



What is the Meaning of the Word “Israel” in the Bible?

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Roadmap for Presentation

Theological
Significance

Stats

OT
Usage

NT
Usage

**Special
Issues**

Theological Significance

OSWALD T. ALLIS

(Amillennialist)

Literal interpretation has always been a marked feature of Premillennialism; in **Dispensationalism** it has been carried to an **extreme.**

OSWALD T. ALLIS

(Amillennialist)

We have seen that this literalism found its most thoroughgoing expression in the claim that *Israel* must mean *Israel*...

OSWALD T. ALLIS

(Amillennialist)

**...and that the Church was
a mystery, unknown to the
prophets and first made
known to the apostle Paul.**

OSWALD T. ALLIS

(Amillennialist)

Now if the principle of interpretation is adopted that ***Israel*** always means ***Israel***, that it does not mean the **Church**, then it follows of necessity that practically all of our information regarding the millennium will concern a **Jewish or Israelitish** age.

STATS

The Word
“Israel” Occurs
2583 times in the
Bible (OT & NT)

New American Standard Bible

“the”

62,589 times

New American Standard Bible

“the”

62,589 times

“and”

38,126

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Old Testament Usage

The Word “Israel” in the OT (BHS)



2507 times

Summary of OT Usage of Israel

1. The man named Jacob
2. The descendants of Jacob, the twelve tribes of the Hebrews
3. The ten northern tribes (sometimes called Ephraim) after the division of the kingdom

1. The Man Named Jacob

First Occurrence of “Israel”

Genesis 32:28

He said, “Your name shall no longer be **Jacob**, but **Israel**; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”

Israel = “He strives with God”
or “God fights”

2. The descendants of Jacob

- **Sons of Israel = 645 x**
- **Tribes of Israel = 52 x**
 - **Twelve tribes of Israel = 5 x**
 - **Twelve tribes = 10 x**
 - **Twelve Tribes of the Sons of Israel = 1 x**
(Rev. 21:12)

“Hear, O Israel”

Deut. 9:1

Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing...”

Deut. 6:4

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the LORD is one! (cp. Mk 12:29)

“Hear, O Israel”

Deut. 9:1

Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you

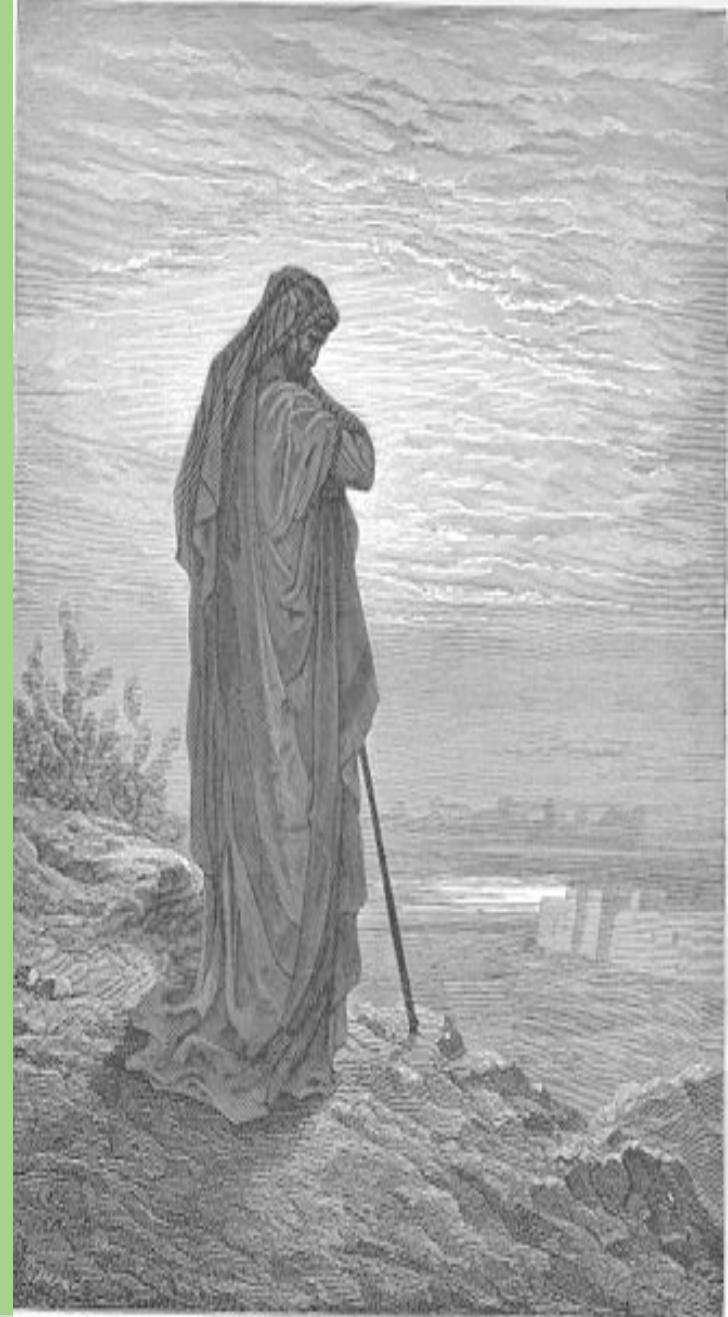
Deut. 20:3

He shall say to them , “Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today...”

Amos 3:1-2

**Hear this word
which the LORD
has spoken against
you, sons of Israel,
against the entire
family which He
brought out of
Egypt...(v. 1)**

Israel = Jacob

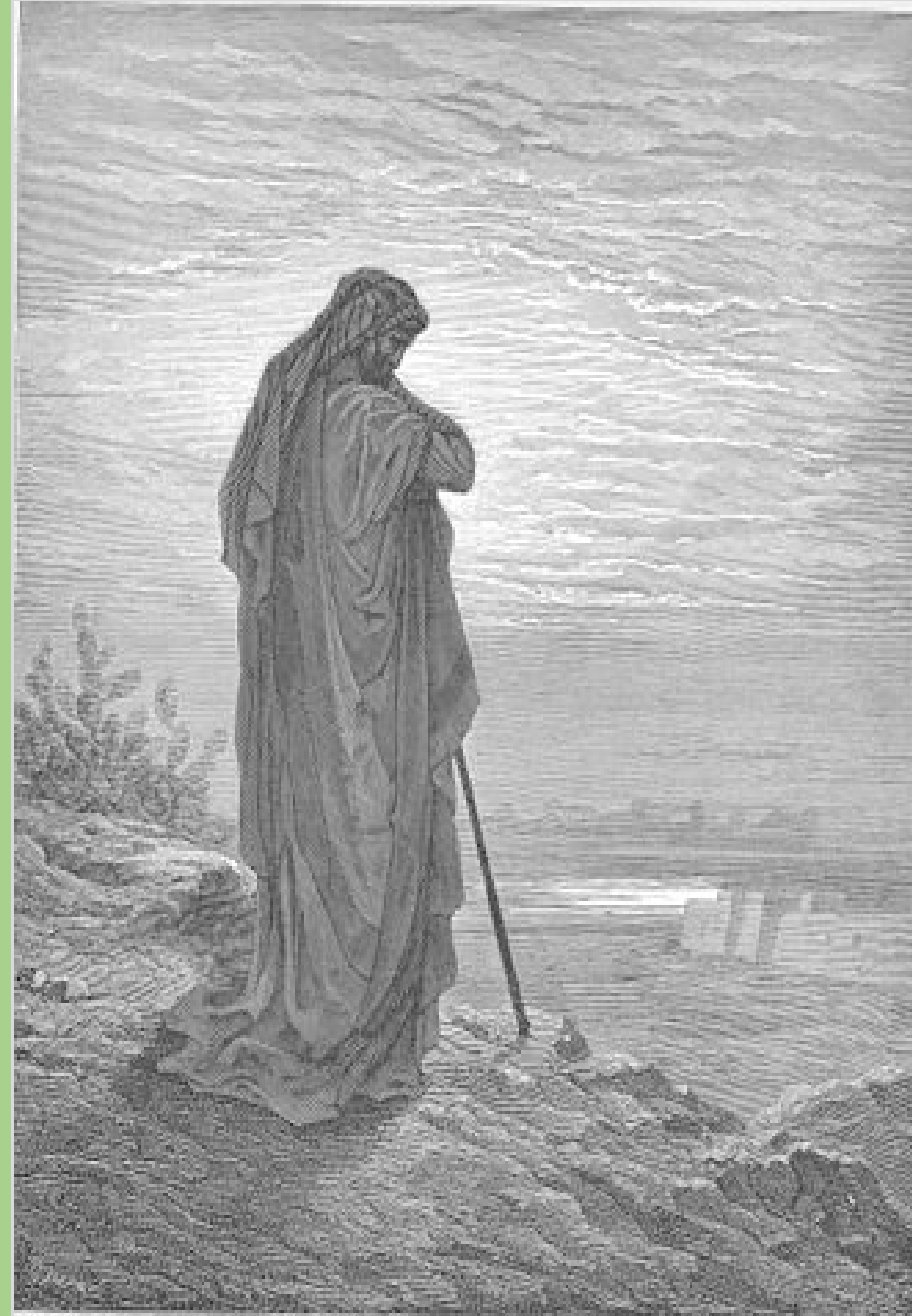


Amos 9:11-15

v. 11 – bring
about a united
kingdom

v. 14 – bring from
ruin the nation of
Israel = both
north and south
tribes

v. 15 – in land
never to be
uprooted again



3. The Ten Northern Tribes

1 Kings 12:16

When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, “What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!”

**Rehoboam
> Judah**

**Jeroboam
> Israel**

2
Chronicles
25:21-22

So Joash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Bethshemesh, which belonged to Judah. Judah was defeated by Israel...

Amos

1:1-2:16

1:3-2:3

Pagan nations

2:4-5

Judah

(southern tribes)

2:6ff

Israel

(northern tribes)



New Testament Usage

The Word “Israel” in the NT (NA28)

68 times
+
5 times
(Israelite)

ὁ δὲ ἐγερθεὶς
παρέλαβεν τὸ
παιδίον καὶ τὴν
μητέρα αὐτοῦ
καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς
γῆν Ἰσραήλ

Summary of NT Usage of Israel

1. The man named Jacob
2. The descendants of Jacob,
the twelve tribes of the
Hebrews

1. The Man Named Jacob

Twelve Tribes
of Israel

2x

...when the Son of Man
will sit on His glorious
throne, you also shall
sit upon twelve
thrones, judging the
twelve tribes of Israel

Matt. 19:28

1. The Man Named Jacob

Sons of

Israel

14x

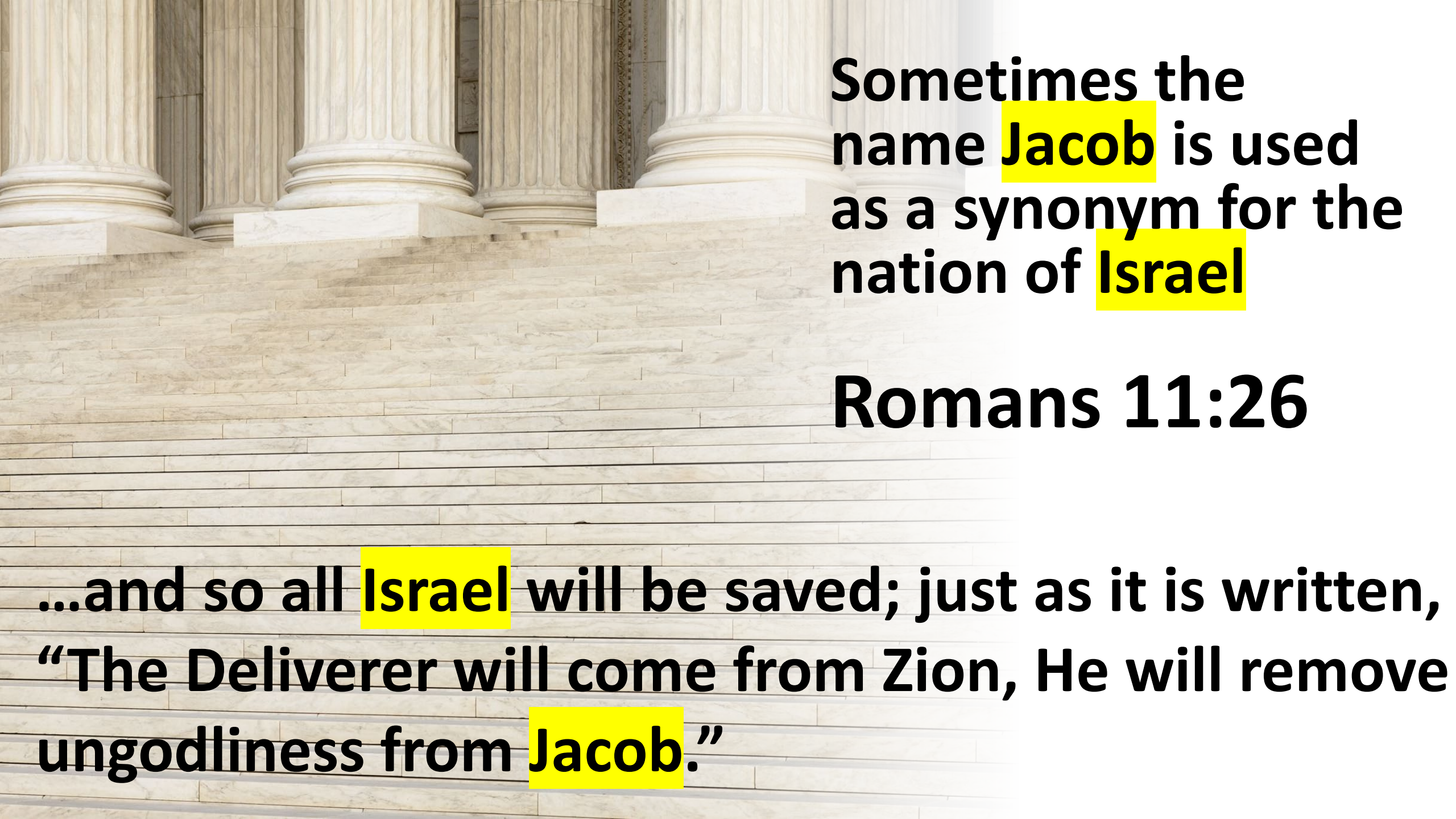
And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel (Rev. 7:4)

1. The Man Named Jacob

Last Occurrence of “Israel”

Revelation 21:12

And it had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel [Jacob].



Sometimes the name **Jacob** is used as a synonym for the nation of **Israel**

Romans 11:26

...and so all **Israel** will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from **Jacob**.”

2. The descendants of Jacob

People of Israel – 5x

Land of Israel – 2x

House of Israel – 6x

God of Israel – 3x

King of Israel – 4x

Men of Israel – 5x

Nation Israel – 2x

2. The descendants of Jacob

- **Luke 24:21** – We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.
- **Acts 1:6** – Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?
- **Matt 8:10** – I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel?

Special Issues



Romans 9:6

Galatians 6:16

Acts 7:38-42

Romans 9:6

For they are not all
Israel who are
descended from Israel

Options

1. The statement speaks of Gentiles being part of Israel (or the new Israel) so that the distinction between Israel and the Church is done away.
 - The Church as spiritual Israel is in view

Options

2. This statement teaches that not all Jewish people (Israel) are saved.
 - The two kinds of people in view are Jews who have faith in Christ and those who do not.
 - Jewish people must do more than be Jewish to be saved.

Why the Second Option is Correct

1. The entire section of Romans 9-11 explains Israel's situation & future
2. It fits the preceding context of 9:1-5.
3. It expresses the statement of 9:7-8.
4. It harmonizes with the illustrations of Isaac and Jacob in 9:7-13.

Galatians 6:16

And those who will walk by
this rule, peace and mercy
be upon them, and upon the
Israel of God.

Options

1. The Israel of God refers to the Church, the new creation of v. 15.
 - καὶ is explicative or epexegetical meaning “even”
 - The blessing would be for the Church, **even** the Israel of God
 - This makes the Church = Israel
 - There is one category in the verse

Options

2. The Israel of God refers to Jewish Christians

- καὶ is emphatic meaning “and”
- The blessing would be for the Church **and** also including the Jewish Christians in the Church
- The passage does not equate Israel and the Church
- There are two categories of people in the passage

Why Option # 2 is Correct

1. The preposition (επι, upon) is used for each group pointing toward two categories
2. All other references to Israel in the NT refer to Jewish people in some way
3. It makes sense for Paul, after a blistering attack on Judaizers throughout the book, to remind his readers that the blessing applies to those Jewish people who have come to Christ by faith

Acts 7:38-42

- Context of Stephen's Sermon
- Verse 42 – **House of Israel**
- Verse 38 -- "**Congregation** (*ekklesia*) in the wilderness" from the LXX
- KJV translates as "**church** in the wilderness"

Acts 7:38-42

- Some scholars even today use this text to argue that Israel is the OT Church
- This is part of a doctrinal commitment to the Church as the people of God for all time
- This is a theological interpretation of Scripture rather than a literal understanding

Why do our theological opponents reject seeing Israel as referring to Jewishness in some way?

1. Creedal theology

2. New Testament priority

3. Allegorical Hermeneutics

Israel
Means
Israel