

The Church Age in Isaiah's Prophecy

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There is no mention of the Church in the Old Testament but the Church age was clearly defined in Old Testament prophecies as the age of Israel's blindness.

The Church is never called "spiritual" Israel in the New Testament. When Paul concluded his epistle to the Galatians and wished God's peace upon the "Israel of God" (Gal.6:16) he was referring to converted Jews who were "of God", as distinct from those Judaizers with whom he had been contending, who were **not** "of God".

The Church Revealed when Israel was Rejected

Paul made it clear that the Church was "*kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and...made known to all nations*" (Rom.16:25-26). It was "*the mystery (hidden)...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles...*" (Eph.3:3-5). See also Col.1:25-27.

The period of history known as the "Church age", from Pentecost to the Rapture, is also the period when Israel is blinded, so if we can define the time of Israel's blindness then we will have found the Church age under a different name. The age of Israel's blindness is the same period in history as the Church age.

The Church Age = The Age of Israel's Blindness.

During this time the natural branch (Israel) is "broken off" the olive tree (Rom.11:17) and the "wild olive" branch (Gentiles) is grafted into their place.

When the "fulness of the Gentiles" comes in, the Church will be Raptured and the natural branch will be grafted back into the olive tree. The "firstfruits",



144,000 Jewish men, will preach the “*Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come*” (Matt.24:14). At that time “*all Israel*” will be saved.

Church Age in Daniel’s Prophecy

The present period of Israel’s blindness constitutes a gap in God’s dealings with Israel and this explains why the 70th “week” of Daniel’s prophecy did not immediately follow the 69th “week” (Dan.9:24-27).

Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 “weeks” determined on the Jews and Jerusalem began in the month Nisan, 445BC, and continues to the millennial kingdom. There is an time gap between the 69th “week” and the 70th “week”.

Because Daniel’s prophecy is about Jews and Jerusalem it is therefore silent about the Church. However it identifies **three events that will occur during the gap:**

1) Messiah would be “*cut off*” (4 days later)

2) Jerusalem would be destroyed (In AD70 - 38 years later)

3) Numerous wars would desolate Jerusalem until “*the end*” (Dan.9:26).



The “*end*” is obviously the end of the 70 “weeks”.

At the beginning of the 70th “week” a Roman prince will make a 7-year covenant with Israel, then the Temple will be rebuilt and sacrifices restored until a Roman prince causes them to cease half-way through the last “week”. For the latter half of the 70th “week” the Roman prince will set himself up as God in the Temple.

The 70th “week” will conclude with Israel’s blessing. It has not been fulfilled and therefore is future.

Isaiah Foretold Israel’s Blindness Isa.6:9-12

First let us look at the context of Isaiah 6:9-12. In chapters 1 to 5 of this prophecy Isaiah denounced the sin of Israel and stated that one day Zion would be “*redeemed with judgment*” (Isa.1:25-27). A glorious future was assured to Israel (Isa.2:1-4) but only after the nation had learned to “*walk in the light of the LORD*” (Isa.2:5).

The nation would be blessed when “*he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy*” and when God’s glory will lighten Jerusalem. “*When the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem...by the spirit of judgment...*” (Isa.4:3-5).

In chapter 5, Israel is described as the “*choicest vine*” in God’s vinyard but it produced “*wild grapes*” (Isa.5:2), therefore “*the anger of the LORD*” was kindled and He indicated He would call the Gentile nations against Israel to “*carry it away*” (Isa.5:25-29). The Gentile Roman armies carried the Jews away in AD70 and Jerusalem has experienced wars ever since.

In this context, God commissioned Isaiah to tell Israel:

“Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.



Then said I, Lord, how long?

*And he answered, **Until** the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land” (Isa.6:9-12).*

Israel would be blinded and God would remove men “*far away*”. There would be “*a great foresaking in the midst of the land*”.

Isaiah asked, "How long"? ie. How long would Israel be blinded? He was told, Until a remnant returned and became "the holy seed".

"Yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof" (Isa.6:13).

The *Interlinear Hebrew* translates this verse "...as an oak that in being felled yet has its stump - the holy seed is the stump" (Isa.6:13b).

Israel would be cut down and only its stump remain. When it grows again it will be a "holy seed". Thus the nation would be cut down but revive later.

When Israel rejected Messiah she was blinded and in AD70 the nation was cut down and there was a great forsaking of the land. Jesus' words were fulfilled:

"they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24).

Today Israel possesses part of the land, Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles but **Israel is still blind** to who Jesus Christ is.

When was Israel Blinded?

Four times the New Testament quotes Isaiah 6:9-13 to indicate **when** the blindness of Israel began (Matt.13:14-15; John12:37-41; Rom.11:8-10; Acts 28:25-28).

In chapter 13 of Matthew's Gospel Jesus stated that Isaiah chapter 6 was fulfilled. John 12:37-42 does likewise.

After teaching the principles of the kingdom in Matthew 5 to 7 Jesus' miracles are recorded in chs. 8 and 9. His disciples were sent out to invite the nation to receive Him in Matt.10:40.

However, Israel "*repented not*" (Matt.11:40) and Jesus appealed to all individuals "*that labour and are heavy laden*" to come to Him (Matt.11:27-30).

The Pharisees plotted to destroy Jesus (Matt.12:14) and so He withdrew from the Jews and told His disciples that Isaiah's prophecy had been fulfilled:

"...he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles...and in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matt.12:15-21).

Jesus then denounced that generation as “vipers” and “wicked”. The Jews had blasphemed the Holy Ghost and judgment was pronounced against it (Matt.12:31-32; 41-45). It is in THIS context that Jesus told His disciples:

“In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive” (Matt.13:14). See also John 12:39-41.

Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled and the nation would be blinded and scattered by God. Isaiah 6:9-13 is therefore a prophecy of the age of Israel’s blindness: the Church age.

Jesus began to speak in parables AFTER He was rejected and in Matthew chapter 13 the disciples asked why He spoke in parables. Jesus replied:

“Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them (Israel) it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (Matt.13:11-12).

From this point onward the Jews contended with Jesus and He indicated that the nation would be destroyed and the mantle given to others (Matt.21:40-43). The Church was born on the day of Pentecost.

The Book of Acts Confirms Israel’s Blindness

When Paul addressed the elders of the Jews at Rome they rejected the truth of Christ and he quoted Isaiah’s prophecy:

“Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive ... their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes ... and should be converted ... Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it” (Acts 28:25-28).

The testimony of the Apostles had been rejected and their blindness was therefore confirmed.

Isaiah 29 is Prophetic of the Israel’s Blindness

Isaiah prophesied of the blindness of Israel again in chapter 29. They would not understand the visions of God and the Old Testament.

would be a closed book to them as it is today.

“For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes ... And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned,



*saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as **this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me**, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work ... the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid” (Isa.29:10-14).*

Jesus made it clear that this passage was a prophecy of the Jews in His day:

“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy OF YOU, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me” (Matt.15:7-8).

Orthodox Jews study tradition and the Law, they recite long prayers, yet are blind to the prophecies already fulfilled in the first advent of Messiah. It is a sealed book to their scholars who are *“blind leaders of the blind”* (Matt.15:14).

The Reason for Blindness was Rejection of Messiah

Psalms 69 is a prophecy that expresses the prayer of the Saviour on the cross as He endured the rejection of His own people Israel and concludes:

“Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not ... Pour out thine indignation upon them ... Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents ... for they persecute him whom thou hast smitten” (Ps.69:23-26).

Israel was blinded for rejecting Messiah and the prayer of Christ has been answered in 2,000 years of chastening.

The Gospel would be Spread by Gentiles when Israel Blinded

Isaiah prophesied of a day when God would speak to Israel in **Gentile languages**. At that time Israel would diligently study the precepts of the law but be blind and “*fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken*” (Isa.28:13). Isaiah wrote:

“With stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear” (Isa.11:12).

Jesus invited Israel to “*come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matt.11:28) but they would not hear! Then Isaiah says:

“BUT the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isa.28:11).

The Jews rejected Christ and continued to blindly study the Law, “*precept upon precept*”. The oral law i.e. tradition, was added:

“The entire material of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and the halakic midrashim ... was not reduced to writing until the beginning of the third century C.E.” - Jewish Encyclopedia.

At Pentecost the apostles spoke in Gentile languages as a sign to Israel that God was turning to the Gentiles and Paul quoted Isaiah’s prophecy in 1Cor.14:21-22 when he controlled the **use of Gentile languages** in the Church.

Israel’s Blindness Ends after the Rapture

The parable of the marriage of the King’s son in Matthew chapter 22 indicates that the King’s Son would have a bride and that Israel would have three opportunities to be at the marriage supper. The first invitation was given by the Lord and was rejected. They “*would not come*” and their eyes were blinded (Matt.22:3; 23:37). On Palm Sunday Jesus said as He wept over Jerusalem:

“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (blinded) (Luke 19:41-42).

The second was given by the Apostles in the early Church era but they “*entreated them spitefully, and slew them*” (Matt.22:6).

The third and final invitation will be given by 144,000 Jewish witnesses immediately after the Rapture of the Church. They will preach the Gospel of the kingdom “in all the world” (Matt.24:14) during the first half of the Tribulation and “*all Israel shall be saved*” (Rom.11:26). Thus, the marriage will be “*furnished with guests*” (Matt.22:10).

When the Church, the bride of the King’s Son, is removed at the Rapture, Israel’s “*firstfruits*”, 144,000 Jewish men, will turn to the Lord (Rev.7:1-8) and at the Russian/Islamic invasion, all Israel will be saved. When Christ returns Israel will be guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev.19:7-9).

Israel’s Blindness Ends when the Nation Turns to the Lord

Paul described the blindness of Jews in this age as a veil that is on their hearts so that “*their minds were blinded*” (2Cor.3:14-15). However, he looked forward to a day when the nation will “*turn to the Lord*” and “*the veil shall be taken away*” (2Cor.3:16).

The blindness of Israel will therefore finish when the nation turns to the Lord.

To the Romans, Paul wrote:

“they also, if they (Israel) abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again... blindness in part is happened to Israel, UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved” (Rom.11:25-26).

When the Church is complete the “*fulness of the Gentiles*” will have come in and Israel will turn to the Lord. In the meanwhile, Israel is in a state of blindness so the Church age is the age of Israel’s blindness.

Israel’s Repentance will be at the End of the Age

Israel could have repented when Peter preached but their leaders refused and were blinded. Peter told them:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the

Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ...Whom the heaven must receive UNTIL the times of restitution of all things..." (Acts 3:19-21).

The restitution of all things is the millennial kingdom when the throne of David will be restored and Christ will reign. Israel must repent BEFORE Christ returns and we know this will take place after the Rapture of the Church.

Israel's Restoration will be After the Church is Complete

When Israel was blinded God turned to the Gentiles. The Apostles preached in Gentile languages at Pentecost and although the first believers were Jews and proselytes (Acts 2:10) increasingly through the Book of Acts we find Gentiles filling the ranks of the Church. Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles and the first Church Council at Jerusalem discussed the place of Gentiles in the Church. James said:

"Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name...AFTER THIS I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down...That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called" (Acts 15:14-17).

Church Age - Israel Blinded

"God at the first did visit the Gentiles" Acts ch.10

**AFTER
this I will
return...**

...and will build again the tabernacle of David...that the residue of men might seek after the Lord...

The throne of David has not existed since the time of Zedekiah (586BC) when God said:

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, UNTIL he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek.21:27).

In this age of Israel's blindness God is calling out from the Gentiles a people for His name and AFTER THAT, Christ will return and restore the throne of David. Finally, ALL the Gentiles will be blessed in Christ's millennial kingdom.