



THEN the
END

will come

WEEK 2: ISRAEL & the CHURCH



5 Truths that will shape your eschatology

As I'm sure you're aware, eschatology (the doctrine of the end times) is one of those doctrines where godly people disagree. Many of these people have spent years studying the Scripture and searching out the best possible interpretation. They have attended schools of academia. They have studied the original languages. They have read from the brightest minds in history. And yet, these men whom we respect, have been unable to find common ground on this subject.

So why study eschatology? Why waste our time looking at a doctrine at which the experts can't agree? Well, the simple answer is found in **2 Peter 1:3**. Peter writes, "*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.*" In this verse Peter says that we have access to everything we need to live the Christian life the way that God expects. It happens when we access "divine power" – the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who strengthens us for the Christian walk. And it happens as we pursue the "**knowledge of God**" that is found in the **Bible** – the **knowledge of God** from **Genesis** to **Revelation**.

So why study eschatology? We study it because it's in the Bible. We study it because we believe it will lead to greater knowledge of God. We study it because we know that in some way it will help us to live the life that God commanded us to live. And we study it because we want to grow in our worship of God.

Our approach will be a little different from other studies we have done. Rather than looking at the individual pieces of this puzzle and trying to arrange them into a cohesive picture, we're going to zoom out to the broader themes of Scripture that will help us understand the doctrine as a whole. Rather than trying to create a detailed timeline of events that lead to a final conclusion, our study will seek to provide a roadmap that so we can sort out the details for ourselves. We're going to focus on the broader truths upon which most theologians agree, and then allow those truths to shape our personal perspective of this doctrine.

We'll take those truths one at a time, and then perhaps take a closer look at how these truths relate to the COVENANTS (i.e. promises) God made to his people throughout the Old Testament. **Here's a list of the 5 truths that we'll cover in the next several weeks.**

1. God's word is clear (perspicuity) and is meant to be interpreted literally.
2. Israel and the church are one in Christ, yet distinct.
3. God will fulfill his unconditional covenants to Israel.
4. The "day of the Lord" is a time of physical judgment of the wicked on the earth.
5. Those who are "in Christ" through faith will not experience God's wrath because Christ already endured it on the cross.

ISRAEL and the CHURCH

one and yet distinct

How do you begin to describe something that is the **SAME** and yet **DIFFERENT**?

It sounds like a contradiction of terms – polar opposites that have no common ground. And yet, the Bible calls attention to this truth in several instances. Even in our own experience we can identify with it.

I'm embarrassed to mention this, but as a kid I had dozens of stuffed animals. They came in various shapes and sizes. They represented different kinds of animals (bears, bunnies, sheep, dogs, etc.). They were different colors and had been given to me at different stages of my life. Some were soft, and others, not so soft. But every morning when I made my bed, I wanted to make sure that none of my stuffed animals felt neglected or unloved, so I would shift them into "positions of honor" on my bed so that they would all have their turn in the middle. I wanted to make sure that none of them would get "preferential treatment." – I know what you're saying – he's CRAZY – but this was my sense of impartial love for these objects of affection. All of them belonged to me – and in that way, they were all ONE. Yet, each of them was different in their own way, and each of them had special significance based on when they were given (birthday, Christmas), or who they were given by.

Maybe you never did that, but if you have children, you can probably relate. Which one of your kids do you love the **BEST**? Okay, maybe you shouldn't answer that question. But for many of us, that's a hard question to consider. We love all of our KIDS the **SAME**, and yet we also love all of our KIDS **DIFFERENTLY**. They each bring their special joys and sorrows. They add their own special flare to the home; their personality, their compliance, their stubbornness, their unique perspective, their different interests, and their special contributions to the family. In a way, **it's their UNIQUENESS (not their SAMENESS) that REINFORCES the family's ONENESS.**

In a similar way, God emphasizes the **ONENESS** and **DISTINCTIVENESS** of various relationships throughout the Bible. Moses writes, "*The LORD our God, the LORD is one*" (Deuteronomy 6:4). And at the same time, we know that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – three persons of the Trinity. How can those two truths exist simultaneously? And at the beginning of time, God set the parameters of marriage by saying, "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24). Does this mean that a man and woman are the same? Does it mean that once they get married they lose all of their distinctiveness in roles and responsibilities? Then as we make our way into the New Testament, we find that Jesus accomplished something extraordinary through salvation in that "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3:28). At conversion, does God erase all distinctiveness or can we be ONE and yet DISTINCT? Let's look into the word and search this out together!

ONENESS is not SAMENESS

We see throughout the Scripture that ONENESS is not SAMENESS. Even Jesus makes a startling statement in **Philippians 2:6-8** when he says, “*...though he (Jesus) was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant....he humbled himself (to the Father) by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” Even Jesus didn’t count ONENESS with God as SAMENESS, but chose to humble himself to the will of the Father by dying on the cross for our sins.

Let’s look at some other examples together:

1. **Marriage:** In many of Paul’s letters he describes the unique relationship between a husband and a wife.

Ephesians 5:22–28 (ESV) - ²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* ²⁶ *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,* ²⁷ *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* ²⁸ *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

- a. **What are the unique roles of a husband and wife?**

- b. **In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 Paul underscores the unique roles of moms and dads by applying it to his ministry approach to this church. How does Paul describe the unique contribution of moms and dads?**

1 Thessalonians 2:7–12 (ESV) - ⁷ *But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.* ⁸ *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

¹¹ For you know how, like a **father** with his **children**, ¹² we **exhorted** each one of you and **encouraged** you and **charged** you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

- c. If we pick up where we left off in Ephesians, Paul describes the “oneness” of a man and a woman. In what way are they one? And what is the significance of their “oneness”?

Ephesians 5:29–33 - ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are **members of his body**. ³¹ **Therefore** a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the **two** shall **become one** flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to **Christ** and the **church**. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

2. **CHURCH:** We see the same truth show up in the church. There is ONENESS and DISTINCTIVENESS.

- a. How does Paul describe the ONENESS of the church in Ephesians 4:1- 6?

Ephesians 4:1–6 - ¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the **unity** of the **Spirit** in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is **one** body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, ⁶ **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- b. How is our “oneness” demonstrated relationally (Eph 4:1-3)?

- c. What does our “oneness” say about God and the gospel (Eph 4:6)?

- d. The church is also made up of individual members. These members do not lose their distinctiveness but support the body as they embrace that distinctiveness. How do we observe this in Romans 12:3-8?

Romans 12:3–8 (ESV) - ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

ONENESS of ISRAEL and the CHURCH

Probably the clearest passage in the New Testament that describes the oneness of Israel and the church is found in Ephesians 2:11-22. Let's look at it a piece at a time.

1. **What were the differences between Jews and Gentiles as described in verses 11-12?**

Ephesians 2:11–12 - ¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you 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.

2. **What did Christ do to bring these two groups together? In what way are they ONE?**

Ephesians 2:13–16 - 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 hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in 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.

3. What were the results of Christ's work to create "oneness"?

Ephesians 2:17–21 - ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

DISTINCTIVENESS of ISRAEL & the CHURCH

Throughout the book of Romans Paul describes the work of Christ in salvation to Jews and Gentiles. That truth comes to the forefront in **Romans 1:16** when Paul says, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also for the Greek.*” Paul will spend the rest of the book discussing the work of Christ to bring salvation to these two groups. And in chapters 9-11, it all comes to a head when Paul describes the sovereign hand of God in salvation.

1. What privilege has been extended to the Gentiles as described in Romans 9:25-26 (a quotation from Hosea 2:23 and 1:10)?

Romans 9:25–26 - ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea, “*Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’*” ²⁶ “*And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’*”

2. Did God's kindness to the Gentiles negate or remove his mercy to the Jews (Romans 9:27)?

Romans 9:27 - ²⁷ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,

3. The natural question becomes, why did God extend salvation to the Gentile so that they enjoy the same personal benefits of relationship with God as the Jews (Romans 9:30-33)?

Romans 9:30–33 - ³⁰ What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. ³² Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

4. The next obvious question is, has God “moved on” from Israel? Has the church replaced Israel in His master plan of redemption?

Romans 11:1–6 - ¹ I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? ³ "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished

your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.”⁴ But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

5. **So why did God extend grace to the Gentiles? And how does his grace to them guarantee that there will be continuing grace for the Jews in the future (Romans 11:11-15)?**

Romans 11:11–15 - ¹¹ So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! ¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?



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