



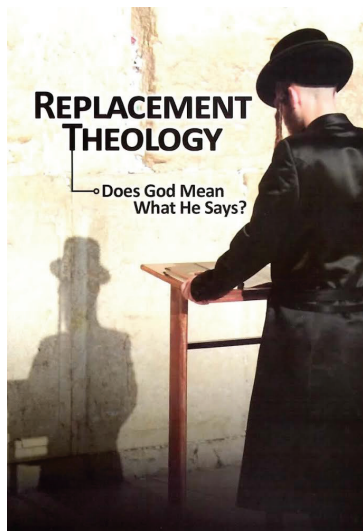
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"Replacement Theology": Does God Mean What He Says?

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It appears that the philosophy of 'Replacement Theology' is becoming more commonly believed amongst professing Christians and, consequently, we consider it right to say something about the issue.

Replacement Theology is the strange notion that the Church (made up of Jews and Gentiles) has replaced national Israel, so that the covenant promises made by God to His ancient people are not really meant for them at all, but were intended for others. Hence, the word 'replacement.' In a peculiar way and with great inconsistency, it is thought that the Church replaces the nation in order to receive the promised blessings, but the curses are left for the Jewish people.

We would submit that, amongst other things, Replacement Theology:

1. denies that God's words are to be taken to mean what they say;
2. gives the idea that God's words can mean anything;
3. deviates from true spirituality;
4. leads to anti-Semitism;
5. tends to imply that Old Testament teaching is different from New Testament teaching - as if one part of the Bible is more inspired than the other,
6. proclaims a false message.

Some of the Scripture references quoted in an endeavour to prove the theory are Matthew 21:37-46; John 10:16; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6; Ephesians 2:10-21 and Galatians 3:27-29. It is strange to provide these passages as proof-texts as there is nothing in any of them which says that when God uses the word 'Israel' He intends us to understand that He really means the Church.

Replacement Theology Denies God's Words Mean What They Say

Faith is a believing of what God has said in His Holy Word. The words used in Scripture are words which the Holy Ghost has chosen to reveal truth. To replace any such word by saying that it means other than that stated seems to us to be a very dangerous practice. We would have thought that the idea of replacing any Divinely-inspired words would be obnoxious to all true believers.

The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony has always insisted that God means what He says and says what He means. Also, that where the plain sense is good sense, it is the right sense. That does not mean that the Lord has never used dreams, visions, types, shadows, parables, etc., but the explanations given, and all plainly-worded statements, are to be taken as meaning precisely what they say.

Mr George T Hunt, an early editor of the magazine, 'Watching and Waiting,' wrote, 'In reading prophecy, remember that Israel means Israel and not believers; Jerusalem means Jerusalem and not heaven; Zion means Zion and not the Church; Babylon means Babylon and not Rome; Egypt means Egypt and not the world.'



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That is an excellent guide.

It is understood that the names 'Israel,' 'Jerusalem,' and 'Zion' are used to illustrate lessons for the whole Church of God. For example, we read in Psalm 125:2. 'As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people.' In that way, godly men have included these terms in hymns which we love to sing. However, whilst there is application, we need to understand that this is not exposition.

Bishop J C Ryle

In more recent years, the Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony has republished a sermon preached by Bishop J C Ryle entitled 'Scattered Israel To Be Gathered,' in which the learned Protestant Bishop gives a list of Scripture texts from the prophetic books - both 'major' and 'minor' prophets, as they are often described - where definite statements are made concerning the future gathering of the nation of Israel. We would strongly recommend that Dr Ryle's remarks be studied by all who are concerned about truth. Bishop Ryle was no mean scholar, but it does not take a lot of intelligence to understand that it is the same nation that was scattered that will be gathered. Although the sermon, preached from Jeremiah 31:10, was delivered many years ago - in 1858 - there is no need to change one word. The booklet is still obtainable from the SGAT and costs only £1.50, post free. There is, of course, much other good literature on this subject.

The three chapters in Romans (9 - 11), which give so much information about God's purposes for Israel, are very specific and it ought to be noted that they were written after the crucifixion of the Messiah. Anyone reading these chapters with an unbiased mind should be able to understand what God has said. You do not need to be a great scholar to grasp the plain words of Holy Scripture, but you do need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to believe these statements. We are clearly told that Gentiles will be 'grafted in' - that is, to the nation which is described as 'a good olive tree.' However, there is no suggestion that Gentiles become the Israel of which the passage speaks.

In Galatians 3:27-29, we are instructed concerning the unity of all true believers. There is mention of there being neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), bond nor free, male nor female. All these groups, as Christians, have a real unity but that does not alter the fact that such groups have existed through the centuries, and still do exist. There are still males; there are still females, etc. However, it makes no difference to our unity in Christ whether we are male or female, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. The passage goes on to explain that all those truly saved by God's grace are Abraham's seed.

The covenant with Abraham is recorded in various places - see Genesis 12:1-3,7; 13:15-17; 15:5-7; 17:4-8; 24:7. When these passages are studied together, it is abundantly apparent that the promise concerned (1) the land, (2) the people and (3) the Messiah (in Whom all nations of the earth would be blessed). As Jehovah is a faithful God, He will keep all three parts of the covenant, and the fact that persons from nations other than the Jewish people are blessed in the Messiah is no proof that God will not keep His promises concerning the land and the nation. In fact, it is a strong indication that He will perform all that which He has spoken. The idea of God failing to do as He has said could be more accurately described in other words by saying, God did not mean what He said about the land and the nation because He has fulfilled, and will more completely fulfil, that spoken concerning the Seed! What folly!

Apart from the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob there are the many, many promises made to the nation of Israel which are recorded in Holy Scripture, particularly in the prophets and the psalms, and we submit that not to believe these statements of God is to deny that He has used the right words in His book, the Bible, which is, of course, a book of revelation.

Proverbs 30:5 tells us that 'every word of God is pure.' 'Every' means 'every' and 'pure' means 'pure.' Consequently, it is inconceivable that when the Lord gave covenant promises to a certain nation, He had no intention that they would actually be for that people.

Replacement Theology Suggests God's Words Can Mean Anything



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It is a dangerous thing to say that God does not mean the words He has used in Holy Scripture. That is how modernists treat statements of history and doctrine. They, in their folly, would imagine that there was no six-day creation, that Jonah was not swallowed by the great fish, etc. They are satisfied to look for, what they call, a 'spiritual meaning.' We contend that everything in the Bible is true. We further contend that wherever the word 'Israel' is used in the Bible it refers either

(1) to the man, Jacob, or

(2) to the nation that descended from him (that is, from his loins).

Those persons imbibing the replacement theory often endeavour to prove their notion by using the term 'spiritual Israel,' as if that allows for the inclusion of persons other than those of the Jewish nation. The truth is that this title (spiritual Israel) describes those Jews who are converted to Christ and are truly born again. Although the Scripture speaks of a time when 'all Israel' (those Jews who will be alive at the time of the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ) shall be saved (Romans 11:26), it is evident that not each person of the Jewish race during the centuries has belonged to the spiritual Israel. Judas Iscariot is a notable and obvious example.

This is really what Romans 2:28-29 and 9:6 teach us. When God says in chapter 2, 'He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ... but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly' it is a reminder that there have been and will be those Jews who are only 'outwardly so, but there are those who know a real experience of God's grace and can be described as 'inwardly,' for example, Moses, David, Paul. When God says in chapter 9, 'They are not all Israel, which are of Israel' it is a reminder that there are those who are 'of Israel' - merely born into the nation - but there are those who are the true Israel, experiencing the grace of God in their hearts. These verses do not make any mention of Gentiles. Why read into the Bible that which is not there?

Mr Newmark used to comment that when God re-affirmed to the nation in later years, the covenant that He had formerly made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He frequently used the name 'Jacob' instead of 'Israel.' He would remark that if God had said 'Israel' some people would think that He meant the Church and others would think He meant Britain!

This is a very important issue for each one of us individually as, if God never intended to keep His plainly-worded promises to the nation of Israel, how can any of us be confident that He will keep His promises to us?

Deuteronomy 4:2 states concerning God's word 'Ye shall not... diminish ought from it.' 'Diminish' means 'lessen,' 'decrease,' 'abate,' 'degrade,' 'take from.' Clearly, such diminishing is evident when the word 'Israel' is understood to mean other than what it says.

If we are to accept that 'Israel' in the Bible can be replaced, is there any other word in Holy Scripture that cannot be replaced?

Replacement Theology deviates from True Spirituality

It would be quite wrong to suggest that many persons who have embraced the teaching of replacement theology are not spiritually minded people; but that is in spite of their reception of the theory rather than because of their imbibing of the notion.

It is often spoken of as a 'spiritualising of the prophecies,' but we submit that it is not spiritual at all. It is in effect, a 'vapourising' of prophetic truth. We consider that when studying Holy Scripture, the most literal understanding of God's plainly-worded sentences is the most spiritual.

We have heard it said that Galatians 4:26 and Hebrews 12:22 warrant the taking of the word 'Jerusalem' in the prophets as meaning 'the Church.' How can that be?

In Galatians, the apostle is speaking about Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, and he specifically states that these 'things are an allegory' (verse 24). Hagar and her son represented the conditional covenant of



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the law, which is described as 'Jerusalem which now is.' Sarah and her son represented the new covenant, which is unconditional. This is described as 'Jerusalem which is above.' So, there are two Jerusalems, one on earth and one above.

The passage in Hebrews has a similar theme and contrasts Mount Sinai with 'the heavenly Jerusalem.'

John tells us in the Book of the Revelation, that he saw 'the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven' (21:2). It is however, unreasonable to confuse this city with the place of which we read so much in God's Word – the Jerusalem here on earth, that which God 'has chosen, to put his name there.' It is foolish to think that what God has clearly said concerning the earthly Jerusalem does not mean what it was obviously intended to convey.

It is amazing how many of God's people, who appear to be otherwise godly persons, seem to lose their Christian character when they are endeavouring to enforce their belief in this 'so called' spiritualising. Sadly, we have heard some, whom we would consider as dear believers, refer to pre-millennialism as heresy, and pre-millennialists as heretics!

Replacement Theology Leads to Anti-Semitism

God has made unconditional promises in a covenant of grace towards the nation of Israel. It is true that the covenant at Sinai was conditional, but it is impossible to read the Bible with an open mind and not realise that much that God has said to and about the ancient nation does not depend for its fulfilment on their behaviour. Replacement theology seems to tell us that Jehovah has rejected the Jews because of their sin. We who are Gentile believers are far from sinless, so would that mean that God will reject us? Any professing Christian who knows anything about the grace of God will be very conscious of many personal sins and short-comings and will be thankful that God's sovereign grace does 'much more abound' - is super-abundant. Is it consistent with the doctrine of free and sovereign grace to suggest that God would cast away His covenant people because of their transgressions? In any case, He has definitely stated, 'I will never break My covenant with you' (Judges 2:1), and that in spite of the fact that in the next verse, Jehovah continued by saying, 'Ye have not obeyed My voice.'

Those who understand that the Lord retains His love for His ancient people, although they, as a nation, rejected the Messiah, will love those people too, as did the apostle Paul (Romans 9:2-4). Moreover, there is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was able to choose into which nation He would be born, chose to be a Jew. Those who understand these things rightly seek to love those whom God Himself has loved and still loves with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).

A man, in speaking to me, sought to describe the church he had been attending, and he said, 'They pray for every country under the sun, except Israel.'

The Scripture specifically tells us that we should pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6); and to this is added the promise that those who thus pray shall prosper. That peace will not come until the time when the Jewish people look upon Him Whom they have pierced and are brought to a godly repentance (Zechariah 12:9-14).

Some seem to presume that our love for Israel means that we must support the present apostasy of the nation. However, there must be many Christians who love and pray for godless relatives and friends. They would abhor the fact that those for whom they have a concern continue in rebellion against God, but that does not cause their concern to cease. In the same way, we who have a love for the Jews do not condone the nation's apostasy but we look forward to the time when 'all Israel shall be saved' (Romans 11:26)

It appears sadly obvious that those who fail to grasp this truth of God's perpetual love for Paul's 'kinsmen according to the flesh' often look at God's ancient people as the world sees them; and whether or not it is ad-



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mitted, the inability to grasp God's purpose does lead to anti-Semitism. Zechariah 2:8 refers to Israel as 'the apple of His (God's) eye.' If the nation is thus so precious to Jehovah, should they not also be to His people?

Replacement Theology Implies Testaments Not Equally Inspired

We find too, that amongst those persons embracing replacement theology, there is a tendency to speak of the New Testament as if it were superior to the Old Testament; this in spite of the fact that both are equally inspired.

It is worthy of note that it is in the New Testament, in Hebrews 8:8-11, that a quote is made from Jeremiah 31:31-34. This is what is said in Hebrews: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest.'

The quotation is not altered to say that the new covenant is with the Church, but it is specifically stated that it is a 'covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah' - that is, with both sections of the Jewish people following the division at the time of Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The covenant of which Jeremiah spoke is contrasted with that given to Moses. Both were to the same people but one (the Sinaitic Covenant) depended on the nation keeping God's commands whereas the other rests solely upon the grace of God. The new covenant is referred to as 'a better covenant' and that is because it does depend entirely upon the unchangeable and unfailing promise of an immutable God rather than upon the conduct of the nation.

2 Timothy 3:16 informs us that 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.' That includes the Old Testament as much as the New Testament. The New Testament does not annul, render void, or abolish the clear promises set forth so continuously in the Old Testament. The truth is that the New Testament confirms the abundant grace of God in keeping His Word to the Israel nation, which Word was so frequently set forth by faithful messengers in Old Testament times. Well may the apostle Paul exclaim, 'Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people' (Romans 11:1 -2).

We may well ask, Is it right or is it reasonable to replace God's words with men's thoughts? We would submit that replacement theology leads to unbelief.

Replacement Theology Proclaims a False Message

A real problem with the teaching of Replacement Theology is that it creates a false hope. Sadly, men who otherwise soundly preach salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, by Blood alone - men whom we would regard as dear brethren in Christ, are taking Scriptures which refer to Israel's future blessing and they try to apply them to the Church in this age; whereas the Bible clearly teaches that this present evil age will culminate in terrible apostasy and extreme godlessness. It is not difficult for a spiritually-minded person to see the way things are now going on the earth.

The Old Testament prophets had a similar experience. In the historical books, we read of many prophets (about four hundred men) telling Ahab that all would be well (1 Kings 22) but Michaiah stood alone and boldly uttered the true message of Jehovah. The king and people found that the message of the false prophets was much more appealing to them and they accordingly refused to hearken to the faithful man of God.

When we read the prophetic books, we find that this situation occurred fairly regularly. For example, in the



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days of Jeremiah, there were plenty in Judah who found a very palatable message was given by those who professed to be speaking in the name of Jehovah, but God had not sent them (Jeremiah 23:21). Jeremiah faithfully preached the truth revealed to him by the Lord and for this was treated most cruelly.

It may be very 'nice' to believe that, in our days, we will see what men consider to be wonderful revival, but that is not what God has promised. The teaching gives a false hope. Thankfully, we are encouraged to continue in faithful testimony, to go on preaching the truth of the Gospel, because the Lord will not cease to call out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). However, we have been clearly informed that the lot of the Church in this age is tribulation and suffering, not ruling over nations. The failure to discriminate between the Scriptures speaking of the present age and those which refer to the future age, things which will come upon the earth with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, has led many sincere believers into great confusion.

There is an oft-repeated phrase, 'time will tell;' but we do not need time to tell us because we know by reading the Bible. God's words ought to be believed, not replaced.

We are told in Jeremiah 44 of those who refused to accept God's word through the prophet, and verse 28 states that ultimately they 'shall know whose words shall stand; Mine, or theirs.' Time certainly will tell whether God will do as He has said for the Israel nation, and it will then be evident to all whose word will stand - those of the Omnipotent God or those of the teachers of Replacement Theology.

'Blest pledge! He neer will revoke
A single promise He has spoke.
He will not His great self deny -
A God of Truth can never lie:
As well might He His being quit
As break His oath or word forget.'