

# The History and Significance of Premillennialism

## Lesson #5 The Mystery of the Church <sup>0642</sup>

### I. Introduction

The New Testament Church came into existence at the day of Pentecost with signs and wonders. There is nothing like the “Church” in the Old Testament. Temple worship was nothing like the church in purpose or in ecclesiology. The synagogue of later Jewish history has some similarities, but is not driven by Hebrew scripture.

### II. The Mysteries Revealed in the New Testament (file # 0758)

Below is a list of mysteries revealed in the New Testament, found in **Dwight Pentecost’s** book, *Things to Come*, on p. 135. [Note particularly Item #3 in the table below.]

#	Title	Reference
1	“The existence of this present age, which was to interrupt God’s established program with Israel.”	Mt 13:11
2	“That Israel was to be blinded so that Gentiles might be brought into relationship to God was a mystery.”	Rom 11:2
3	“The formulation of the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles to form a body, was a mystery.”	Eph 3:3-9; Col 1:24-28; Eph 1:7-12; Rom 16:25-27;
4	“This whole program of God that results in salvation was called a mystery.”	1 Cor 2:7
5	“The relation of Christ to men in redemption was called a mystery.”	Col 2:2; Col 4:3
6	“The incarnation itself was called a mystery, not as to fact but as to its accomplishment.”	1 Tim 3:16;
7	“The development of evil unto its culmination in the man of sin and the development of the great apostate religious system both constitute that which was called a mystery.”	2 Thess 2:7; Rev 17:5; Rev 17:7;
8	“That there should be a new method by which God received men into His presence apart from death was a mystery.”	1 Cor 15:51;

“These, then, constitute a major portion of God’s program for the present age, which was not revealed in other ages, but is now known by revelation from God.”

### III. Supporting Scriptures for the Church as an Old Testament Mystery

Consider the following NT verses that appear to clearly say that the New Testament Church was in fact not declared, seen, nor understood by the Jews prior to its rapid rise and evangelical outreach to both Jews and Gentiles following Pentecost after the Lord’ crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

**Rom 11:22-29** *Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup>And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup>For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural BRANCHES be grafted into their own olive tree? <sup>25</sup>For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; <sup>26</sup>and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” <sup>27</sup>“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” <sup>28</sup>From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of*

*God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; <sup>29</sup>for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* NASU

**Eph 3:1-10** *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – <sup>2</sup>if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; <sup>3</sup>that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. <sup>4</sup>By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup>which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; <sup>6</sup>to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, <sup>7</sup>of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. <sup>8</sup>To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup>so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.* NASU

**Col 1:24-28** *Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. <sup>25</sup>Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, <sup>26</sup>that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, <sup>27</sup>to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.* NASU

#### IV. What is the Origin of the Jewish Synagogue?

Since the church is not mentioned in the Old Testament, maybe it existed in the form of the Synagogues of the Jews? The following partial quotation from the internet adds some light to this issue. You should consider reading the whole article from the hotlink listed below.

“THE word ‘synagogue’ comes from a Greek word meaning ‘assembly’ or ‘gathering together.’ The name is fitting because synagogues have been places of assembly for instruction and worship in Jewish communities since ancient times. The Hebrew Scriptures make no clear reference to synagogues, but it is clear from the Christian Greek Scriptures that such gathering places were already well-established by the first century C.E.

[*Synagogue* συναγωγή *synagogue* (Str. 4864) 56x in NT meaning “brought together, assembled”]

[*Church* εκκλησία *ekklesia* (Str. 1577) 114x in NT meaning “the called out ones”]

Most scholars believe that synagogues originated during the Jewish captivity in Babylon.

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* reasons: ‘The Exiles, deprived of the Temple, in a strange land, feeling the need for consolation in their distress, would meet from time to time, probably on Sabbaths, and read the Scriptures.’ On being released from their exile, the Jews evidently continued to meet for prayer and reading of the Scriptures, and they established synagogues wherever they settled.

By the first century C.E., synagogues had thus become the focus of Jewish religious and social life for communities scattered around the Mediterranean, throughout the Middle East, and in Israel itself. ‘[The synagogue] served as a place for study, sacred meals, court proceedings, depositing communal funds, and political and social meetings,’ says Professor Lee Levine of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He adds: ‘Of central importance, of course, were the religious services.’ It is not surprising, then, that Jesus frequently attended gatherings at synagogues. ([Mark 1:21](#); [6:2](#); [Luke 4:16](#)) There he taught, exhorted, and encouraged those present. Following the establishment of the Christian congregation, the apostle Paul likewise did much preaching in synagogues. Those interested in spiritual things were

naturally drawn to the synagogue, so when entering a city, Paul usually went first to the synagogue and preached there.—Acts 17:1-2; 18:4.”

<https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-february-2019/origin-synagogue/>

## V. Use of the Word “Church” in Scripture

It is revealing that the use of the Greek word “church” (ἐκκλησία - ekklesia Strong’s 1577) only occurs 114x in the New Testament and never occurs in the Old Testament as meaning the “church” of the New Testament. See “Conclusion”\* below from a complete article re. OT use of the word “ekklesia”.

\*“**Conclusion:** It is evident from the use of *ekklesia* in the LXX\*\* that the word held a deep significance for Greek-speaking Jews. Although an *ekklesia* could be merely a crowd of people (I Samuel 17:47 [LXX I Kings 17:47]) or an assembly of “evil-doers” (Psalm 26:5 [LXX 25:5]), the “*ekklesia* of the LORD” was the covenantal assembly of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:10). This body, when assembled, worshipped God (II Chronicles 29:28,31,32), appealed to God (II Chronicles 20:5), repented to God (Joel 2:16), and made choices for the nation as whole (I Chronicles 13:2,4; Ezra 10:12 [LXX II Esdras 10:12]). To stand “in the midst of the *ekklesia*” was a significant responsibility (I Chronicles 28:2; II Chronicles 20:5). To face shame before the *ekklesia* was to be avoided (Proverbs 5:14). Not all who dwelt among the Israelites could enter the *ekklesia* (Deuteronomy 23:1-3, 8). To fail to come together in the *ekklesia* was a serious breach of duty (Judges 21:5; Ezra 10:8 [LXX II Esdras 10:8]). Although the *ekklesia* could include men, women and children (Ezra 10:1 [LXX II Esdras 10:1]), there is no example of a woman addressing what the LXX calls the *ekklesia*.” \*\*LXX refers to the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament

“The Use of the Word *Ekklesia* in the Greek Old Testament” by Kyle Pope

Use this hotlink to bring up the article: <http://www.olsenpark.com/Sermons07/CongregationOfTheLord.html>

This New Testament word is translated “Church” 81x. It’s occurrence by book is as follows:

Book	# times	Book	# times
Matt	3x; 16:18 church will be built in the future. 18:17 <sup>2x</sup>	1 Tim	4x 3:5-7 quals of elders & deacons; 3:15 household of God; 5:16 rules in support of widows;
Mark	0x	2 Tim	0x
Luke	0x	Titus	0x
John	0x	Philem	1x 1:2 Greeting address
Acts	<b>19x</b> mostly a historical account	Heb	1x – not referring to the earthly church.
Rom	3x; 16:1, 5, 23 – practical greetings only	Jms	1x 5:14 for sickness, call the elders;
1 Cor	<b>18x</b> mostly assisting a weak church	1 Pet	0x
2 Cor	1x mentioned as part of the address to that church	2 Pet	0x
Gal	1x Paul, Jew of Jews, mightily persecuted this church as a danger to his Jewish faith.	1 Jn	0x
Eph	<b>10x</b> 1:22 quote of Ps 8:6 now mentioning the church; 3:10 God’s wisdom to be made known through the church; 3:21 God is glorified in the church; 5:22-32 <sup>7x</sup> heading – Marriage is like Christ.	2 Jn	0x
Php	2x 3:6 Paul a former persecutor of the Church; 4:15 Church giving in support	3 Jn	3x 1:6 & 9-10 – struggle re. discipline.
Col	5x 1:18 Christ is head of the body in supremacy over all things. 4:15-16 amplifies this supremacy of Christ.	Jude	0x
1 Thess	1x 1:1 Greeting address	Rev	7x all 7 mentions are related to the 7 Churches of Asia Minor as discussed in Ch 2 & 3.
2 Thess	1x 1:1 Greeting address		

## VI. Distinctions Between Israel and the Church

Taken from Dwight Pentecost’s “Thing to Come”, pages 201-202

“[Lewis Sperry] Chafer has set forth twenty-four contrasts between Israel and the church which will show us conclusively that these two groups can not be united into one, but that they must be distinguished as two separate entities with whom God is dealing in a special program.”

- (1) The extent of Biblical revelation: **Israel** – nearly four fifths of the Bible;  
**Church** – about one-fifth of the Bible.
- (2) The Divine purpose: **Israel**-the earthly promises in the covenants;  
**Church** – the heavenly promises in the gospel.
- (3) The seed of Abraham: **Israel**- the physical seed, of whom some become a spiritual seed;  
**Church** – a spiritual seed.
- (4) Birth: **Israel** – physical birth that produces a relationship;  
**Church** – spiritual birth that brings relationship.
- (5) Headship: **Israel** – Abraham; **Church** – Christ.
- (6) Covenants: **Israel** – Abrahamic and all the following covenants;  
**Church** – Indirectly related to the Abrahamic and new covenants;
- (7) Nationality: **Israel** – one nation; **Church** – from all nations;
- (8) Divine dealing; **Israel** – national and individual; **Church** – Individual only.
- (9) Dispensations: **Israel** – seen in all ages from Abraham;  
**Church** – seen only in this present age.
- (10) Ministry: **Israel** – no missionary activity and no gospel to preach;  
**Church** – a commission to fulfill.
- (11) The death of Christ: **Israel** – guilty nationally, to be saved by that death;  
**Church** – perfectly saved by it now.
- (12) The Father: **Israel** – by a peculiar relationship God was Father to the nation;  
**Church** – we are related individually to God as Father.
- (13) Christ: **Israel** – Messiah, Immanuel, King; **Church** – Savior, Lord, Bridegroom, Head.
- (14) The Holy Spirit: **Israel** – came upon some temporarily for power to service;  
**Church** – Indwells all permanently after new birth.
- (15) Governing principle: **Israel** – Mosaic law system; **Church** – grace provision gift.
- (16) Divine enablement: **Israel** – none; **Church** – the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- (17) Two farewell discourses: **Israel** – Olivet Discourse; **Church** – upper room discourse.
- (18) The promise of Christ’s return: **Israel** – in power and glory for judgment;  
**Church** – to receive us to Himself.
- (19) Position: **Israel** – a servant; **Church** – members of the family.
- (20) Christ’s earthly reign: **Israel** – subjects; **Church** – co-reigners.
- (21) Priesthood: **Israel** – had a priesthood; **Church** – is a priesthood.
- (22) Marriage: **Israel** – an unfaithful wife to the Father; **Church** – the bride of Christ
- (23) Judgments: **Israel** – must face judgment; **Church** – delivered from all judgments.
- (24) Positions in eternity: **Israel** – spirits of just men made perfect in the new earth;  
**Church** – church of the firstborn in the new heavens.

## VII. Conclusion

It appears that any plausible connection between the New Testament Church and the Old Testament Israel is weak at best and more likely non-existent.

It is true that Old Testament saints were saved by the “blood of Christ” which was a mystery in the Old Testament now revealed in the New Testament. (See item #4 in Section II. above.)

### **Important Quotations**

His greatest problem is not the outward divisions and denominations that divide His Church, but our own individualistic hearts. Yes, the Cross must do its work here, reminding me that in Christ I have died to that life of independence which I inherited from Adam, and that in resurrection I have become not just an individual believer in Christ but a member of His Body. There is a vast difference between the two. When I see this, I shall at once have done with independence and shall seek fellowship. The life of Christ in me will gravitate to the life of Christ in others. I can no longer take an individual line. Jealousy will go. Competition will go. Private work will go. My interests, my ambitions, my preferences, all will go. It will no longer matter which of us does the work. All that will matter will be that the Body grows.

. **Watchman Nee; *The Normal Christian Life* - Hendrickson Christian Classics; p. 144**

I argue that people who do not believe the essentials of the faith, the things that are essential to salvation, cannot be guilty of schism. They are not in the church. If you do not believe a certain irreducible minimum, you cannot be a Christian and you are not in the church. Have we reached a time when one must not say a thing like that? Have evangelicals so changed that we no longer make an assertion like that?

. **Martin Lloyd-Jones; *Evangelical Unity*; p. 249**

The church, the living organism and the organized cell of believers, is in this dispensation God's way of doing business in local communities. This is a unique period in divine time. In terms of the local church, believers of a given age must see themselves as having a special calling to serve the Lord in their own generation. As surprising as this may sound, the local church itself is never instructed in Scripture to evangelize. That is the job of the individual believer. The purpose of the local cell is to arm, equip, and train Christians to speak out and witness within their circles of influence.

. **Mal Couch; *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics*; p. 179**