

Symbolism and Duality

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Who can understand the Bible? Just anyone? Christ spoke in parables to hide the spiritual meaning from all but His true disciples (Matthew 13:10-17). In these verses, he quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 to show that rebellious physical Israel and the rest of the world could not understand His Word, but His true disciples can know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. God gives His Spirit to those who obey, not those who abandon obedience (Acts 5:32), and it leads them to understand (John 14:26).

Of the Old Testament, Paul boldly states that its accounts were *all* "written for *our* admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (I Corinthians 10:11). "Our" includes the New Testament church at Corinth and himself. The Old Testament was written for the church!

To the Roman church he attests, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Earlier, he says that God recorded Abraham's faithfulness not for him alone, but for *us* (Romans 4:20-24).

Paul informs Timothy that "*All* Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16). Verse 15 makes it clear that Paul refers to the Old Testament since it was what was available to Timothy as a child.

These plain passages state emphatically that the Old Testament was written primarily for the church! God has consigned physical Israel to unbelief until the Millennium and Great White Throne Judgment (Romans 11:25-26, 32). Other than as a warning of physical punishment and captivity for breaking the Old Covenant, the Bible is "Greek" to the Hebrews! They have no opportunity for spiritual salvation until later--unless called into the church for whom the Bible is chiefly written! Though they may consider themselves Christians, God has not offered them, nor do they understand, the New Covenant. They do not even know why they exist!

Duality

Does anyone who came out of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) because of doctrinal heresy *not* apply Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 23 and Malachi 1 to the ministry of God's church today? Is anyone so naïve as to think these incriminations are against only the Catholic and Protestant ministers of "Churchianity" today? If we feel they apply to a true ministry gone awry, we have applied the *principle of duality*.

This is not duality as worldly theologians view it (good and evil, light and darkness, or other conflicting powers), but duality as the true church defines it. It occurs when a

passage of Scripture applies on two different levels. For example, a verse may apply both physically and spiritually, in the letter and spirit of the law, or to Israel and the church.

The prophecies absolutely apply to physical Israel and her pagan, so-called Christian ministers. In recent startling reality, they also apply to apostate WCG ministers, wolves who have rent the flock.

How can some so easily apply these prophecies to the church, yet have trouble seeing the rest of the prophecies as speaking first to the church, second to physical Israel? This is especially curious with such emphatic, unequivocal quotations from Christ and Paul about their intended audience, the church.

In Ephesians 1, Paul exerts quite a little energy explaining that God foreordained the church--us--before the foundation of the world to be redeemed and sealed as His children to receive spiritual blessings, not just physical ones. God offered Israel physical blessings, but they rejected Him, forcing Him to divorce them--since they obviously left the marriage--before He ever came in the flesh, when they rejected Him again!

Jesus' words in Matthew 21:43 confirm that physical Israel has no authority or current offer to participate in the Kingdom of God: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." He had given the keys of the Kingdom to the apostles (Matthew 16:18-19), telling them plainly they would each rule one of the tribes of Israel in the Kingdom (Matthew 19:28).

Though the Pharisees may still "sit in Moses' seat," it would no longer carry any influence or spiritual value to God or the church. This is the lesson of the transfiguration! It explained to the disciples, taught all their lives to look to Moses, that now Christ was the authority. "Hear Him!" God thunders (Matthew 17:5).

Who is this "nation bearing the fruits of" the Kingdom? A series of scriptures will make it clear.

Hebrews is a choice place to begin understanding biblical symbolism as it refers to the church. The book is written to physical Israelites whom God had called into spiritual Israel, the church (Galatians 6:16). The author's very first point is that God spoke in the past by the prophets--Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others--but now through Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2), underscoring that Moses' seat is now obsolete--of no value--to the church. Look to Christ! Much of Hebrews is devoted to focusing our attention on Christ, that He changed the priesthood, tithing, etc., bringing a better way.

In Hebrews 11, using notable names from the past, Paul puts them in perspective to the New Testament church. Verse 39 must have hit these Jewish converts like a bombshell. They had looked to Moses all their lives, yet Paul says Moses was not one whit ahead of them or us, the New Testament church! We will all be resurrected in the same batch--all the firstfruits! In Hebrews 12:18-21, he explains that access to God is not now through Moses.

Hebrews 12:22-24 shows where we now look:

- *Heavenly Jerusalem* (Galatians 5:26; Revelation 21:2).
- *General assembly and church of the firstborn*, the called-out ones (Romans 8:14-19, 23, 29-31; James 1:18).
- *Those written in heaven*, which Luke 10:20 defines as the disciples of Christ.
- *The spirits of just men made perfect*, which are all of those who have completed their course and are awaiting the resurrection of the dead.

Bible Defines its Symbols

These various symbols are all one and the same! Wherever these terms appear in the Bible, we can apply them spiritually to the church. Their first application should be to the church, to God the Judge of all, Jesus the Mediator, the New Covenant and our salvation.

Paul lumps all these synonyms of the church together to show Jewish converts that the church is now the apple of God's eye, not physical Israel. Israel will have to wait for salvation in their order (I Corinthians 15:23). It is similar to what Christ Himself told the Jews: "Indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last" (Luke 13:30). Physical Israel came first in history, but they will be among the last in salvation. Spiritual Israel came last in history, but will be first in salvation.

True, physical Israelites comprise most of the church, but God has grafted in Gentiles, who are just as much spiritual Israelites as the original branches (Romans 9-11). Neither Greek nor Jew has any advantage unless converted.

In Acts 8, the eunuch from Ethiopia was reading Isaiah and could not understand it. Philip began *with that scripture* and preached Christ, baptism and the New Testament church! By the time he finished, the eunuch was baptized. Do Isaiah and his prophetic companions apply to the church or not?

Other New Testament passages confirm the use of various symbols to the church. In Galatians 4:26, Paul writes, "Jerusalem above . . . is the mother of us all." Hebrews 12 already equated heavenly Jerusalem to the church, and here "Jerusalem above" is symbolized as our mother, the body in which we mature before spiritual birth into God's Family.

Galatians 6:16 calls the church "the Israel of God," giving us authority to apply prophecies about Israel first to the church, second to physical Israel. Paul's point is that spiritually circumcision is nothing, but the new Israel of God, His new creation, is everything (verse 15)! Now we see the "nation bearing the fruit" to which God will give the Kingdom.

I Peter 2:1-11 confirms this. Peter addresses his letter to the "pilgrims of the Dispersion [scattering]," and he refers to the church as a "holy nation" (verse 9). Lest any miss the symbolic applications of Israel to the church, Peter uses many other symbols in his letter: newborn babes, living stones, spiritual house, holy priesthood, Zion, chosen generation, royal priesthood, special people, the people of God, sojourners, pilgrims and sheep.

Analogies

Scripture frequently uses these symbols as analogies describing the church, its members and their relationship to the Father, the Son and the Kingdom of God. *We must be careful*, for each analogy adds to the picture but is not the whole picture in itself.

For example, we are called firstfruits (of the grain harvest) and firstborn (of beasts). Each adds to understanding but is not the whole picture. If we mix these two analogies, we come up with a weird combination--something half vegetable, half animal!

Another example is in the family analogy. We are called children, sons, brothers, daughters, virgins, bride, the 144,000 and mother. If each of these is the whole picture in itself, we have a problem with Christ breaking His Father's laws! The mix would include polygamy, incest and homosexuality!

We can authoritatively use all these symbols from both the Old and New Testaments and apply them to the church. However, we must not take them so far that they break down.

God warns us not to return to *Egypt* and to come out of *Babylon*. Is it really a great stretch to see the symbolism here? WCG has gone back to Egypt (doctrinal sin) and back into the captivity of Babylon, having joined the pagan churches of physical Israel. When we read of Egypt and Babylon in the prophecies, the spiritual tie-in is clear.

In the same vein, God types the Assyrian as a destroyer and a rod of His anger. Have we not seen a destroyer in the church? Does not God say He will send the Assyrian to punish His people and that He Himself sent him (see Lamentations 2:1-8)?

Ezekiel 34, which nearly all have applied to the church, shows a scattered flock (verses 5-6). Sounds like the current church!

Revelation 3 says Christ will spew (scatter) the church for Laodiceanism. Did not *all* the virgins, the whole church, slumber and sleep (Matthew 25:5)? Should we be shocked to realize Christ's abandonment when we were too spiritually lazy to open the door for our Bridegroom (Song of Songs 5:2-3)?

Paul directly addresses II Thessalonians 2:1-9 to the church. Why is it that we have applied it only to the Beast and False Prophet? Verse 4 adamantly declares that this man "sits as God *in the temple of God*, showing himself that he is God." The church is frequently called the temple of God, the members lively stones. Where is this man of sin? In the church! Did not many in the church flee from the swine of false doctrine offered on

the spiritual altar of God? Was there not a falling away from the true doctrine of God as Paul warns (verse 3)?

Yes, a world religious figure will stand in physical Jerusalem and fight first the Two Witnesses and then Christ at His return. Here is a lesson in duality. Antiochus Epiphanes in Daniel 11 was not a type of only one man, but of at least two. One in the church, one in the end-time global government of Satan.

Which can potentially do greater damage to God's plan, the one who attacks the firstfruits or the one who devastates physical Israel? Judgment is now on the church (I Peter 4:17), while physical Israel must wait until the Millennium or Great White Throne Judgment. The spiritual application of these prophecies could be far more eternally destructive to God's purpose than to physical Israel.

Daughters of Zion

An analogy that mystifies some refers to the split-off churches from WCG as "daughters of Zion." They reason that, since the church is "not divided," is "one body" and Christ built "one church," it cannot be several churches or daughters.

The Bible often symbolizes churches as women, both faithful and evil. Ephesians 5:22-33 plainly shows physical marriage as a type of Christ and the church. Men are types of Christ, women, types of the church.

When Herbert Armstrong said there is only one church, he was absolutely correct. At the time, there was only one organization so far as we knew, though little groups in other countries had at least some truth and could have been remnants of the early church. Mr. Armstrong often referred to himself as our "father in the faith." He did not mean it as the Pope does, calling himself the "Vicar of Christ," but as Paul did--the one through whom God called us.

In one sense, though scattered, the church is still not divided, for within the whole assembly, including tares, God knows those that are His. The tares He will separate out. In addition, some will fall by the wayside, among thorns, on rocky ground or good ground. A separation will occur. So the *true Christians* are the church, together in truth and obedience no matter what corporate organization they are part of.

On the other hand, we all slumbered and slept--became Laodicean--and God is spewing us out of His mouth, scattering us like spit under pressure. So, by analogy, there was one organization until God scattered us (Lamentations 2; Daniel 12:7). Since Zion represents the church, and church members are scattered into many organizations, these organizations are analogous to "daughters of Zion." Many Old Testament prophecies refer to them as such. Paul himself applied Hosea's prophecy of children of harlotry to the church (Romans 9:25-26).

Application to the Church

When we understand how the New Testament writers applied the Old Testament, we can begin to see how the prophecies fit what is happening before our very eyes in the church.

The judgment on the true ministry of Christ in spiritual Israel has already become manifest and their flocks are being scattered (Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 11). In Hosea, the church is pictured as a harlot with her disobedient daughters. God was "a little angry" with the church, but when the heathen entered, He became "exceedingly angry" (Zechariah 1:15).

While God may still see the WCG as having been the "mother" church, He views her as a harlot and refers to her as Egypt and Babylon, where her leaders have taken her. In some passages, He is not too pleased with the "daughters" either. Maybe we ALL have some repenting to do!

He calls physical Jerusalem "Sodom and Egypt" in Revelation 11:8. See how the analogy fits? Spiritual Jerusalem has also become "Sodom and Egypt" (see Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:44-46; 23:11-21)!

This is why God is scattering us. He is putting us to the sword (many are spiritually dead or dying), to famine and pestilence (the spiritually starving and sick) and many are now in captivity (back in spiritual Egypt, Babylon or Assyria--the world).

God is fulfilling Ezekiel 5 on spiritual Israel just as He will on physical Israel in a short time! He will save a very small remnant (Isaiah 1:9, Ezekiel 5) of the church from the Tribulation just as He will save a small remnant of physical Israel from death to work with in the Millennium. Ultimately, He will save most of the church just as He will save physical Israel (Romans 11:26).

A remnant of the church will be taken to a Place of Safety, but many will only repent during the Tribulation, though they may have to give their lives physically to prove their worthiness. Physical Israel will essentially be killed as well, but will be saved in the second resurrection (Ezekiel 37) when God will give them physical life and spiritual opportunity.

Reading the passages having "daughter(s) of Zion" in context makes an eye-opening study. The prophecies, both good and bad, parallel what is happening in the church today, just as they will soon apply to physical Israel.

A Future Scenario

When physical Israel finds herself in captivity in the near future, what is she to do? She is to repent and return to God with her whole heart that she might be saved. When we went to sleep and woke up in spiritual Babylon, Egypt or Assyria, what were we to do? Repent, turn to God with our whole heart, buy oil for our lamps if we lacked, and pray that God will save us and reunite us.

He will, but alas, it will be only a remnant. He will draw us one by one into one fold (Isaiah 27:12-13). He will apparently do this through the Two Witnesses, who will lead the building of the latter temple by working *with the people* (Haggai 2). Zechariah 3-4 shows them as supplying oil to all seven churches, divided by the different attitudes that prevail at the end. We do not know whether this gathering will be before the Tribulation or in the Place of Safety.

Who God will use as His Witnesses and when remain to be seen, though it is clear from the above scriptures that they will be active in helping build the church. For 3½½ years they will make a strong testimony against the world (Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 11).

Another thing that remains to be seen is who will repent, overcome, don the garments of holiness and be included in the righteous remnant (Revelation 2-3). This depends on our individual response to God.

Through the Bible-defined symbols for the church, we can begin to see how intimately God and Christ are involved with us. We can see how the story of the church is central to understanding the prophecies of the Bible as they pertain to us today.

They are not just something to consider for physical Israel, but are very living, real and dynamic for us TODAY. They were written for us "upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The apostles constantly referred to the prophets in preaching Christ to the early New Testament church. In fact, much of the New Testament is quotations from and references to the Old. God has not "done away" with the Old Testament; it is part and parcel of our lives.

Physical Israel has no idea who they are and what part they play.

Do we?