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What About Israel?

The Replacement Theology Theory

By

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Israel is the name God gave one of Abraham's grandson – “And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed’” (Genesis 32:28). Even as God chose Abraham and Isaac, He chose Jacob and gave him a special name, Yisra'el (יִשְׂרָאֵל).

The Chosen Nation

There should be no question among scholars and students of the Bible that God chose Israel to be ‘His special people.’ Moses told the ‘children of Israel’ that they were God’s ‘chosen’ before they entered into the ‘Promised Land:’

“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.” Deuteronomy 7:6

“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 14:2

The Chosen Seed

Israel’s King David said – “O seed of Israel His servant, You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!” (1 Chronicles 16:13). God ‘chose’ Israel to carry His ‘Seed’ forward until the day that Jesus Christ was born to a virgin named Mary. Jesus came to ‘fulfill the Law’ of Moses (Matthew 5:17) and to preach salvation to the people of Israel (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18). Jesus was Israel’s Savior – the long-promised Messiah.

However, Israel rejected its Messiah and called for His death on a Roman cross. Jesus did die and shed His blood for the ‘remission of sins’ (Matthew 26:28). Jesus rose from the dead, but still the rulers of Israel continued to reject their Messiah. God then ‘chose’ a special messenger to take the Gospel of salvation to the “Gentiles, kings, and

the children of Israel” (Acts 9). Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul, took the Gospel of Christ to the nations and told them that God did a ‘new’ thing by making ‘one new man’ out of Jew and Gentile:

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh —who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those

who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Ephesians 2:11-18

The Roman Army destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple about ten years after the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians. The hatred of Jews burned against Christians for centuries, giving rise to the idea of what many in the Church called ‘Replacement Theology.’ Their idea was that because of Israel’s failure, God ‘replaced’ them with the Church. They pointed to various Scripture to support that belief:

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” Matthew 21:43

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Galatians 3:26-29

The question is if the Apostle Paul was pointing to a ‘replacement’ or a temporary ‘repositioning’ based on something God had kept secret until revealing it to Paul? Did the apostle mean that Israel was ‘out of the picture’ permanently as far as the future was concerned or did he mean that God was going to do something different with Israel until a later time? Let's take a closer look.

Replacement Theology

“Replacement Theology-also called Supersessionism-typically holds that the Christian Church has fully and permanently replaced Israel in God’s plan. According to proponents of this view, God’s covenant promises to Israel now find their exclusive fulfillment in the Church. While various streams of historical theology have introduced different nuances to this idea, the central claim remains that the Church, as the “new Israel,” has superseded national Israel’s role in the divine covenantal relationship.” [BibleHub](#)

“Replacement theology 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 Israel. The prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are spiritualized or allegorized into promises of God’s blessing for the church.” [GotQuestions](#)

The combination of Jewish hatred toward Christianity in the early days of the Church and Church leaders' beliefs about 'Replacement Theology' led many Christians to view Israel as having no future place in God's plan for salvation as a nation. Individual Jews who turned to Jesus for salvation through the Gospel of Christ were accepted into the Church just as Paul had written, but Israel as a nation no longer existed and had no place in God's plan. Jews scattered across the earth – a people with no homeland – which supported many Christians' belief that God was done with Israel. All of the covenant promises God had made with Israel in the Old Testament were given to Christians.

Though that was a prominent belief in the Church for centuries, many Christians have had a somewhat recent change of mind concerning Israel. One reason is that Israel became a nation-state in 1948. Another reason is that some Christians became more aware of what Paul had written about God's plan for Israel:

“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.” Romans 11:1-2

Paul explained that Israel had not obtained what it sought and that God had given them ‘a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day’ (Romans 11:7-8). Paul went on to write that Israel had ‘stumbled’ and that through their fall provoked them to jealousy. Salvation then came to the Gentiles:

“Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!”
Romans 11:12

Paul went on to write that Israel's being 'cast away is the reconciling of the world,' and that their 'acceptance' would be 'but life from the dead.' The Greek word for 'acceptance' is προσλημψις (*proslémpsis*), which means 'receiving, admission.' It comes from the verb προσλαμβάνω (*proslambanó*) – 'accepted, taken in, received.' Keep in mind that the context is what God had in mind for Israel at a future time.

As we read in Ephesians, God gave the Apostle Paul certain mysteries that He had kept hidden for ages (Ephesians chapter 3). We see this in Romans 11 as well. What God planned for Jews and Gentiles, Israel and Gentile nations, was a mystery that He kept hidden until He revealed it to Paul. Remember in the Book of Acts that the other apostles were surprised by the message God had given to Paul. It took time, effort, arguments, and searching for the apostles to finally recognize the mystery God had given to Paul (e.g. Acts 15; Galatians 2).

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’ ‘Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:28-36

God’s ‘secret’ kept hidden until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul was that He would set Israel aside for a time in a state of ‘blindness’ while Gentiles were saved. However, when the ‘fullness of the Gentiles has come in,’ Paul wrote, ‘so all Israel will be saved.’ That is a clear statement concerning the future of Israel. Nothing in Paul’s explanation of this ‘mystery’ supports ‘Replacement Theology.’ Some in the Church have come to understand that and have changed their views about the nation of Israel. Others in the Church have not.

Is Modern Israel Saved?

The short answer is ‘no.’ The nation of Israel may be somewhat friendly toward Christian nations because of the help they receive with national defense, funding, and material supplies for their people. However, Israel as a nation is not yet saved. They do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God. They do not believe that Jesus Christ is their Messiah. A large percentage of Jews in Israel (and other nations) are ‘secular Jews,’ meaning they are not religious. They continue to be blind, deaf, and dead in their sins. So, how should Christians view Israel today? Should they hate Israel? Be ‘anti-Israel?’ Ignore Israel?

Not at all. Israel continues to be a mission field for Christians, which is true of other nations on earth. Paul warned the Gentiles who turned to Christ not to “be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion.” God was not done with Israel. He set them aside for a time in order to ‘graft’ Gentiles in, but He also warned Gentile believers not to be ‘haughty’ about that:

“You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?” Romans 11:19-24

That is a strong claim concerning God's intention for both Gentiles and Jews. As Paul wrote in the next verse:

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

Romans 11:25

God opened the door of salvation to Gentiles through ‘blindness’ that had happened to Israel – ‘until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.’ What did Paul mean by that statement?

The Greek word for ‘fullness’ is πλήρωμα (*plérōma*) and means ‘filled, filled up, complete.’ The idea is of something being finished. What is finished? complete? ‘the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.’ The Greek for ‘come in’ is εἰσέρχομαι (*eiserchomai*) and means ‘enter into.’ Enter into what?

Paul wrote the Thessalonians that believers who were alive at the time Jesus returned for His Church would be caught together with those believers who had died. They would “be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Paul wrote the Corinthians that this event was a ‘mystery’ and would happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” He went on to write in 1 Corinthians 15 that death would be “swallowed up in victory.”

That event, often referred to by Christians as ‘the rapture,’ will occur when the ‘fullness’ of the Gentiles ‘comes in.’ What happens after that?

“And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.’” Romans 11:26-27

This is a clear statement of God's plan to save the nation of Israel. Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God, will 'turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' Remember that the name 'Jacob' is another way of saying 'Israel.' God made an unconditional agreement (covenant) with Israel and God will save Israel when Christ (the Deliverer) comes out of Zion and takes away their sins.

The next verse sums up Paul's point:

“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.” Romans 11:28

God 'elected' (ἐκλογή – chose) Israel and called them 'beloved' (ἀγαπητός – very dear) 'for the sake of the fathers.' Who are the 'fathers?' The Greek word is πατήρ (*patér*) and refers to the 'fathers' of Israel, sometimes called the 'patriarchs' of Israel. Those include Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel).

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul knew God's plans for Israel because God revealed those plans to Paul – what Paul referred to as a 'mystery' – "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery." Paul did not want Christians to be ignorant of the mystery that God had revealed to him. Unfortunately, many Gentile believers have been ignorant of the mystery concerning Israel for centuries. Many still are ignorant.

God made many unconditional promises to 'the fathers' that include a special place for Israel, even though they became enemies of the Gentiles who would come to Christ. The day is coming when Gentiles and Jews who Christ has saved in this 'dispensation' (Ephesians 2 and 3) will be complete and caught up to be with Christ forever. That event will open the next phase of God's Eternal plan to save Israel.

Christians today should be cautious about what they think about Israel. Remember Paul's warning in Romans 11. We've been 'grafted in' through God's grace. We need to remember that Israel's 'being cast away is the reconciling of the world.' Their 'acceptance' by God in the future will be like 'life from the dead.' We should be thankful to God for His great love and mercy and look at Israel through His eyes.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33

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