

Replacement Theology Refuted

There is a growing heresy amongst Christians that claims the church is the new Israel. It is called replacement theology and in our opinion at the PMI Center, while it is the most damning, anti-Semitic heterodoxy in the world it is easily refuted by proper Biblical exegesis.

Distinguished Bible authority Dr. Thomas Ice agrees: “Replacement theology is the view that the church is the new or true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded Israel as the people of God. Another term, often found in academic circles, for replacement theology is *supersessionism*. Replacement theology has been the fuel that has energized Medieval anti-Semitism, Eastern European pogroms, the Holocaust and contemporary disdain for the modern state of Israel. ⁱ Mike Vlach ⁱⁱ notes: ‘The acceptance or rejection of supersessionism may also influence how one views the modern state of Israel and events in the Middle East.’ Wherever replacement theology has flourished, the Jews have had to run for cover.”

The Wrong View: The Church is a Continuation of Israel

The dominant view in Christianity has been that the Church is the New Israel, a continuation of the concept of Israel from the Old Testament. This view teaches that the Church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian Church, not in biblical, literal, Israel. So, the prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Land of Promise are "spiritualized" into promises of God's blessing for the Church. The prophecies of condemnation and judgment, however, still remain for national Israel and the Jewish people. This view has been called Replacement Theology because the Church replaces Israel in the program of God. Major problems exist with this view, such as the continuing existence of the Jewish people throughout the centuries and especially with the revival of the modern state of Israel. If Israel has been condemned by God, there being no future for the Jewish nation, how do we account for the supernatural survival of the Jewish people, Israel's rebirth among the gentile nations, victories in major wars with the Arabs and a flourishing modern democratic Jewish state?

The Right View: The Church is Totally Different and Distinct from Israel

Although being suppressed throughout the history of the Church, the view that Israel and the Church are different is clearly taught in the New Testament. In this view, the Church is completely different and distinct from Israel and the two are never to be confused or used interchangeably. We are taught from Scripture that the Church is an entirely new creation, that came into being on the Day of Pentecost and will continue until it is translated to Heaven at the Rapture (Eph. 1:9-11). The Church has no relationship to the curses and blessings for Israel, the covenants, promises and warnings are valid only for Israel. Israel has been set aside in God's program during these past 2,000 years of dispersion. The Lord has preserved the Jewish people through great persecutions, though they are largely in unbelief.

After the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-18) God will restore Israel. The first event at this time is the "Time of Jacob's Trouble," also known as the Great Tribulation. This is a horrible period of seven years, which begins moderately during the first half then intensifies in full during the latter half. The world will be judged for rejecting Christ, while Israel is prepared through the trials of the Great Tribulation for the Second Coming of the Messiah. Now, when Christ does return to the earth, at the end of the Tribulation, Israel will be ready to receive Him. The remnant of Israel which survives the Tribulation will be saved and the Lord will establish His kingdom on this earth with the capital as Jerusalem. With Christ reigning as King, Israel will be the leading nation and representatives from all nations will come to Jerusalem to honor and worship the King. The Church will return with Christ and will reign with Him for a literal thousand years (Rev. 20:1-5).

The History of the Change

How did the thinking in the Church change toward Israel? Slowly, the Gentile majority in the Church began to view Israel as a relic of the past. With spiritual competition between the two groups, we can see why the Church adopted the view that it was the new Israel. The view of the Church was that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD was brought about divinely, that God had ordained the end of Jewish unbelieving Israel. Since Jerusalem was in ruins and the Jewish people were scattered throughout the world, it seemed evident that God was finished with national Israel. Theologians now proposed that Israel in the Scriptures did not really mean literal Israel, instead, it meant the Church. The Church now became the new Israel and through this spiritualization, wherever blessings are spoken of to Israel in the Old Testament, it was interpreted to mean the Church. In essence they simply replaced Israel with the Church.

Replacement Theology became the position of the Church during the time of Augustine (A.D. 354-430), who popularized it in his book *The City of God*. Initially Augustine claimed that he was a Chiliast, the belief in the literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, the basic view of Premillennialism today. Having come to the conclusion that this view was "inferior" and "carnal," he adopted the position that the reign of Christ should be much more "spiritual" and it would occur during this present Church Age. His spiritualizing method, of course, eliminated true Israel and the losing of all the promises God made to the Jewish nation, which he viewed as now being fulfilled within the Church.

What Did The Apostolic Church Believe?

Almost all students of the early church agree that Premillennialism, or Chiliasm, was the most widely held view of the apostolic church. Philip Schaff, the noted authority on church history writes, "The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene Age [A.D. 100-325] is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, . . . a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers, such as Barnabas, Papia, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Methodius, and Lactantius" (Philip Schaff. *History of the Christian Church*. New York: Scribner, 1884, Vol. 2, p. 614).

Premillennialism began to die out in the established Catholic Church during the time of Augustine, though it has always survived as a Church doctrine. Even when it has not been widely known it survived through "underground" and "fringe" groups of Believers. The last 200 years have seen the greatest development and spread of Premillennialism, which, like the early church, recognizes a future glorious hope for literal Israel. Beginning in Britain and spreading to America, consistent Premillennialism, known as Dispensational Premillennialism, has come forth as a major theological view in the Church.

The Biblical Basis for Premillennialism

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament support a Premillennial understanding of God's plan for humanity. Even so, the strongest support for Premillennialism is found in the clear teaching of Revelation 20:1-7, where it says, six times, that Christ's kingdom will last 1,000 years. After the Tribulation the Lord will return and establish His kingdom with the nation of Israel, Christ will reign over the whole earth with Jerusalem as His capital and Israel will be the leader of the nations. The Church will reign with Him for a literal thousand years. ¹ Philip Schaff. *History of the Christian Church*. New York: Scribner, 1884, Vol. 2, p. 614. ⁱⁱⁱ

EDITOR'S NOTE: Replacement theology is the teaching of *seducing spirits and doctrine of devils* (1 Tim. 4:1) that the Lord Jesus warned would flourish in the last days church ^{iv}: *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee* (Revelation 3:9). It is an insult to Israel and an affront to God. DO NOT be a part of such heresy my friend!

Should Christians Support Israel While Israel Is Still in Unbelief?

Larry Spargimino

Almost every time a new crisis looms in Israel and Christian Zionists call for Christians to back Israel, many in the Christian community issue a challenge: "Why should the followers of Christ support a nation that has turned its back on Christ?"

Those who raise this challenge claim to be offended by Christian support for Israel. They claim that Israel is in disobedience. "After all," they argue, "there are many faithful Christian missions and missionaries who need our help. Why should Christians reward that disobedience with support?"

This attitude has been gaining support in the last couple of decades. In the spring of 1992 Christianity Today did a cover story entitled "For the Love of Zion" [3/9/92]. It claimed that Christian support for Israel was waning. Several years later the tone became more militant. In its May 23, 2002, edition, the Wall Street Journal featured an article entitled "How Israel Became a Favorite Cause of Christian Right." This was seen as a clear example of mixing religion and politics.

Still more recently a Los Angeles Times article [10/24/08] wrote of a National Council of Churches publication that would prove that Christian Zionism is not only wrong, but dangerous to world peace. The brochure claims that "Christian Zionism fosters fear and hatred of Muslims..." and can lead "to the dehumanization of Israelis and Palestinians."

I believe that these statements are not valid because they; are based on human logic rather than divine revelation, and because they show the influence of an anti-biblical world and life mindset. Here are four important arguments that I believe demonstrate that Christians should support Israel no matter what her spiritual condition at the present time.

First, Israel's rejection of Christ is a present fact, not a permanent reality. In Romans 11:1-2 the Apostle Paul writes: "I say then. Hath God cast away his people? God forbid ... God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." Even within ethnic Israel at the present time, there is a core group, "a remnant according to the election of grace" [vs. 5). After the fullness of the Gentiles is brought to salvation. God will again work in a mighty way with the Jews. Israel's hardening is only temporary (vs. 25).

Second, the New Testament warns Gentiles about speaking against Israel. Romans 11:17ff Scripture speaks of Israel as an olive tree, and we Gentiles as a wild olive tree that has been grafted in to the natural olive tree. Some of the branches were broken off of the natural olive tree, but we shouldn't boast against the branches. "Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.... Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee" [vss. 18,20-21).

The Scripture is emphatic. Romans 11:24 tells us that if Gentiles were grafted in to a good olive tree and prospered spiritually, how much more shall the natural branches prosper spiritually when they are grafted in.

Third, we should remember God's plan and purpose. We should remember God's unconditional covenant with Abraham and his descendants. This covenant has never been revoked. How could it? It is a grace covenant and grace covenants are immutable. In Genesis 17:6-8 the Abrahamic covenant is reconfirmed. A study of biblical history shows that God's method of fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant has been literal. Abraham was blessed spiritually and temporally. He came to have a great name, and he was a channel of blessing to others. We have every reason to believe that this method of fulfillment will continue until God's promises are literally fulfilled in every way.

In a world of uncertainty and fear, Christians need to remember God's plan and purpose. Man is often unfaithful, but God is always faithful. Recent attempts to "remove" Israel from God's plan appeals to those who are seeking to "create God in man's image." We thank God that His Word makes it clear that God is not man.

Fourth, the Apostle taught that Christians have an obligation to Israel because of our spiritual indebtedness to them. Paul speaks the heart desire of the saints of Macedonia and Achaia to give to the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem. "It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things"(Romans 15:27). Those who argue that the only way that Israel can have a right to the land and to the support and backing of Christians is that they first receive Jesus Christ are putting the cart before the horse. God's relationship to Israel is not based on Israel. It is based on God's unchanging covenant.

The claim that Israel is not a Christian nation and should not be supported by Christians is nothing more than a sanctimonious way of voicing sentiments that are totally without biblical warrant. v

Who are the twelve tribes of Israel?

Answer: The Bible lists the twelve tribes of Israel in several locations: (Genesis 35:23-26; Exodus 1:2-5; Numbers 1:20-43; 1 Chronicles 2:2; Revelation 7:5-8). It is interesting that there are slight differences in some places. The 12 sons of Israel (Jacob) were: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Joseph. These were the ancestors of the original twelve tribes. However, Reuben lost his rights as firstborn by defiling Jacob's bed (Genesis 35:22; 49:3-4). In Reuben and Joseph's place, Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, became tribes of Israel (Genesis 48:5-6). As a result, the twelve tribes became Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim and Manasseh. In some other lists of the twelve tribes of Israel, Levi is not mentioned, presumably because the Levites were assigned to serve at the temple and therefore were not apportioned land of their own in Israel (Joshua 14:3).

Naming the twelve tribes is a confusing task. Revelation 7:5-8 lists the 12 tribes as: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. This is interesting...for the first time Joseph is listed as a tribe along with his son Manasseh. Why isn't Ephraim listed? Why is Reuben listed, but not Dan? There are no perfect answers to these questions. Technically, there were more than twelve tribes if you count both of Joseph's sons as tribes in addition to Joseph. Revelation 7 presents a list of 144,000 witnesses from twelve different tribes. It does not say why Ephraim and Dan are not listed. The best answer is that God decided not to choose any witnesses from those two tribes. Some Bible teachers understand Dan being left off the list in Revelation 7 because of what is said in Genesis 49:17, "Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward."

With all of that said, what are the twelve tribes of Israel? Every list in the Bible contains Simeon, Judah, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin. In addition to those nine tribes, there are Ephraim, Reuben, Joseph, Dan, and Levi. Most Bible teachers would view Ephraim, Dan, and Levi as the additional three to result in twelve tribes. Whatever the case, God is free to re-adjust and re-account the twelve tribes of Israel as He sees fit. ^{vi}

Recommended Resource: Bible Answers for Almost all Your Questions by Elmer Towns.

ⁱ For more info, please order our eye popping booklet: *Dividing Israel and God's Judgment on America*.

ⁱⁱ Michael J. Vlach, "The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism," (PhD dissertation at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, 2004).

ⁱⁱⁱ © Alan Torres- <http://www.biblicist.org/bible/replace.shtml>

^{iv} Many scholars, including Drs. CI Scofield, John Walvoord, Tim LaHaye, Jack Van Impe, David Jeremiah and others see the seven churches of Revelation as a depiction of church history.

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^{vi} Copied from <http://www.gotquestions.org/twelve-tribes-Israel.html>

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