

In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them. (NASB Esther 8:17)

2. However, after the Cross God showed his favor upon the Gentiles apart from circumcision and the Law by giving them the same assurance of salvation in the Spirit that he had given to the Jewish believers (cf. Acts 10:47-48; 11:15-18; 15:8-9).

"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead..." ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all (Cornelius, et al.) who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water (inclusion rite)? They have received the Holy Spirit (as a deposit guaranteeing inclusion in the Kingdom) just as we have." ⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (NIV Acts 10:42-48)

Peter began and explained everything to them ("circumcised believers") precisely as it had happened... ¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning... ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life (i.e. inclusion in the resurrection and Kingdom)." (NIV Acts 11:4-18)

After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles (cf. Cornelius, et al.) might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them... ¹³ When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself (in the Messianic Kingdom). ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement (Gk. *sumphōneō* vs. Gk. *plēroō*, "to fulfill") with this, as it is written: ¹⁶ 'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name (i.e. included in the Messianic Kingdom), says the Lord, who does these things.' ¹⁹ It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals

and from blood. ²¹ For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath." (NIV Acts 15:1-20)

3. The logic of the Jerusalem Council is simply based on the reality spoken of throughout the prophets: all the nations of the earth will be commonly blessed and rejoice in the leadership of the Messiah. The Messiah will be the hope and joy of the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, because all will share in the blessing of the resurrection and Kingdom.

Clap your hands, all you nations: shout to God with cries of joy. ² How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth! ³ He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. ⁴ He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. Selah... ⁸ God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. ⁹ The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted. (NIV Psalm 47:1-9)

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, Selah ² that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. ³ May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth... ⁷ God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him. (NIV Psalm 67:1-7)

Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. ² Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples... ⁹ Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. ¹⁰ Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity. (NIV Psalm 96:1-10)

The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. ² Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. ³ Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. ⁴ His lightning lights up the world; the earth sees and trembles. ⁵ The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶ The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory. (NIV Psalm 97:1-6)

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. ² The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. ³ He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music. (NIV Psalm 98:1-4)

The LORD reigns, let the nations tremble; he sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake. ² Great is the LORD in Zion; he is exalted over all the nations. ³ Let them praise your great and awesome name-- he is holy. (NIV Psalm 99:1-3)

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. ² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. ³ Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. (NIV Psalm 100:1-3)

Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. ² For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. (NIV Psalm 117:1-2)

They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰ In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious... ¹² He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth. (NIV Isaiah 11:9-12)

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸ he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. (NIV Isaiah 25:6-8)

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. ² He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. ³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope. ⁵ This is what God the LORD says-- he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: ⁶ I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, ⁷ to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness... ⁹ See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you. ¹⁰ Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them. (NIV Isaiah 42:1-10)

He says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." ⁷ This is what the LORD says-- the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel-- to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." (NIV Isaiah 49:6-7)

Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. ⁵ My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm. (NIV Isaiah 51:4-5)

Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰ The LORD will lay bare his

holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. (NIV Isaiah 52:9-10)

Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed...⁶ And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him...⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.⁸ The Sovereign LORD declares-- he who gathers the exiles of Israel: I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered." (NIV Isaiah 56:1-8)

O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, "Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good..."²¹ Therefore I will teach them-- this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is the LORD. (NIV Jeremiah 16:19-21)

In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.⁷ I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. (NIV Haggai 2:6-7)

Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come,²¹ and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, "Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going."²² And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him...²³ In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you." (NIV Zechariah 8:20-23)

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey...¹⁰ He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (NIV Zechariah 9:9-10)

- D. It is the righteous assembly/church of Jew and Gentile who will inherit the earth in the age to come when Jesus the Messiah returns to restore the glory of the Lord upon the earth. This common eschatological destiny informs a common present identity in the church, which is reflected in a number of different metaphors used in the Scriptures including: common adoption (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-29), political "commonwealth" (Eph. 2:11-13); common household (Eph. 2:19); human body (Eph. 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; Rom. 12:5; etc.); holy olive tree (Rom. 11:16-24), cleansed "unclean" animals (Acts 11:5-18), and inclusion of foreign sheep (Jn. 10:14-16),

Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones (cf. Gentiles) God can raise up children for Abraham.¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire (at the coming of Messiah). (NIV Matthew 3:8-10)

- **...those (Jew and Gentile, cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:9ff; 3:9, 29; 9:24, 10:12; 11:11ff, 15:8ff) who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (NIV Romans 8:14-17)**
- **You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed (Jew and Gentile), and heirs according to the promise. (NIV Galatians 3:26-29)**

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands-¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth (Gk. *politeia*) of Israel ("citizenship in Israel") and strangers to the covenants of promise (of redemption/ resurrection, cf. 1:7, 10, 14, 19; 2:7), having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility...¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens (Gk. *sumpolitēs*) with the saints and members of the household of God...^{3:1} For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles...⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs (Gk. *sungkleronomos*), members of the same body (Gk. *sussomos*), and partakers (Gk. *summetochos*, "fellow partakers" NASB) of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (ESV Ephesians 2:11-3:6)

For if their (unbelieving Jews) rejection (of Jesus as Messiah) is the reconciliation of the world (Gentiles), what will their acceptance (of Jesus as Messiah) be but life from the dead (cf. resurrection)?¹⁶ If the part (righteous Jews) of the dough (all Jews) offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy (cf. 1 Cor. 7:14; Gen. 18:24ff; Jer. 5:1; Ez. 22:30); if the root is holy, so are the branches.¹⁷ If some of the branches (unbelieving Jews) have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot (Gentile), have been grafted in among the others (believing Jews) and now share in the nourishing sap (cf. Spirit as deposit) from the olive root (cf. Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11; Gal. 6:6; etc.),¹⁸ do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root (righteous Jews) supports you (righteous Gentiles)...²⁴ After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree (Gentile people group) that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree (Jewish people group), how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree (after their time of hardness, v.25)! (NIV Romans 11:15-24)

- ***For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.* (ESV 1 Corinthians 7:14)**
- ***Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city.* (NIV Jeremiah 5:1)**
- ***For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings (cf. Spirit as deposit of salvation), they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.* (NIV Romans 15:26-27)**

I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners (cf. Messianic Kingdom, Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:2), and it came down to where I was. ⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air (diversity of Gentiles, cf. Rev. 7:9). ⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, "Get up, Peter (cf. Messiah). Kill and eat (cf. feast of the Kingdom; Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:29; Rev. 19:9; etc.)." ⁸ I replied, "Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth." ⁹ The voice spoke from heaven a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." ¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again... ¹⁸ When they ("the circumcised believers" v.2) heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." (NIV Acts 11:5-18)

***I am the good shepherd (i.e. Messiah, cf. Heb. 13:20; 1 Pe. 5:4; etc.). I know my own (Jewish believers) and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep (Gentiles) that are not of this fold (Israel, "sheep pen" NIV). I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.* (ESV John 10:14-16)**

- E. Thus, concerning the inheritance of the resurrection in the Messianic Kingdom, there is "no difference" between Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 7:19; Col. 3:11). Both have a common faith, common destiny, and common Lord (Eph. 4:1-6), and both will be "richly blessed" by their common Father (Rom. 10:12).

You are all sons of God (i.e. sons of the resurrection, cf. Lk. 20:36; Rom. 8:14ff; Eph. 1:5ff; Jn. 1:12; etc.) through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (NIV Galatians 3:26-29)

- ***Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶ for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.* (ESV Luke 20:35-36)**

For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness (cf. resurrection). ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love ("faith expressing itself through love" NIV). (^{ESV} Galatians 5:5-6)

...that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved... ¹¹ As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (cf. Is. 49:23) ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (cf. Joel 2:32) (^{NIV} Romans 10:8-13)

- ***Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders... ²³ Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame. (^{ESV} Isaiah 49:22-23)***
- ***The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ³² And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls. ^{3:1} In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ² I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land. (^{NIV} Joel 2:31-3:2)***

F. This common destiny and inheritance in the age to come is the basis for unity within the Church in this age. Since the Scriptures describe Jew and Gentile in unity then, they are called to walk according to their calling now.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you (Jew and Gentile, cf. 2:11-3:21) to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body (of believers, cf. 2:19; 3:6) and one Spirit (given as a deposit, cf. 1:14; 2:18)-- just as you were called to one hope (of salvation and redemption, cf. 1:13-14) when you were called-- ⁵ one Lord (Messiah, cf. 1:10, 20, 2:7), one faith (in Messiah), one baptism (of inclusion); ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (^{NIV} Ephesians 4:1-6)

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another ("a spirit of unity among yourselves" NIV) according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, ⁹ and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "Therefore I will give praise to you among the Gentiles, and I will sing to your name." (cf. Ps. 18:49) ¹⁰ Again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people." (cf. Deut. 32:43) ¹¹ And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him." (cf. Ps. 117:1) ¹²

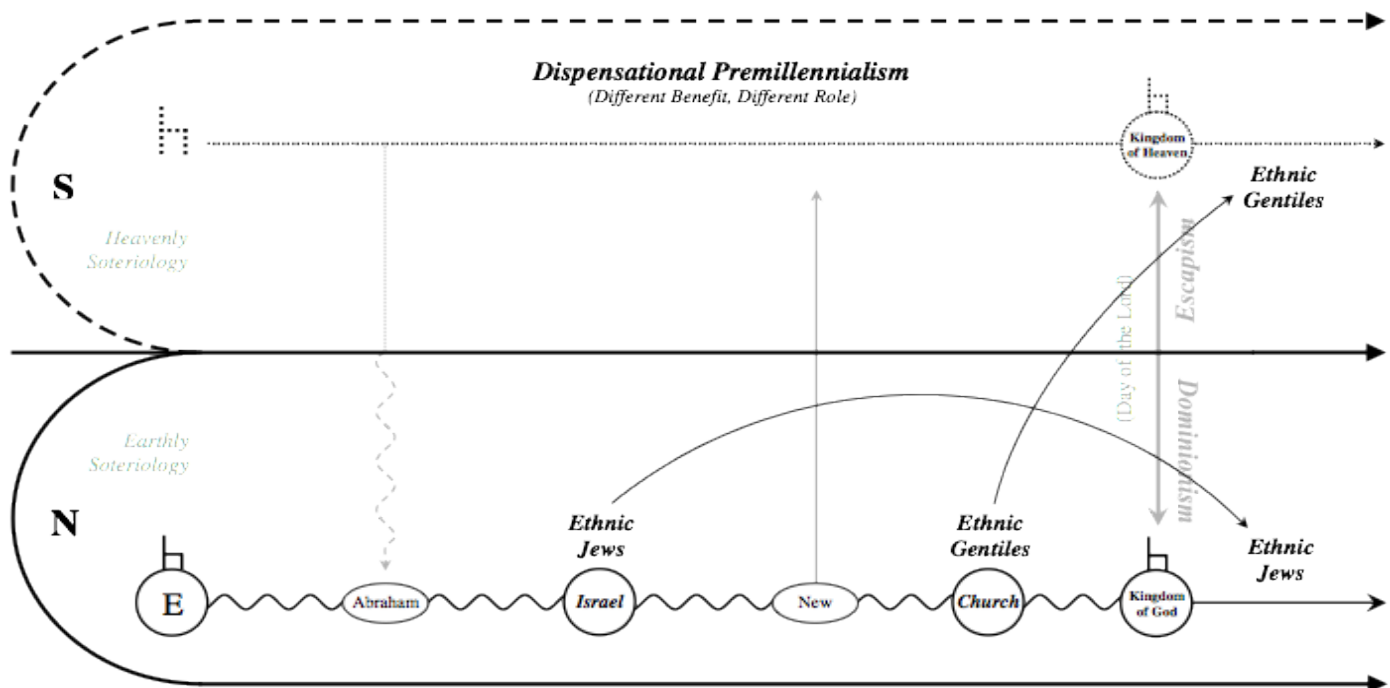
Again Isaiah says, "There shall come the Root of Jesse, and he who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope." (cf. Is. 11:10) ¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NASB Romans 15:5-13)

Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. ¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people (for the Kingdom), holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. (NIV Colossians 3:11-15)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (NIV Philippians 2:1-3)

IV. THE CONTINUITY OF ETHNICITY IN THE AGE TO COME

Christonaturalistic Ethnicity Diagrams



- A. Though Jew and Gentile will receive a common inheritance in the age to come, they will retain their distinctive ethnicity. There will continue to be "nations" in the age to come, and likewise Jews will retain their Jewish ethnicity forevermore.

He carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... ¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel... ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it... ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. (NIV Revelation 21:10-26)

- B. The Messiah will rule over Israel *and* all the nations in his kingdom. The Scriptures therefore clearly portray a distinction between Jew and Gentile in the age to come.

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed... ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. (NIV Daniel 7:14)

I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill... ⁷ You are my Son; today I have become your Father. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. (NIV Psalm 2:6-8)

For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help... ²⁶ The poor ("afflicted" ESV/NASB) will eat and be satisfied (cf. Is. 53:11); they who seek the LORD will praise him (the afflicted one)-- may your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, ²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust (Jew and Gentile) will kneel before him-- those who cannot keep themselves alive. (NIV Psalm 22:24-29)

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. ² He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice... ⁷ In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. ⁸ He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth... ¹¹ All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him... ¹⁷ May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. (NIV Psalm 72:1-17)

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. ¹⁰ For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. (NIV Psalm 86:9-10)

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it... ³ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples... Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (NIV Isaiah 2:2-4)

Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. ⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor. (NIV Isaiah 55:3-5)

At that time they will call Jerusalem The Throne of the LORD, and all nations will gather in Jerusalem to honor the name of the LORD. No longer will they follow the stubbornness of their evil hearts. (NIV Jeremiah 3:17)

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. ¹¹ And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. ¹² And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. (ESV Zechariah 2:10-12)

My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD Almighty. (NIV Malachi 1:11)

- C. Though Jew and Gentile have a common Lord in the age to come and receive a common inheritance, there will remain a distinction of ethnicity and therefore a distinction of governmental roles in the Messiah's rulership over the earth. Paul describes this relationship as a "commonwealth", a unified kingdom composed of *many nations* (i.e. Gentiles) that pledge allegiance to a *common nation* (i.e. Israel).

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh... ¹² were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (ESV Ephesians 2:11-12)

1. This is clearly portrayed throughout the Prophets of the Old Testament. When the Messiah comes, he will unify the earth under the leadership of the Jewish people.

You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come. ¹⁴ For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity. ¹⁵ The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. ¹⁶ For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory. (NIV Psalm 102:13-16)

The LORD will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. ² Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the house of Israel will possess the nations as menservants and maidservants in the LORD's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors. (NIV Isaiah 14:1-2)

See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders. ²³

Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. (NIV Isaiah 49:22-23)

See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. ³ Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn... ¹⁰ Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you... ¹¹ Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations-- their kings led in triumphal procession. ¹² For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined... ¹⁴ The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel. (NIV Isaiah 60:2-14)

In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, ¹² so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name... ¹⁴ I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them... ¹⁵ I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them. (NIV Amos 9:11-15)

2. In this way Israel is God's "firstborn" son among the nations (cf. Ex. 4:22; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1). Paul draws from this idea to paint the picture of the Kingdom as a righteous "household" consisting of the eldest son (righteous remnant of Israel) in relation to the younger sons (righteous remnant of the Gentiles) who will receive the earth as their inheritance (cf. Eph. 2:19).

This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son. (NIV Exodus 4:22-23)

Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and say, "O LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel." ⁸ See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth... ⁹ I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son. ¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: "He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd." (NIV Jeremiah 31:7-10)

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. ¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people (in the Kingdom) and members of God's household. (NIV Ephesians 2:17-19)

- D. This distinction of calling in the age to come is the basis for the burden of Jewish repentance and salvation in this age. In Ancient Near Eastern culture, the father of a house longs for all of

his children to be reconciled, but concerning the inheritance of his estate, it is imperative that the eldest son be restored, since he will ultimately be responsible for managing the household.

I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- ² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race. ⁴ the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. ⁶ It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel (cf. righteous remnant). ⁷ Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ⁸ In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. (NIV Romans 9:1-8)

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew... ⁵ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace... ¹¹ Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. ¹² But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! ¹³ I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry ¹⁴ in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (NIV Romans 11:1-15)