

*Appendix 3*  
*The Messianic Community*  
*and*  
*The Sense in Which Gentiles as*  
*Individuals*  
*Become Part of National Israel*  
*During the Interadvent Period*

**Introduction**

The following conclusions are drawn in Appendix 1:

- Since the beginning of its national status at Sinai, Israel exclusively has been the "people of God."
- Until the salvation of Gentiles as nations at the second advent, "my people" remains exclusively the nation of Israel with no loss of continuity from Old Testament times.
- No new, distinct, and unique group or entity, separate from Israel, comes into existence at Pentecost.
- The Gentiles saved as individuals during the interadvent period must, therefore, in some limited sense, become part of national Israel.

In addition, these conclusions are drawn in Appendix 2:

- Two systematic, didactic passages imply that in some sense Gentiles saved as individuals during this interadvent period become "part" of national Israel.

- In Romans 11:16-24 Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree and with this image portrays believing Gentiles as "wild branches" "grafted" into national Israel. Gentiles are saved as individuals during the interadvent period.
- In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul points out that Gentiles had previously been "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel" but have now become "fellow citizens" with the Jewish remnant in national Israel. They are thus no longer "strangers" to Israel's covenants.
- It is necessary to explain the limited sense in which Gentiles in this interadvent period become in some way "part" of national Israel so as not to jeopardize in any way Israel's integrity as a nation or her covenantal and prophetic future.

That explanation is constructed in this appendix. The basis for constructing it must include a number of Scriptural observations and theological tenets. These are summarized in the next three sections dealing with Israel, the Gentiles, and the ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*, "church").

## **National Israel**

A number of important tenets regarding national Israel are needed to accurately define the sense in which Gentiles have become part of Israel as individuals during the interadvent period.

Chapter 5 contains the following summary of Israel's future according to its covenants and prophets. This future includes both spiritual and physical blessings. At the second advent, Jesus, the Messiah of Israel will:

- Regather all of Israel back to the land God promised them as an everlasting possession: Isaiah 11:10-12; Ezekiel 37:15-28; Micah 2:12-13; Zechariah 8:1-8; 10:8-12.
- Accomplish Israel's spiritual redemption based on his atoning work at his first coming: Zechariah 12:10-13:1. This is the prophecy specifically fulfilled when the natural branches are grafted back into their own olive tree.

- Reestablish the kingdom of Israel and rule the world from Jerusalem on the throne of David: Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:3-8; 30:8-9; 33:14-16; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-12.
- Establish the universal knowledge of God in both Israel and the nations: Isaiah 2:2-3; 11:9; Jeremiah 3:16-18; 31:31-34; Zephaniah 2:11; Zechariah 8:20-23; 14:16.
- Bring in worldwide peace: Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4.

Chapter 5 also argued for the following points regarding the salvation of Gentiles:

- Gentile salvation is through Israel and only through Israel.
- All Gentile salvation is based on the spiritual blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed."<sup>1</sup>
- The ultimate salvation and blessing of Israel itself is the preeminent component of God's plan of salvation, the capstone and goal of that plan developed in the covenants and prophets. The new covenant, with its saving blood of the Messiah,<sup>2</sup> was made "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,"<sup>3</sup> not with the Gentiles. Salvation flowing to the nations is always derivative and secondary.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Gentiles: Individuals and Nations**

There are two distinct periods of Gentile salvation:

- During the interadvent period, salvation flows to

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1 Gen. 12:3.

2 Luke 22:20.

3 Jer. 31:31.

4 Cf. Rom. 11:12. Even during this interadvent period, the salvation of Gentiles as individuals, though based on the Abrahamic covenant, is for the purpose of making Israel jealous and bringing about her return to the Lord (Deut. 32:21; Rom. 11:11, 13-14). This issue and specifically the text of Deut. 32:21 are discussed in the next section.

the Gentiles as individuals.

- At the second advent, salvation flows to the Gentiles as whole nations.

Both are based on the Abrahamic covenant,<sup>5</sup> and thus as always, salvation comes to the Gentiles through Israel and only through Israel. Both are also mentioned by Paul in Romans 11.

- In verse 11 he makes reference to the salvation of Gentiles during the interadvent period.
- In verse 12 he makes reference to the salvation of Gentiles at the second advent when "all Israel will be saved."
- In verse 15 he makes reference to both periods of Gentile salvation.

Therefore, during Israel's partial and temporary fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles as individuals. At Israel's full restoration at the second advent, salvation will come to the Gentiles as nations, portrayed by Paul as a much greater blessing for the Gentiles. Note that therefore during this interadvent period salvation is extended to individuals in both Israel and the Gentile world; at the second advent salvation is extended to nations, both Israel and Gentile nations.

### The Salvation of Gentiles as Nations

The prophets clearly predict the salvation of Gentiles as

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5 Eric Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity*, trans. G. H. Lang (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p. 177, provides a similar analysis: "The fact remains that in the period of the New Testament church Old Testament prophecies of the conversion of Gentiles are being fulfilled. But, as both experience and Scripture testify, this applies first of all to the salvation of *individuals*: 'God will *take out* of the nations a people for His name' (Acts 15:14). But this does not contradict the other fact that, in the course of the carrying through of this His one inclusive plan for the Gentiles, God will hereafter cause a still greater ingathering of Gentiles, in which the nations as *nations* will be converted, and, with Israel as a *people*, will stand under one common covenant of blessing and peace under the one sovereignty of Messiah as King of Israel and King of mankind (Isa. 19:23-25)" (emphasis original).

nations at the second advent:

10 "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. 11 "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. 12 The LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. 13 "Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation."<sup>6</sup>

As Appendix 1 argues, up until this point in time "my people" consisted exclusively of the nation of Israel. Now at the second advent Gentile nations are added to "my people." The Gentile nations become part of "my people" based only on the Abrahamic covenant. Note the following points.

- The nations becoming part of "my people" represents the final, climactic fulfillment of that part of the Abrahamic covenant which addresses the nations: through Israel all the nations of the earth will be blessed. It is in this sense alone--namely, receiving this blessing promised in the covenant made with Israel's patriarchs--that they become part of "my people."
- The covenantal sense in which the nations become part of "my people" retains rather than eliminates or obliterates the covenantal distinctives of national Israel.
- Israel remains a distinct nation, and the Gentile nations remain distinct nations. Gentile nations do not become part of the nation of Israel.
- The nations receive the spiritual blessings of

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6 Zech. 2:10-13. See also Isa. 11:10; 19:23-25. However, mention of individuals is not entirely missing. For example, Jer. 31:34: "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest." Also, Zech. 8:23: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

salvation, based on the promise regarding the nations in the Abrahamic covenant, and there is no longer the former enmity between Israel and the nations.

- Despite all these developments at and following the second advent, Israel remains Yahweh's special "portion in the holy land," and he will "again choose Jerusalem."

In commenting on Zechariah 2:10-13, David Baron connects both periods of Gentile salvation to Romans 11:

During the present Dispensation, through Israel's temporary "fall," salvation has come to the Gentiles, and the "diminishing of them" has been overruled of God to "the riches of the Gentiles." But this "salvation" and "riches" extend only to individuals. God hath visited the "Gentiles" to "take out of them a people for His Name."...

Then, when "*all Israel shall be saved*"; when the miracle of a whole nation being born in a day shall first be witnessed on the earth in the case of the Jews;...then nations, as nations, "shall join themselves unto Jehovah," and the day of which prophets and psalmists sang, and for which they yearned, the day of universal peace and righteousness, when God's way shall be known in all the world, and His saving health among all nations, shall at last break on this earth.

But even when all nations of the earth shall walk in the light of Jehovah, the special position of Israel, as God's peculiar people on the earth, shall still be made manifest. "*And Jehovah shall inherit Judah His portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again*": which reminds us of Isa. xix. 25, where we read that even after the blessing comes to the saved of the nations whom Jehovah of hosts shall bless, saying: "Blessed be Egypt, My people, and Assyria, the work of My hands," He will still say of Israel, "Mine inheritance," for the Lord's inalienable "portion" from among all the other nations of the earth "is his people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. xxxii. 9)...

The words, "and shall yet choose Jerusalem again,"

so to say, "round off" the glorious promises in this chapter, and are the second of a threefold reiteration by Zechariah of Isa. xiv. 1. The meaning...is, that Jehovah shall then, by the various acts of lovingkindness to His people and to the land, which are enumerated in this prophecy, *demonstrate* in the sight of the whole world *the fact and the immutability* of His original choice of them.<sup>7</sup>

### The Salvation of Gentiles as Individuals

Does the Old Testament also predict the salvation of Gentiles as individuals during the interadvent period?

At the Jerusalem council James seemed to think so. Referring to Peter's visit to the Gentile household Cornelius in Acts 10, he says,

Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.<sup>8</sup>

However, he quotes Amos, who mentions only "nations":

"In that day I will raise up the fallen  
booth of David,  
And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up  
its ruins,  
And rebuild it as in the days of old;  
That they may possess the remnant of Edom  
And all the nations who are called by My name,"

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7 David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1972; original publication date, 1918), pp. 78-80 (emphasis original). Likewise Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 282, insists that "the blessing of other nations will not detract from Israel's; they will still be the portion of the Lord and His chosen. His grace toward them was hindered for a time, but His covenant abides permanently. (Cp. Ro 11:28-29.)" Similarly, Kenneth L. Barker, *Zechariah*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), VII:620: "The conversion of many nations to the Lord does not abrogate the promise and purpose of God for Israel, his chosen and special covenant people." Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 52, draws the same conclusion when commenting on v. 12.

8 Acts 15:14.

Declares the LORD who does this.<sup>9</sup>

This citation certainly settled the debate over circumcision, so it would appear that James sees the salvation extended to Gentiles as individuals in the interadvent period as a precursor, a foretaste, a partial fulfillment, or perhaps even the beginning of the ultimate, climactic fulfillment on the national level depicted in texts such as Amos 9:11-12 and Zechariah 2:10-13.<sup>10</sup> Apparently Paul also sees the five Scriptures he quotes in Rom. 15:7-12 (2 Sam. 22:50; Ps. 18:49; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 117:1; Isa. 11:10) as indicating the same thing.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this precursive fulfillment is to send salvation to the Gentiles as individuals in order to make Israel jealous.<sup>12</sup>

However, the Hebrew and Greek words used add a bit of uncertainty. In the Old Testament, the passage from Amos quoted by James in Acts 15:16-17 and all five passages quoted by Paul in Romans 15:7-12 use the Hebrew word גוֹיִם (*gôyim*), the plural of גוֹי (*gôy*), which means *nation* or *people* in the sense in which "nation" is used in English. Thus with reference to גוֹי,

"one must conclude that the basic idea is that of a defined body or group of people, or some specific large segment of a given body...The term *gôy* is used especially to refer to specifically defined political, ethnic or territorial groups of people."<sup>13</sup>

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9 Amos 9:11-12 cited by James in Acts 15:16-17. There are textual issues with James' citation that are beyond the scope of this subject. The only point to note here is the mention of "nations" in both Amos 9:12 and Acts 15:17.

10 Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 277, draws the same conclusion: "The complete fulfillment of Amos's [*sic*] prophecy will take place when the undivided realm of King David's time is restored. Meantime, this is a beginning." Saucy's term is "an earnest or guarantee of the final fulfillment" (*The Church in God's Program*, p. 81).

11 Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity*, p. 172, describes this list of prophecies in Rom. 15:7-12 as "a series of separate Old Testament prophecies which he [Paul] applied to the conversion of Gentiles in this present age, among which was even the kingdom prophecy of Isaiah concerning the coming 'Shoot out of the root of Jesse which standeth to rule over the nations' (Isa. 11:10)."

12 Rom. 11:11, 14.

13 Gerard Van Groningen, "gôy." *TWOT*, pp. 153-54. See also *BDB*, p. 156.

Therefore, all six of these quotations probably refer to "nations" in the English sense of the word. The Greek word used for ׀יִג in these six New Testament passages is εθνη (*ethnē*), the plural of εθνος (*ethnos*), which can mean "nation" as in English, but it can also mean individuals from the nations.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, although the Hebrew word used in the six passages cited is most likely to be interpreted as "nations," it is not possible to determine simply from the use of εθνη in Acts 15:17 and Romans 15:7-12 whether James and Paul were thinking in terms of "Gentiles" (individuals) or "nations." Thus the best conclusion is probably the one suggested above: James and Paul see the salvation of individual Gentiles as precursive or partial fulfillments of the climactic fulfillment on the national level at the second advent depicted in the quoted prophetic texts.

Nevertheless, the salvation of the Gentiles as individuals during this interadvent period does seem, in fact, to be foreseen in the Old Testament, specifically in Deuteronomy 32:21:

They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God;  
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.  
So I will make them jealous with *those who* are not a  
people;  
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

Saucy argues as follows:

To be sure, God's blessing of Gentiles was a recurrent theme of Old Testament prophecy, beginning with the promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3) and onward. The Gentiles would be blessed during the glorious reign of the Messiah (Is 60:1-3; 62:1-2). Hint was even given of their blessing before the kingdom age during a time of Israel's disobedience (Deu 32:21; cf. Ro 10:19; 11:11).<sup>15</sup>

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14 E.g., Acts 14:5; 26:17; Rom. 3:29; Gal. 2:12, 14; Eph. 3:1; and possibly others. See AG, p. 217.

15 Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, p. 60. On p. 76, Saucy also writes, "The original promise to Abraham included this blessing upon those outside of Israel: 'In thee shall all the families of the

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 in Romans 10:19 and then applies the concept of making Israel jealous by means of Gentiles during the interadvent period in Romans 11:11.<sup>16</sup> Saucy further states,

Old Testament prophecies looked forward to the salvation of the new covenant extending also to the Gentiles. The Servant of God not only restores Israel, but God says, "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Is. 49:6b; cf. 42:1, 6; 60:3). This prophecy looked forward to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom at the coming of Christ when salvation would flow through converted Israel to all nations. But this salvation has now come to the church during the time of the mysteries of the kingdom between Christ's first and second comings as an earnest or guarantee of the

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earth be blessed' (Gen. 12:3), and the outworking of this promise is the subject of many of the Old Testament prophecies. The vast majority of these relate to that time when converted Israel will be the channel of blessing to all nations during the kingdom reign of Christ on earth (Is 2:2-4; 60:1 ff.; 62:2; Zec 8:22-23). However, with the institution of the mystery phase of the kingdom, the New Testament teaches that this blessing has already come to the Gentiles during the church age. This present blessing does not supersede or cancel the fulfillment of millennial blessings, but is rather part of that program of God which was not clearly revealed in prophecy. There are, in fact, indications of God's turning from Israel to bring salvation to others even during this time before the restoration of Israel. He promises to provoke Israel to jealousy 'with those which are not a people' (Deu 32:21b). The apostle Paul sees this promise fulfilled in the salvation of the church (Ro 11:11; 10:19)." Saucy makes a similar statement on p. 69.

16 C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 3 vols., in vol. 1 in *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols., C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975; original publication date, ca. 1864), III:477-78, argues that Paul did not "adapt" Deut. 32:21 to the situation he describes in Rom. 10:19 but correctly interpreted its intent: "God would therefore excite them to jealousy and ill-will by a no-people, a foolish nation, i.e., by preferring a no-people to the Israelites, transferring His favor to them, and giving the blessing which Israel had despised to a foolish nation. It is only with this explanation of the words that full justice is done to the idea of retribution; and it was in this sense that Paul understood this passage as referring to the adoption of the Gentiles as the people of God (Rom. x. 19), and that not merely by adaptation...but by interpreting it in exact accordance with the true sense of the words. The adoption of the Gentile world into covenant with the Lord involved the rejection of the disobedient Israel..."

final fulfillment.<sup>17</sup>

One final point should be made. James' statement in Acts 15:14 that God's current work is "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name" does not constitute the formation of a second "people of God." If this is what James meant, then this "people" would consist of Gentiles only. Rather, the Gentiles during this interadvent period become in some sense part of national Israel and thus part of "His people." As argued in Appendix 1, "His people" is limited to the nation of Israel until the second advent when Gentile *nations* expand "His people."<sup>18</sup>

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17 Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, p. 81. According to Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 743, in Rom. 11:13-15 "Paul builds upon Isaiah 49:1-13 where Isaiah taught the same thing: the Messiah would come to Israel, Israel would reject Him, and the Messiah would then, for awhile, become the light to the Gentiles; but eventually Israel will return to Him and be restored. Paul does not say anything new here; he just points out the way Isaiah 49 is being fulfilled in this day."

18 James in Acts 15:14 states that during this interadvent period God is "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." Pentecost, *Things to Come*, p. 133, states that "the 'taking out of a people' thus constitutes God's present-age program. This people constitutes the church, the body of which He is the head (Eph. 1:22-23)..." Similarly, Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, pp. 73-74, takes the same view: "The consistent witness of Scripture is to the distinctiveness of Israel and the church. Israel is an elect nation called to witness to the glory of God as a nation among nations...The prophecies declare that she will yet fulfill this calling. The church, on the other hand, is a people called out from every nation as 'a people for his name' (Acts 15:14)." Dispensationalism, therefore, takes this "people for his name" as the church, a separate people distinct from Israel. Of course, there is a serious problem with this view. James says that God is "**taking from among the Gentiles** a people for His name." If this "people for his name" is the church, then the church started with Peter's visit to Cornelius and consists exclusively of Gentiles. However, the dispensational view is a misinterpretation of James. Amos 9:11-12 describes "all the nations who are called by My name," which makes these nations part of "My people." The reference in Amos is to the Gentile nations that are saved as nations at the second advent and become member nations of "My people" in addition to the nation of Israel, as in Zech. 2:10-13. Amos is not talking about a second "people of God" but an enlarged people of God. In his time and ours, the people of God still consists exclusively of Israel but at the second advent is enlarged to include not only the nation of Israel but Gentile nations as well. James cites this text because he sees God's current activity of taking out of the Gentiles a people for his name as a precursive or partial fulfillment of Amos 9:11-12 prior to the final, climactic fulfillment in terms of Gentile nations at the second advent. Therefore, the "people" in Acts 15:14 is still a reference to national Israel, the only people of God prior to the second advent. To become part of this "people," these individual Gentiles must in some sense become part of national

## The ἐκκλησία and the "Mystery"

A number of important tenets regarding the ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*), the "church," are also needed to define the sense in which Gentiles as individuals have become part of Israel during the interadvent period.

*First*, the point was made in the previous section that the current salvation of Gentiles was foreseen in the Old Testament. If it is correct, then this mere salvation of the Gentiles today cannot be taken as part of the "mystery" in Ephesians 3:2-6 and Colossians 1:24-26, first revealed in New Testament times to the "apostles and prophets."<sup>19</sup>

*Second*, if the mystery is not Gentile salvation of individuals during this interadvent period, what is the mystery of Ephesians 3:2-6 and Colossians 1:24-26? It is defined in Ephesians 3:6:

...the Gentiles are **fellow** heirs and **fellow** members of the body, and **fellow** partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel...<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the mystery not revealed in the Old Testament is that Gentiles saved as individuals during this interadvent period have a fully equal status with believing Jews in the Messianic community.

By contrast, it should be noted that when Gentiles are saved as nations at the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom on earth, there will not be equality between the nation of Israel and the Gentile nations. The nation of Israel will have preeminence in some respects over the

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Israel--the only people of God during this interadvent period.

19 The background for Paul's use of μυστηριον (*mustērion*), "mystery," is the OT, not the Greek mystery religions. It is a technical term for "divine relation," and refers to the hidden or secret thoughts and plans of God, which, for us to know, must be revealed to us by him. One could say a "mystery" in Paul's sense is a "revealed secret." AG, p. 532, make the following statement: "Out lit. uses it to mean the secret thoughts, plans, and dispensations of God which are hidden fr. the human reason, as well as fr. all other comprehension below the divine level, and hence must be revealed to those for whom they are intended."

20 Emphasis added.

redeemed Gentile nations.

In the "blessings and curses" chapter, Deuteronomy 28, the Lord promised Israel that if they obey him and keep his commandments, they will have a higher status than the Gentile nations.

Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, in the Old Testament Israel failed and did not achieve this promised status. However, when "all Israel will be saved" at the second advent and God writes his law on their hearts,<sup>22</sup> the prophets are quite clear that Israel will have the preeminent position among the nations of the earth. For example:

10 Foreigners will build up your walls,  
And their kings will minister to you;  
For in My wrath I struck you,  
And in My favor I have had compassion on you.

11 Your gates will be open continually;  
They will not be closed day or night,  
So that *men* may bring to you the wealth  
of the nations,

With their kings led in procession.

12 For the nation and the kingdom which  
will not serve you will perish,  
And the nations will be utterly ruined.

13 The glory of Lebanon will come to you,  
The juniper, the box tree and the cypress together,  
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;  
And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.

14 The sons of those who afflicted you  
will come bowing to you,  
And all those who despised you will bow themselves  
at the sole of your feet;

And they will call you the city of the LORD,  
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 Whereas you have been forsaken and hated  
With no one passing through,

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21 Deut. 28:1.

22 Rom. 11:26; Jer. 31:33.

I will make you an everlasting pride,  
A joy from generation to generation.  
16 You will also suck the milk of nations  
And suck the breast of kings;  
Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior  
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.<sup>23</sup>

Thus on an individual level during the interadvent period, and presumably into the Messianic kingdom, Gentiles as individuals have an equal status with Jews as individuals. However, on a national level, starting at the second advent, the nation of Israel has a preeminent position over the Gentile nations.

### The *qāhāl* of Messiah

Based on the evidence marshaled in chapters 3 and 4, chapter 7 developed the final arguments for identifying the *קְהָל* (*qāhāl*) or *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklēsia*) to which Jesus referred in Matthew 16:18:

The *qāhāl* is the Messianic assembly or community within national Israel.

It was thoroughly Hebraic in origin, nature, and standing with a direct link to the use of *qāhāl* for Israel's remnant in the Old Testament. Moreover, its constituency consisted of Jewish believers in the Messiah who were called the "remnant chosen by grace" by Paul in Romans 11:5.

Also, as argued in Appendix 1, the prophets viewed the people of God to be limited to national Israel until the second advent. This precludes any new "people of God" beginning during the interadvent period. This in turn implies that the Messianic community remains within the broad scope of national Israel until the second advent. Individual believing Gentiles are admitted into it and given equal status with the individual believing Jews of

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<sup>23</sup> Isa. 60:10-16; see also Isa. 14:1-2; 49:22-23; 61:5-7.

the remnant.

## A Limited Covenantal Sense

Having reviewed this background material, it is now possible to formulate a meaningful but limited sense in which Gentiles become "part" of Israel.

### The Need for Defining This Sense

The various points made in chapters 3-7 and in Appendices 1-2 demand the need for such a definition in several different ways.

- The *qāhāl* or ἐκκλησία is the Messianic community within national Israel. Until Acts 10, it consisted exclusively of Jewish believers, the "remnant" of Romans 11:5.<sup>24</sup> However, beginning in Acts 10, Gentiles as individuals are added to this *qāhāl* or Messianic community. But if they are added to the Messianic community, which in its nature is a subset of national Israel, this in turn implies that these Gentiles by that very addition in some sense become part of national Israel. Therefore, in what sense are they "part" Israel?
- *As argued in Appendix 1:* The prophets viewed the "people of God" to be limited to national Israel until the second advent when Gentiles are added as nations to the people of God. This precludes any new "people of God" distinct from Israel during the interadvent period. So if Gentiles saved as individuals during this period become part of some "people of God," they again in some sense must become part of national Israel, the only current component of God's people. Therefore, in what sense are they "part" Israel?
- *As argued in Appendix 2:* Paul in his metaphor of the olive tree pictures "wild branches" (Gentiles as individuals) grafted in among the natural branches remaining on the cultivated olive tree (the "remnant" of Jewish believers within national

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24 Concerning the Samaritans in Acts 8, see footnote 46 in chapter 10.

Israel). The Gentiles are not grafted into the remnant. Rather they are grafted into the olive tree itself, which as argued in Appendix 2, represents the nation of Israel as a whole. The wild branches remain wild, implying that the Gentiles remain Gentiles distinct from Jews. Therefore, in what sense are they "grafted" into Israel?

- *As also argued in Appendix 2:* Paul in Ephesians 2 states that Gentiles had previously been "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel." However, now they have become "fellow-citizens with the saints," that is, with the remnant of Romans 11:5. This must mean that Gentiles have now become citizens of national Israel. The remnant, of course, also consists of citizens of national Israel. The believing Gentiles have joined these Jewish believers as fellow-citizens of national Israel. Therefore, in what sense do they become "citizens" of Israel?

#### What This Sense Cannot Mean

Before attempting to define the sense in which Gentiles as individuals can become "part" of national Israel, it is helpful to articulate in the strongest terms what this sense cannot mean.

- "Israel," or perhaps better, the scope of the term "Israel," cannot lose her ethnic identity as the physical descendants of Jacob.
- Israel cannot lose her distinct status as a nation, either during the interadvent period with the salvation of Gentiles as individuals or with the salvation of Gentiles as nations during the Messianic kingdom on earth.
- Israel cannot lose her standing as the chosen people, the covenant nation of God.
- Israel as a nation cannot lose any of her physical or territorial promises given to her in her covenants and prophetic Scriptures to be fulfilled at the second advent or during the Messianic kingdom on earth; they will be fulfilled literally by national Israel and only by national Israel.

Gentiles do not appropriate and then fulfill Israel's physical or territorial promises in some "spiritual sense."<sup>25</sup>

- Israel as a nation cannot lose her centrality and preeminence in God's total plan of redemption. The salvation and blessing of national Israel herself, not the salvation and blessing of the Gentiles, is the preeminent component of God's plan as developed in the Old Testament covenants and prophets. The central goal of this plan is that "all Israel" be saved.
- The Gentiles as individuals cannot lose their identity as Gentiles; they do not become proselytes or Israelites in any sense.<sup>26</sup>

This list would make it seem that there is no sense in which Gentiles can become "part" of Israel. However, there must be some consistent way to define this sense in order to explain the points raised above in the section "The Need for Defining This Sense."

#### What This Sense Does Mean

These points should be reviewed:

- All Gentile salvation, whether now as individuals or

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25 Saucy, *The Church in God's Program*, p. 82: "It is interesting to note that none of the physical blessings attendant upon the realizations of the new covenant for Israel are cited in the New Testament with regard to the church (cf. 2 Co 3:6-7; Heb. 8:8-13 with Jer 31:31-40; Eze 36:24-38)." Saucy continues with a statement that reflects the dispensational position regarding the church. However, his statement quoted here is agreeable both to dispensationalism and the position taken in this book.

26 Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, pp. 701-02, is absolutely correct: "These Ephesians passages [Eph. 2:11-13; 3:6] clarify what is meant by the Galatians statement of becoming heirs to the promise [Gal. 3:29]. It does not mean that Gentile believers become Jews in a mystical way, but rather that they become partakers in the spiritual blessings of the Jewish covenants and receive this privilege by faith. This act does not make them spiritual Jews but spiritual Gentiles. Even by being partakers, they do not share in all the facets of the covenants, but only in the spiritual blessings contained in them. Things such as inheritance of the land and circumcision, among others, are not appropriated by believing Gentiles. These elements are exclusively for the Jew."

at the second advent as nations, is through Israel and only through Israel.

- All Gentile salvation, whether now as individuals or at the second advent as nations, is based on the Abrahamic covenant, one of Israel's covenants: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed."
- Gentile salvation as individuals during the interadvent period makes them "part" of the nation of Israel in some sense. As individuals, Jewish and Gentile believers within the Messianic community, which itself is within national Israel, have equal status.
- Gentile salvation as nations at the second advent does not make these nations "part" of national Israel in any sense; it simply expands the "people of God" by adding nations in addition to Israel. As a nation, Israel has a preeminent role over the Gentile nations.

The role of the Abrahamic covenant in the spiritual blessings of salvation for both Israel and the Gentiles is the key to defining a sense in which it can be said that individual Gentiles during this interadvent period become "part" of national Israel.

*First*, by design and intent, the ultimate, climactic fulfillment of Genesis 12:3, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed," occurs at the second advent with the inauguration of the Messianic kingdom on earth when Gentiles as nations are saved. These details are explained in the prophets. Therefore, at that time these nations need not and do not become part of national Israel in any sense in order to receive these promised blessings. The blessings are based on Israel's Abrahamic covenant, but these nations are added as nations to the people of God, which until that point had consisted solely of the nation of Israel. Thus at the second advent these blessings are not limited to the nation of Israel but flow directly to the Gentile nations as members of God's people.

*Second*, during the interadvent period, there is a precursive or partial fulfillment of this promise of salvation to the Gentile nations. It is experienced by Gentiles on an individual level to make Israel jealous.

However, since there is always only one "people of God," and since prior to the second advent the "people of God" is limited to national Israel, the spiritual blessings of salvation now flow only to Israel and not yet directly to Gentiles. Therefore, the Gentiles as individuals must in some way be brought into association with Israel to experience these blessings of salvation.

*Third*, also during this interadvent period, the bulk of national Israel is in unbelief. However, within Israel there is a "remnant" of Jewish believers, as was often the case in the Old Testament. This remnant is the Messianic community within national Israel, the *qāhāl* or ἐκκλησία named and identified by Jesus in Matthew 16:18.

*Fourth*, since during the interadvent period God wanted to send salvation to the Gentiles on an individual level to provoke Israel to jealousy, he does this by bringing them into the Messianic community, which as the believing remnant is a part of national Israel. These Gentiles then ipso facto also become part of Israel together with the believing remnant. It is only in this way that Gentiles can receive these blessings of salvation during a time in God's redemptive program when the blessings are limited to national Israel.

*Fifth*, the Messianic community is to retain this status until the second advent when "all Israel will be saved." Then the Messianic community per se within national Israel disappears when it becomes the entirety of the nation. The remnant expands to the nation, and the Gentiles within this community also expand to their respective nations. At this point not only is "all Israel" righteous, but the Gentile nations are also righteous.

*Sixth*, during the interadvent period, the Gentiles, saved as individuals, therefore become "part" of national Israel in one sense and one sense only: they share in or receive, together with the remnant, the spiritual blessings of salvation that flow to the nation from its Abrahamic covenant.<sup>27</sup> But since they receive them before the designed, ultimate fulfillment of the promise to the

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27 This sharing or receiving, of course, is Paul's point regarding the Gentiles in Rom. 11:11-24. See also Rom. 15:27. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 744: "Gentiles have been made partakers of Jewish spiritual blessings as contained in the Abrahamic Covenant."

nations in the covenant, they share them, not directly, but within Israel, with whom the Abrahamic covenant in its entirety was made.

Therefore, the following conclusion is offered:

Gentiles today become part of Israel only in a **very limited covenantal sense**:

The sense is simply **sharing Israel's spiritual covenantal blessings of salvation directly through Israel during the interadvent period before they are ultimately granted directly to the Gentiles as member nations in "His people" at the second advent in the climactic fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.**

The sense begins and ends there.

We might not have called this limited sense a "grafting" into Israel, but Paul did.<sup>28</sup> We might not have called this limited sense "citizenship" in Israel, but Paul did. The Gentiles as individuals during the interadvent period require a direct relationship to Israel in order to share in or receive Israel's spiritual blessings. This direct relationship Paul calls a grafting into Israel and citizenship in Israel. He nevertheless maintains in Romans 11:25-29 the absolute national distinction of Israel, the physical descendants of Jacob, and the complete fulfillment of all the Old Testament covenants and prophetic promises to Israel as a nation.

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28 The sharing of Israel's spiritual blessings is called a "grafting" into Israel in Paul's metaphor to show the *source* of these blessings, namely, the patriarchs of Israel. In the olive tree analogy, then, the Gentiles are viewed as grafted into the olive tree in order to receive the flow of Israel's spiritual blessings of salvation during the interadvent period from the olive tree root--the patriarchs with whom the Abrahamic covenant was made: "You...were grafted in among them [the natural branches remaining on the olive tree] and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree" (verse 17).

## The Centrality of Israel

This set of three appendices closes with some comments on the implications of the theological position developed in them.

*First and foremost*, this position affirms the nation of Israel, the apple of God's eye,<sup>29</sup> as the center of his attention--past, present, and future.

*Second*, the position taken here, not the dispensational position, is the opposite end of the theological spectrum from replacement theology and amillennialism.

*Third*, it has this position on the theological spectrum because it casts the nation of Israel as the center of God's redemptive plan to bring salvation to the world and as the agency through which it will be accomplished. Israel was the center of this plan during the Old Testament and will be its center during the millennial kingdom. The position taken in this book brings into focus that same centrality during the interadvent period. These are some of the particulars of this period:

- The focus of God's attention is on national Israel. That is why the gospel must be preached "to the Jew first."<sup>30</sup>
- In the upper room as part of the Passover just before his atoning sacrifice, Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) explained that by his death he would initiate the new covenant that had been made "with the house of Judah and with the house of Israel."<sup>31</sup> It was upon this covenant with Israel that all salvation is based.
- The Messianic community is the believing remnant within national Israel; it is God's witness to the unbelieving bulk of the nation until "all Israel is saved" at the second advent.
- Gentiles play a lesser role. They are brought into the Messianic community as a down payment to the

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29 Zech. 2:8.

30 Rom. 1:16.

31 Luke 22:20; Jer. 31:31.

future blessing of Gentile nations that will result from "all Israel" being saved. However, God's purpose in this down payment is to make the unbelieving bulk of national Israel jealous. The center piece of God's plan of redemption was, is, and always will be the salvation of his chosen people, Israel.

- The centrality of Israel is center stage in Paul's didactic passages of Romans 11 and Ephesians 2. Gentiles receive their salvation during the interadvent period only by being grafted into Israel and becoming fellow citizens of Israel in the sense defined in this appendix.