

# The Veil of Moses

*The Current Focus Upon Israel*

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Understanding Ministries**

## Preface

In the Western churches today there is a large and growing interest in Israel and the Jews. This interest, which for some provides a useful and objective background to the culture, geography and worship of Bible times, has for others become an issue of such primary concern that it is now beginning to shape the beliefs and practices of many Christians and churches.

Following the rebirth and development of the State of Israel since 1948, seen by some as the fulfilment of many Old Testament prophecies, the scriptures are being searched alongside today's newspapers to discover what other predictions are soon to be fulfilled in the Middle East.

The result of this focus upon Israel has been a reappraisal of the place of the Jews in history and God's future purposes, in order to determine Jewish cultural influence upon: the origins of Christian doctrine, our understanding of the Bible, the walk of believers and how we meet to worship .

In order that a correct scriptural viewpoint is reached on these matters, it is vital that some crucial questions are answered and that the Bible itself is seen to be the arbiter in the search, not a particular reading of history. This booklet seeks to answer these questions in such a way - questions like:

- Does the new covenant replace the old or exist beside it?
- Are Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Christ or Israel?
- What is a Biblical Jew?
- What effect has Jewish unbelief had upon the covenants?
- How do Gentiles get God's covenantal blessing, promised initially to Jews?
- Can we trust God's promises?
- Should we observe Old Testament feasts, diets and rituals?
- Is Israel still the promised land and are Jews still God's people?
- Are there two ways to salvation, one for Jews another for Gentiles?
- Is it important for us to concentrate upon the Jewishness of Christ, the apostles and the scriptures?

In the current climate this subject cannot be avoided, and your answers to such questions will determine whether or not you call your church a synagogue or celebrate Jewish festivals, how you address God or even how you read your newspaper.

Peter Hyde  
Hove  
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# Contents

## Introductory Matters

Why is this booklet necessary  
 The origins of the focus upon Jewish things  
 The importance of sound rules of interpretation  
 Understanding Old Testament prophecy

## Crucial Doctrines

Who is God's covenant with?  
 Who does the kingdom belong to?  
 Who did Jesus die for, whom does he live for?  
 Does God have two peoples?  
 Is the inheritance of God tied up with the land of Israel?  
 Does Judaism have anything to teach the church?  
 What was Paul's attitude to Judaism?  
 Should we focus upon the Jewishness of Christ?  
 The significance of being *in Christ*

## Crucial Scriptures

Gal 3-4  
 Rm 9-11  
 Eph 2:11-19  
 Hebrews

## Conclusion

God's focus upon the church which is Christ's body  
 Has God rejected Israel finally?  
 The final word

## Appendices

Promises made to Israel applied by the NT to believers.  
 Everlasting promises.  
 Were the synoptic Gospels written in Hebrew?  
 Should we pray specifically for Jerusalem?  
 Jewishness in the Bible.  
 Replacement theology.  
 Should Christians celebrate Jewish feasts?  
 Are the prohibitions of Acts 15 still relevant?  
 Practical church matters.  
 An example of the dangers of Jewish Midrashic interpretation.  
 Are OT prophecies about Israel to be fulfilled in a future Jewish state?  
 Are people and nations cursed if they oppose Israel?

# INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

## Why is this booklet necessary?

The church today is a place of great contrasts, and considerable confusion. This situation is a hotbed for the promotion of deception so it is no surprise that we are seeing the rise of many old heresies and the development of a few new ones. In this uncertainty, many are trying to find a historical basis for their faith and there is much talk about roots, but instead of looking to the sound historical standards of Christianity (evangelical confessions and creeds) there is a tendency to root faith in racial characteristics like Celtic or Jewish culture. All such deviations focus attention away from Christ on to something else. Having looked elsewhere at Celtic spirituality,<sup>1</sup> this booklet will examine the current focus upon Israel which takes many forms, but perhaps three basic strands can be identified.

### **The Jewish Root Movement**

Typical proponents of this in the UK would include Jacob Prasch and Prophetic Word Ministries. It teaches that: modern Israel is the fulfilment of OT prophecy, Christianity is Jewish, Israel is the root that supports the church; so we must focus on Christ as a Jew and fully understand the Hebraic nature of scripture. Some include, in this, rabbinical midrashic rules of interpretation. It asserts that God has two peoples (Jews and Christians) and that the covenant applies especially to Israel and only in a secondary way to Gentile believers in Christ who have been tagged onto God's purposes for the Jews. People following these ideas tend to use Jewish terminology like *torah* for law.

### **The Messianic Testimony Movement / Christian Zionists**

This is a very large and diverse group including folk like Walter Riggans and 'Rabbi' Phil Sharp. At one end of the scale there are 'churches' which now call themselves synagogues, have leaders who call themselves 'Rabbi', encourage Gentiles to change their names to Jewish equivalents, only call Jesus *Yeshua*, use *G-d* for God's name, celebrate Jewish festivals legalistically, endorse 'Davidic dancing' and strictly follow the law; while some have even been especially circumcised and wear phylacteries! At the other end there are churches which meet more traditionally but use Jewish terminology, pray regularly for Israel and seek to reach out to Jewish contacts. Some moderate organisations, like Prayer For Israel, have rejected

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<sup>1</sup> *Modern Celtic Spirituality*, available from St Matthew Publications Ltd, 24 Geldart Street, Cambridge, CB1 2LX.

extreme forms of Messianic Testimony and Jewish Roots but rather seek to encourage a witness to, and prayer for, Jews. Others are more extreme: in response to a 'prophetic' word, a group in Hove (representatives of a national Messianic leader) went to a local beauty spot, blew a ram's horn and waved flags in order to: 'prepare the way for revival' and 'pray for an open heaven'. Such fleshly legalism dishonours the open heaven procured by the Lord Jesus.

### **A focus upon Hebrew**

This is a recent deviation which maintains that the New Testament, or at least the synoptic Gospels, were written in Hebrew or Aramaic and not Greek; or at least arose from a common Hebrew life of Christ. Even the bits they concede may have been written in Greek arise from a Jewish mindset. Therefore, in order to properly understand the New Testament, one has to determine the original Hebrew writing or thinking underneath a given passage. Rabbinic writers thus become a crucial factor in identifying the 'true' text. Teachers like David Bivin and Ray Blizzard have promoted this view which has been adopted wholeheartedly by Prophetic Word Ministries, especially their Centre for Hebraic Studies. Some (e.g. Bivin) eulogise the value of Hebrew generally, not just to aid understanding the Old Testament but as having almost mystical benefit in a Christian's walk.

### **Key Doctrines**

As the groups are so diverse and contradict each other it is difficult to précis and assign their teaching, but they each hold some or all of the following:

- God's primary, everlasting covenant is with Israel, the church has come into the benefit of this.
- God has two peoples today, Jews and the church.
- The land occupied by Israel, Jordan, Lebanon; parts of Syria, Egypt and Iraq belongs by divine right to Jews and will one day be occupied by them.
- The modern state of Israel is a fulfilment of many OT prophecies and is the centre of God's future purposes.
- To understand God's intention in the Bible, we must concentrate on the Jewishness of it.
- Jesus was a Jew and a rabbi. To properly understand him we must centre on his Jewishness.
- Judaism is not a false religion like others. Though incomplete without the Messiah, it has much of value since Jews are God's people.
- The Gospels were either originally written in Hebrew or were based upon a Hebrew life of Christ. Certain Greek idioms used in them only make sense if translated into Hebrew.
- Rabbinic writings and midrashic methods of interpretation are of great value in helping us understand the Bible.

- Christians should pray regularly for Israel. To speak against Israel will result in a curse upon you.
- When a Jew becomes a Christian he retains his Jewishness to become a completed Israelite. Converted Jews should thus be called 'Messianic Jews' or 'Fulfilled Jews', not 'Christians' since this has a Gentile flavour.
- Celebrating Jewish feasts and rituals is acceptable to Christians and can help focus on Biblical truths.
- The temple will one day be rebuilt and sacrifices again offered by Levitical priests. This is a joyful Christian expectation.
- Jews are not guilty of the crucifixion of the Messiah. The responsibility lies with a few religious leaders and the Romans.
- Teaching that some, or all, OT prophecies addressed to Israel now apply to the church is 'replacement theology' and is a heresy.

Each of these factions arise from the same theological origins and they all spell out the heresy of adding to God's revelation; it is Jesus *plus*, the Bible *plus*; ordinary Christianity is insufficient. Just as modern Celtic spirituality requires an addition to God's word and has no relevance to non-Celtic races, so this focus upon Judaism adds a variety of Jewish items to God's word and is irrelevant to other races. Is it acceptable to think that a poor, rural, Chinese believer cannot lead a fulfilled spiritual life in Christ if he only obeys the Word and has no knowledge of Jewish idioms, interpretations, culture and language? Have the great saints throughout history been starved of true potential because they knew nothing of this emphasis? Even a quick glance at history shows that this is ridiculous. If this focus upon things Jewish is so vital why has it not produced believers and churches which excel beyond the godliness of our forefathers? The lives of great saints, teachers, preachers, workers and missionaries of the past testify against this modern aberration.

Most of the apologists for Christian Zionism/Jewish Root teaching make much of the suffering and persecution of the Jewish race throughout history, particularly the Holocaust. Every sane person denounces this anti-Semitism and is greatly saddened by the facts, but this is not the way to make a doctrinal case. We must not be swayed by our emotions, rather we must evaluate the Biblical data; scripture, not history, must establish doctrine. Many other races have suffered from attempted genocide e.g: Gypsies, Chinese, Poles, Maoris, Albanians, African tribes and Native Americans. Stalin killed more people than Hitler did. The suffering of the Jews has been terrible, perhaps worse than others, but they are not alone. Other nations once close to extinction have also been rejuvenated with political recognition and/or land rights like American Indians, Maoris, Aborigines and African tribes.

I have tried to keep things simple but quote as many scriptures as are necessary. Consequently, I have kept footnotes, citations, bibliographies and abstract theological argument to a minimum. Even so, I have not avoided a number of footnotes. Bible quotations are from the New King James Version.

## **The origins of the focus upon Jewish things**

One of the key reasons for the opposition of Jewish focused groups to Toronto was its eschatology (the study of the last things). Most Toronto groups (but not all) arose within a triumphalist, postmillennial setting. This is the idea that the church will become more and more powerful, godly and influential until it dominates the world and ushers in a golden age for a 1000 years before Christ returns. Extreme forms of this, like Dominionism, Theonomy or Reconstructionism, teach that Christians will rule the world and even use the sanctions of the Mosaic law to do so.

Although minor forms of postmillennialism have been around for several hundred years, particularly amongst some Puritans, it was uncommon, if around at all, during the earliest times of the church. The orthodox belief was amillennialism. This teaches that there is no golden age to be expected but that the millennium of Revelation 20 is a spiritual reign, and refers to the age of grace instituted at the cross. The end will contain a testimony to Christ in the church in the midst of widespread apostasy (i.e. wheat and tares). Most sound believers throughout history have held this view and it was the common belief of the early church fathers, the Reformers, most Puritans and most evangelicals until the 19th century.

A few fathers held a view called premillennialism which arose from old Jewish ideas. This taught that Christ would return, after a time of apostasy, to usher in a 1000 year reign upon the earth when the church would be triumphant but sinners were also present. Though only a minor belief, it continued. It was so minor that Calvin didn't even consider that the 'Chiliasts' (as they were called from the Greek word for '1000') were worth refuting, such was the low esteem most held for these Jewish ideas. Later some Puritans and others asserted similar views, even Spurgeon held them for a while until he adopted amillennialism. This has been called the *Historic Premillennial* viewpoint. None of these positions taught that God had a special, separate purpose for Jews outside the Gospel. Neither did anyone teach a pre-tribulation rapture.

In the mid 1800's everything changed. The 19th century saw many major aberrations begin: Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, the extremes of Revivalism and Holiness movements to name a few. Often a new excitement about an imminent second coming of Christ spurred these ideas on. The most important of these movements was Dispensationalism.

This re-working of historic premillennialism began in the extreme, prototype charismatic church of Edward Irving. Irving was later to espouse heretical ideas about the human nature of Christ and died a broken man, rejected by his own people for not being charismatic enough. His church was full of extreme charismaticism and became the scandal of Victorian London.

Radical ideas about the end was a key motivating factor of the ministry of this church and it developed many novelties about it. In this it was influenced by the teaching of a Roman Catholic Jesuit called Manuel Lacunza who was amongst the first to posit a two phased appearing of Christ at the end. Irving translated his book, *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty* in 1827. To this was added a prophetic vision by a young and sick believer who had a background in occult things and was prone to hallucinations. In 1830 Margaret MacDonald received a vision which declared that there would be a pre-tribulation rapture of the saints to escape persecution at the end. Irving ran with this unexpected idea and it coalesced with the other novelties published in his journal, *The Morning Watch*.

It has now been proved that the Brethren leader, John Darby, copied the ideas of Irving's group.<sup>2</sup> His credibility and widespread lectures on the subject led to their acceptance by many; but it was the Scofield Bible which did most to spread Dispensationalism (as it became known) so that it became the dominant view this century.<sup>3</sup> Other teachers like: E.W. Bullinger, W.E. Blackstone and William Kelly also popularised the teaching which fragmented into many different forms.

The reason for this background is that until the advent of Dispensationalism, no one taught that God had two purposes, one for Israel and one for the church. No one believed that God worked differently in different dispensations (e.g. the age of law, the age of innocency in Eden, the Gospel age etc.) but held that the Gospel of God has always been the same, though applied differently under law. No one believed that God had two covenants of life, one for Jews and one for Gentiles. No one believed that God's first choice was Israel and his second choice were believing Gentiles. Every orthodox Christian taught that God's eternal purpose was bound up with the Gospel of His son and that those who believed were bound up in the church which was God's household. Indeed, this is simple scriptural truth, as we shall see.

In short, the focus upon Israel, in the church, did not exist throughout history

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance: Dave MacPherson, *The Rapture Plot*.

<sup>3</sup> The *Scofield Bible* sold over 3 million copies by 1960.



until about 1827. It began in a discredited, scandalised and extreme Charismatic church. It was initiated by the ideas of a Jesuit and was enhanced by the charismatic hallucinations of a susceptible, immature girl on her sickbed. The idea that God's real chosen people are Jews, not elect Christians, and that the root of Christianity is still Judaism, is modern and comes from a debased root.

## **The importance of sound rules of interpretation**

One of the foundations of Dispensationalism is that it rigidly interprets scripture in a literal way, especially prophecies. Some modern teachers have modified this slightly in order to avoid absurdities [though other writers still maintain an extreme literalism so that God, for instance, is said to have physical arms and legs like a man<sup>4</sup>]. So, although some would allow for figures of speech, they expressly deny that OT prophecy can be applied spiritually to the church. If a text speaks of Israel, Jacob, Zion, and so on, it must be a reference to Jews and not Gentile believers. It is from this mistaken principle that the focus on Israel arises.

Why is it mistaken? We learn how to interpret scripture from scripture itself, and the Bible interprets prophecy in a number of ways. Sometimes the contemporary people are addressed, sometimes the prophecy is applied to Christ as the Messiah, sometimes it is applied to the church. For example:

- **Amos 9:11-12** refers the Davidic kingdom to a future Israel, but this is fulfilled in Jesus in a spiritual way and James applies it to the church in Acts 15:16-17.
- **Jer 31:31-34** ascribes the new covenant to the Jews but Heb 8:8-13, 10:14-18 (c.f. 1 Cor 11:25) applies it to Jesus' atoning death and its benefits to the church.
- **Hosea 11:1** has its first application to the exodus of Israel, its second to Jesus (Matt 2:13-21) and its third to Christians (Rev 11:8).

So the Bible shows that it is wrong to state that all prophecy must always be interpreted literally and the prophecies to Israel are only for Israel. Sound rules of interpretation must guide our approach to this subject. This means that verses must be: interpreted *in context*, [both immediate (near verses) and distant (elsewhere in the Bible)]; their *historical and grammatical background understood*; and *harmonised within a sound Biblical, doctrinal framework*. For instance: the Word Faith notion of faith as an impersonal

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<sup>4</sup> *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*, Atlanta, (1963), NT p280. Still sold widely in Christian bookshops.

force applied by the believer at will, fails all these tests. This idea has no textual evidence for it: it departs from the Biblical meaning and use of the word; it has no historical currency in orthodoxy; and contradicts other Biblical doctrines.

One of the reasons pro-Jewish teachers make mistakes is that they elevate the OT above the NT. They fail to see, or choose to miss, the way the NT interprets the OT. By giving the OT precedence they miss the wood for the trees. The clear texts must interpret the obscure ones. This means that the NT must be our guide in understanding the OT. Jesus warned us about this when he promised that his final and complete word would come after his resurrection via the Holy Spirit. What the apostles wrote was Jesus' final teaching to the church and the Spirit leads us into all this truth (Jn 16:12-15). We do not need rabbinic understanding or midrashic methods of interpretation if we have the Spirit and follow the pattern of NT teaching.

Jesus' teaching must mould our thinking about the OT. Peter directly warns us that prophecy must not be interpreted at our whim (2 Pt 1:20). The fulness of Biblical prophecy and promise is in Christ and these riches are for the people in Christ (Eph 2:7, 3:8), this means that the OT is primarily written for the church, not Israel (Heb 11:39-40; 1 Pt 1:10-12). By teaching that most of the OT relates to a future earthly purpose for ethnic Israel, Dispensationalists and Jewish Root teachers completely miss the point, unbalance scripture and direct the saints away from Christ, the true focus of the promises.

## **Understanding Old Testament prophecy**

### **How does the Bible interpret OT prophecy?**

- Many times prophecies are fulfilled in ways which the writer never expected e.g: Zech 12:10 cf. Jn 19:37; Zech 13:7 c.f. Matt 26:31. Both these prophecies are put into the future by Dispensationalists despite being said to be fulfilled.
- Many times prophecies are fulfilled spiritually and in an unexpected way (e.g: Gen 17:5 in Rm 4:17; Jer 31:15 in Matt 2:18; Gen 3:15 in Col 2:15; Ezek 37 in 2 Cor 6:6-18).
- Most cases of OT prophecy are stated by the NT to be fulfilled spiritually e.g: Joel's outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the land of promise is heavenly (Heb 11:8-16), Elijah as the forerunner to the Messiah is fulfilled in John the Baptist (Mal 3:1, 4:5-6; Lk 1:17; Matt 11:13-14). Over 86% of the OT prophecies fulfilled by *NT events* are spiritually fulfilled.
- One examination of 94 OT prophecies, revealed only 11 cases where the fulfilment was *exactly as the writer foresaw* (in OT & NT events). If

interpreted literally, this would have resulted in a wrong and unbiblical conclusion 88% of the time.<sup>5</sup>

- Another writer identified 97 OT prophecies regarding Christ, only 34 are fulfilled *literally* in the NT (35%).<sup>6</sup>

Why is this? The prophet could only speak about future spiritual blessing on the basis of existing realities; he had no idea of the final character of God's blessing. Even Jesus' disciples were surprised despite three years of his ministry to them (e.g. their shock at the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Gospel). The prophets refer to features of the Jewish religious system (land, temple, priesthood, sacrifices etc.), without realising that these things would be consummated in the life and ministry of God's Son. Promises of a restoration of Israel meant the inclusion of these religious items to Jews, which the NT explains were just shadows of the spiritual reality. Prophets had to speak in terms which their hearers could understand. Despite this, astute worshippers knew that there must be significant changes in a restored Israel as the Gentile nations were included in the promise and God's glory was to be present. The prophecies' fulfilment had to transcend the literal scope. If a man in 1962 promised his young son that, on his maturity, he would be given a toolkit with a quality brace and bit, but then gave him a Black and Decker electric drill in 1969, the promise was fulfilled despite the literal difference in appearance. The son did not get a hand drill; but what was important in the father's promise was the ability to bore holes. Much 'predictive' prophecy is similar - it is a promise that is not necessarily literally fulfilled.

Let's take a specific example. Dispensationalists expect a future literal temple building in Israel based upon OT predictions. Ignoring the cosmic dimensions of this which rule it out, a key feature is the river associated with it. Ezekiel prophesies of a river of living water flowing out of the temple to the east (Ezek 47:1-3ff). Zechariah takes up this theme and prophesies that the water will flow east *and* west (Zech 14: 8-9; a literal fulfilment is already in problems). Later Joel reaffirms this water flow as part of the establishment of God's people in the land (Joel 3:18-20). But in the NT, Jesus takes these OT themes (there is no other antecedent) and spiritualises them to refer to the Spirit, the flow of the Spirit (water) is from within (Jn 7:38), the body becomes God's temple both of Christ (Jn 2:21) and of the believer (1 Cor 3:16). The flow east refers to resurrection life, the flow east plus west refers to universality. These prophecies have nothing to do with irrigation schemes in Israel.

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<sup>5</sup> R.L. Whitelaw, Article, *The Gospel Millennium and Obedience to Scripture*, p6ff. *Searching Together*, St Croix Falls, WI. USA

<sup>6</sup> See Curtis Crenshaw, *Dispensationalism Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Footstool Pub. Memphis (1986) p7-14 for list.

The conclusions we must arrive at are that most prophecies have a spiritual fulfilment and often result in an unexpected conclusion. They frequently cannot be taken literally. Furthermore, the focus of prophecy is the testimony of Christ, (Rev19:10) not the glory of a human institution or an earthly nation. Every OT prophecy fulfilled in the NT is focused upon Christ. To understand prophecy we must fix our eyes upon the Lord and nothing less; that includes Israel. For instance, Jesus himself stated that his resurrection on the third day fulfils scripture, referring to Hosea 6:1-2 (there is no other relevant text); yet this text relates to the restoration of Israel. Clearly, Jesus is saying that his resurrection is the restoration of Israel; Israel's future glory rests in him. This tallies with apostolic doctrine which declares that every blessing is only found in Christ alone (e.g. Eph 1:3).<sup>7</sup>

## CRUCIAL DOCTRINES

### Who is God's covenant with today?

God has established a relationship with his people via a covenant, an agreement of friendship established through his Son. All covenants affecting men are the outworking of an eternal covenant (Eph 1:4) made within the Godhead where Jesus agreed to become the saviour of a people given to him by God (Jn 17:2,4,6,9 etc.) by dying on their behalf (Rev 13:8). The expressions of this covenant in grace occupy different periods, are cumulative and teach specific things about the revelation of God's friendship with man:

- *Noahic Covenant* - God's covenant with Noah and creation which resulted from righteousness. Emphasis: God's preservation. Sign: the rainbow.
- *Abrahamic Covenant* - God's covenant with a family / community. There were no laws for 645<sup>8</sup> years and only the ordinance of circumcision. The basis was faith expressed in obedience. Emphasis: God's gracious purposes in a family to bless the world. Sign: circumcision.

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<sup>7</sup> Note: R.T. France, [There is] '*no instance where Jesus expects a fulfilment of OT prophecy other than through his own ministry, and certainly no suggestion of a future restoration of the Jewish nation independent of himself. He himself is the fulfilment to which that prophecy points*'. 'OT Prophecy & the Future of Israel', *Tyndale Bulletin* 26 (1975), p58.

<sup>8</sup> From the promise to Abraham (c.2090 BC) to the giving of the law (c.1445 BC). Paul's 430 years (Gal 3:17) is calculated from the last reaffirmation of the promise to Jacob just before he went to Egypt (Gen 46:2-4, c.1928 BC).

- **Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant** - God's covenant with a nation. Laws and ordinances are added to discipline and preserve the moral and religious distinctiveness of the people of God. The Ten Commandments establish the moral basis of this covenant. Emphasis: God's nation or people as a testimony to God's dwelling with man. Sign: the Sabbath.
  - \* **Davidic Covenant** - God covenants an eternal throne to the seed of David. God's people becomes God's kingdom. Emphasis: God's reign. Sign: a virgin birth. This is a subset of earlier covenants being personal to David, but it narrows the lineage of the Messiah to the House of David.
  - \* **Covenant with Phinehas** - another subset of the Mosaic covenant which establishes the Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood in covenant form.

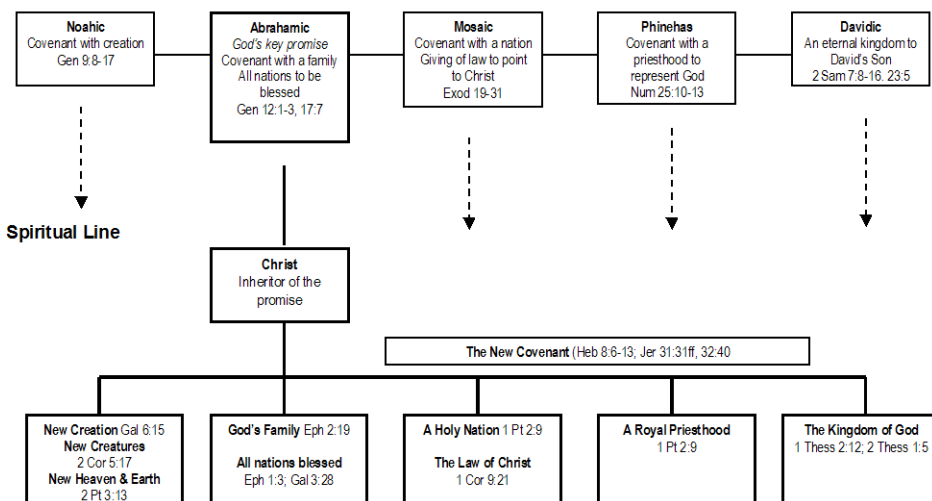
All these culminate in the New Covenant brought in by the cross of Jesus, which cancels previous legal expressions of the Mosaic Covenant and is the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant:

*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:13).*

Each of the manifestations of God's purpose in the previous covenants are subsumed in Christ, the inheritor of all God's promises: Jesus is the person in whom God dwells, Jesus is God's king, he will preserve his people and end the futility of creation, he is the head of God's family, he will bless the nations.

Appendix Two: Overview of the Biblical Covenants

External / Earthly Line



In one sense, the fulness of God's covenantal purposes in Christ represents a return to theocracy (God as King). God deterred David from building a temple to 'house' God and was reluctant to establish a human king in Israel.

Those who wait for a future Jewish temple and re-establishment of David's throne on earth miss the whole point. God never intended a final earthly temple or monarchy and his accession of it in Israel was temporary. The finality is: God glorified in Christ; and worship in spirit and truth (i.e. in Christ) not a place (Jn 4:21-23). Even Zech 14:20ff shows holiness spilling outside the temple.

### **The Abrahamic Covenant**

Covenant had existed before, but with Abraham there are significant new emphases. Here God is establishing a relationship with a community, with a family that is wider than blood ties (Abraham's household including servants, retainers, armed men and their families certainly numbered several hundred people: Gen 17:26-27) which will occupy a large territory. Blood relatives were often excluded (e.g. Edomites) while foreigners were bought in (e.g. Jacob's retainers from Padan Aram), but the covenant community continued as God's family, his testimony on the earth. A second feature was that this covenant was established by faith. The initial external sign of the covenant (circumcision) did not give access to the covenant but demonstrated that men were a part of it. Surely this covenant still applies to ethnic Jews, with the promised territorial expansion still to come, if only in the millennium? The Bible says no!

### Is there an extensive future expansion of Israel's borders?

- The promises of a great nation (Gen 12:2, 3 13:16, 15:18, 17:2, 6-8 18:18, 22:17-18) are said to be fulfilled, for Israel, in the OT not in the future. The external aspects of the promise have already been literally completed.
  - \* Dust of the earth (Gen 13:6), fulfilled 2 Chron 1:9; Num 23:10.
  - \* A nation as the stars of heaven and sand on the shore fulfilled Deut 10:22, 1:10).
  - \* A great nation (Deut 26:5).
  - \* An innumerable nation (1 Kg 3:8).
  - \* From the river (Nile) to the Euphrates (Gen 12:7, 13:15, 15:18); fulfilled. The occupation of it would be gradual (Ex 23:29-30) realised by Solomon (1 Kg 4:20-25).
  - \* The OT states that the fulfilment was complete, it had '*all come to pass*': Josh 11:23, 21:41-45; Neh 9:21-25.
  - \* The law of the first fruits included a declaration by the offerer that Israel possessed the land promised by God:
 

*I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us. (Deut 26:3).*

### Is the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham material or spiritual?

- Abraham realised that the key fulfilment of the covenant was heavenly not

earthly (Heb 11:10,13-16). If Abraham was interested in an earthly fulfilment of the promise, he would have built a city like the great one he left; instead he spent his life in tents. All the patriarchs confessed that they were *'strangers and pilgrims on the earth'* who were seeking *'a better country that is heavenly'*. The idea of a physical, fleshly fulfilment to the covenant puts us in opposition to these ancient godly Jews. We should not be preoccupied by a land.

- The line of the covenant gets narrower and narrower and progresses, not to Ishmael but via Isaac (Gen 21:12), Jacob (Gen 25:29ff), Judah (Gen 49:8ff) and David - who is told that his house and kingdom is eternal (2 Sam 7:16) requiring an eternal king (Ps 89:29). Someone may be of the seed of Abraham physically, but a stranger to the covenant promise (e.g. Ishmael, Esau). Others were outside Abraham's family but shared the same benefits this covenant, a relationship with God (e.g. Melchizedek, Job, Rahab).
- The complete fulfilment is spiritual and is only in Christ, who is the promised seed of Abraham and consummation of the promise:  
*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Gal 3:16).*
- Believers share in this fulfilment since they are in Christ:  
*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:29).*

### What was the central promise to Abraham?

- The key constituent of the promise, repeated often was that: *In you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* (To Abraham Gen 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, to Isaac 26:4, to Jacob 28:14.) The blessing which resulted from being in a family relationship with God was to pass, via Abraham's seed, to all nations in the earth, even Israel's future enemies.  
*In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria -- a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance." (Isa 19:24-25)*
- This promise to Abraham was continually reaffirmed by the prophets, indeed the full redemption of Israel was only viewed in connection with all the nations<sup>9</sup>:  
*Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. [Zech 2:11; see also: Isa 11:9-10; 42:6; 49:6; Jer 16:19; Hag 2:6-7; Mal 1:11 (Gentile nations); Isa 19:19-25 (Egypt &*

<sup>9</sup> One theologian states that, *'it is to be observed that the pictures of the Golden Age are always of a universal character ... There could be no Golden Age for Israel until all men shared it'*. H.H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel*, SCM, (1956), p180.

Assyria); Amos 9:6 (Edom & Gentiles); Zech 8:20-23 (many cities & peoples).]

- The apostle Paul calls this promise the preaching of the Gospel:  
*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."* (Gen 3:8)
- The Gospel which Paul preached was the same as the promise to Abraham:  
*And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.* (Acts 26:6)  
*For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.* (Rm 4:13)
- This clearly demonstrates that the covenant promise to Abraham was the same as the Gospel which Paul preached. The promise to Abraham was not an external affair ('through the law') but was by faith. As a result of this faith in God's graceful promise, one became righteous like Abraham.
- Furthermore it was the same Gospel which Peter preached. In the first Gospel sermon, Peter outlined the covenant history and ends:  
*"For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."* (Acts 2:39)
- Similarly, Jesus applied OT texts which refer to the restoration of Israel, to the gathering of the elect from all nations (e.g. Matt 8:11 with Isa 43:5ff, 49:12; Ps 107:3; Mk 13:27 with Deut 30:4; Zech 2:6). Paul does the same thing in Rm 9:24 (Hos 1:10, 2:23).

There is no doubt. The covenant promise to Abraham is the same Gospel that we believe today. This means that all believers are descendants of him. Abraham is thus the root, or start of this family of believers. The fulfilment of the promise is not physical, external or material and thus cannot be racial. It is not fulfilled in Israel but the church.

*Conclusion:* The promise was never racial but was towards the covenant community, called 'the seed of Abraham'. If it was racial, then Arabs would have as much claim as Jews. The Abrahamic covenant is clearly shown by the NT to be centred on, and complete in Christ and shared with his people, the church, not a human, ethnic nation. The prophecies regarding Israel's national boundaries were fulfilled in the OT and do not require a future territorial expansion. The covenant promise is nothing but the Gospel preached beforehand to Abraham, our father or root in the faith and the rock from which we are cut. It is the beginning of God's redemptive plan in the earth.



### **The Mosaic Covenant**

This was added to the Abrahamic covenant which the Israelites were already under; it did not supersede or annul this covenant:

*the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. (Gal 3:17-18)*

The Dispensationalist claim that at Sinai the Jews exchanged grace for law is everywhere contradicted in the Bible (as above). The covenant with Abraham was still in effect and obedience was just a necessary for Abraham as for Moses. Do they really believe that when faced by the terrifying presence of God speaking from Sinai they should have rejected the covenant he offered? It was given to the seed of Abraham and none of that seed could refuse without cutting himself off from the covenant group.

We do not need to enter into a large discussion about the Mosaic Covenant here since it does not alter the provisions of the promise to Abraham. Its laws were temporary and relative to Israel only, but the underlying moral law as the manifestation of the will of God for man, is eternal - e.g. murder is always wrong, for Abraham and for us. The sign of this covenant was the observance of the Sabbath laws.

### **The Davidic Covenant**

Again, this covenant does not alter or affect the promise made to Abraham. This is a specific promise to David and is not a generalised promise to the nation. 2 Sam 7:12-16 and Jer 23:5 shows that David would have a son who would establish his kingdom and throne forever in righteousness. The Psalms contain references which amplify God's promise to David (e.g. Ps 2; 45; 89; 101). Like the other covenants, this promise is conditioned on obedience (Ps 132:12); heirs of David could be rejected (as they were).

Dispensationalists expect that the fulfilment of this is to be found in an earthly, Jewish reign of Christ in the millennium. We have shown, elsewhere, that this covenant has been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:30-31); that it is universal and eternal (Acts 13:32-39). The 'tabernacle' (lineage, house) of David is specifically stated by James to have been fulfilled in Christ's Gospel (Acts 15:14-18). The inheritor of this promise is Christ, the only son of David who fully kept the covenant (Ps 132:12); and this covenant is completed in Christ's resurrection, ascension, glorification and reign which begun after the cross. His kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36) and is not material so there will be no outworking of it in Jerusalem now or in the future: *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption;* (1 Cor 15:50).

## The New Covenant

Jewish Root and Dispensational teachers affirm that the New Covenant was made solely with Jews by referring to Jer 31 where it is prophesied unto Israel; but the NT disagrees that this limits it to one ethnic nation:

- Jesus himself said that the whole church was part of this New Covenant which should be celebrated weekly in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:25).
- In typological terms, the institution of the New Covenant in Christ's blood for the church is the antitype of the giving of the Old Covenant law to Israel (Ex 24:9-11): Moses and the elders went up, Jesus and the apostles went to the upper room; Moses said, '*Behold the blood of the covenant*', Jesus said, '*This is my blood of the covenant*' (Matt 26:8); the elders represent the people, the apostles represent the church; the elders ate and drank, the apostles ate and drank.
- Church ministers are servants of the New Covenant (2 Cor 3:4-6).
- Jesus is the mediator of this New Covenant (Heb 8:6), and established it on the cross (Heb 10:12-18). As a result, this covenant (which replaces all others) is not fleshly but spiritual.
- The book of Hebrews repeatedly states that the church is part of the New Covenant and quotes Jer 31 several times to emphasise this: Heb 7:22, 8:6-13, 9:15, 10:12-18, 29, 12:22-24.
- The promise in Jeremiah towards Israel was even fulfilled literally. The original church members who embraced the New Covenant were Israelites, even though only a 'little flock', a 'remnant'. Gentile believers were added later. Isaiah (writing earlier than Jeremiah) had already warned that only a remnant would inherit the promise (Isa 10:22-23). The apostles and early believers were of 'Israel and Judah'. Jews who rejected the Messiah were cut off from being part of Israel in God's eyes (Matt 21:43). Even the Abrahamic covenant ceased to be theirs since that was subsumed in the New Covenant and was for believers (Gal 3:7, 29).

*Conclusion:* the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, was not reserved for Jews but belongs to the church - Jews and Gentiles together - in Christ (Eph 2:14-22). '*Jesus is the mediator of a New Covenant*' (Heb 12:24).

## The promises of the covenant

The apostles apply promises, originally made to Israel, to the church and they do this hundreds of times (see appendix one). This is because God's covenant now has a spiritual fulfilment in Christ who unites the people, the promises and the land in himself:

*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. (2 Cor 1:20)*

*Conclusion:* the recipients of the covenant promises reveal whom the covenant is with, its heirs. The NT clearly shows that the OT promises now belong to believers because they are in Christ who is the true heir of God (Acts 13:32-34).

All covenants between God and men result and flow from the covenant of redemption made between Jesus and the Father in eternity. Covenants inaugurated in the OT were temporary phases of God's great redemptive plan summed up in his Son, the object of which was to secure a whole people, the elect community, given to Jesus as a bride by the Father (Jn 17:2,9,20). The 'everlasting' elements of these are subsumed into Christ's New Covenant which is eternal.

Christians are the covenant people and make up this bride along with the OT saints who came to faith in God's promised Messiah under one or another covenant scheme (eg Noah, David). Each covenant progressively pointed more clearly to the promised Messiah (e.g. he would be of the line of Shem, a child of Abraham, a son of David etc). The fulfilment is in Jesus who sums up all covenants, all promises, all kingdoms, all sacrifices etc. The church is, therefore, God's chosen people, the faithful Gentiles and Jews as the seed of Abraham (Rm 9:6-8, 1Pt 2:9-10)

Israel was a specimen covenant people of God intended to spread the Gospel to the world (Gen 12:3; Ps 22:27; Isa 42:6, 45:22, 66:12; God's purpose for mankind - not just Israel - began before the Jews existed). They failed in this but Jesus did not. The church is God's people now which includes Jews as well as all others. The covenant is not Jewish; it is not even human and earthly, it is spiritual and centres in Christ. Paul was attacked by religious Jews when he taught this explaining that the hope of Israel had been fulfilled in Christ (Acts 28:20).

Contrary to Jewish Root teachers, OT prophets declared that this would occur: Joel 2:28 fulfilled in Acts 2:16-17; Amos 9:11-12 stated as fulfilled in Acts 15:13-17. Abraham had more clarity on this than modern false teachers and rejoiced to see Jesus' day (Jn 8:56) because he understood that the Gospel would impact the Gentiles through his seed (Gal 3:8). Far from the church being a temporary institution, the Bible clearly states that in fact it is Israel which only had a temporary place as the focus of God's purposes in covenant.

## **Whom does the kingdom belong to?**

The kingdom is no longer an earthly matter (Rm 14:17) and is not inherited by ordinary humans (flesh, 1 Cor 15:50). No earthly tribe possesses the kingdom. Furthermore, we can state categorically that the kingdom is not Jewish because Jesus said, specifically, that it was taken from Israel:

*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. (Matt 21:43)*

This was firstly because OT Israel did not obey God and did not take the Gospel to other nations. There was never one plan of God for Jews and another for Gentiles:

*But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people." (Rm 10:21)*

Instead of obeying God, Jews became elitist and proud; the rabbis called Gentiles 'dogs' and even taught that the world was created for the sake of Israel:

*'O Lord...for our sakes thou madest this world. As for the other nations, which also came of Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and are like unto spittle.'* 11(4) Esd. 6. 55-59.

This writer had obviously never read Deut 7:7 where God says that Israel was the least (lit. 'offscrapings') of the nations, such was Israel's pride.

The second, and most important reason is the Jewish rejection of the Messiah. This rejection is fearsome and the judgment terrible, but it gives no believer a right to anti-Semitism. Neither does it warrant pro-Jewish teachers seeking to avoid the issue. Scripture is clear on this:

- Jews were responsible to repent and accept the Gospel of their Messiah (Matt 11:20-24).
- Jesus made a powerful lament over Jerusalem because of her attitude to God's servants (Lk 13:34-35).
- Jesus wept over the city because they failed to receive him (Lk 19:41-42).
- Jesus prophesies doom because the people did not accept him (Lk 19:43-44).
- The meaning of the parable of the vineyard is clear (Luke 20:9-19).
- The utter devastation of Jerusalem in 70AD, after 40 years of further rejection, is a testimony to God's judgment.

It is not just the general Jewish acceptance of the crucifixion inspired by religious leaders, but the actual failure of the Jewish people to repent and accept Jesus as their Messiah (apart from a tiny remnant). Paul could say of them: *'Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost'*, (1 Thess 2:16). [See Appendix 11]

In judgment, God has put a veil over the eyes of Jews so that they cannot see the truth of the Gospel unless they are part of the elect remnant.

*Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it,*

*and the rest were blinded ... Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see. (Rm 11:7, 10; also 1 Cor 3:15-16)*

After the kingdom had been given to the church (Col 1:13), Christ's little flock (Lk 12:32), those who love Jesus (Jm 2:5), Jews who come to faith in Christ become part of this kingdom and form the remnant of Israel with whom God still has a relationship. The Jewish remnant is based on grace not race.

*Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (Rm 11:5)*

There is only one kingdom just as there is only one covenant, Jews and Gentiles share in this kingdom; there is only one flock and one shepherd (Jn (10:1).

As far as grace is concerned, God's kingdom comprises of new men, humans who are new creatures in Christ. Racial and even sexual distinctions no longer apply:

*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. (Gal 3:28)*

Believing Jews and elect Gentiles are part of the same olive tree. Unbelieving Jews are not a part of it (Rm 11:11-24).

Jesus made this clear in his earthly ministry by repeatedly taking OT statements about the ingathering of Jewish exiles back to the land and referring instead to the future ingathering of people from all nations into God's kingdom. Promises about returning Jews are applied to the whole world of the redeemed (e.g. Matt 8:10-12 quoting Isa 43:5-7; Ps 107:2-3).

The blindness of Israel continues throughout the Gospel age until a time when a large number of Jews are brought into the church:

*Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (Rm 11:25)*

Exactly when this occurs is the subject of much controversy which we do not need to look into here. The point is that the entrance into the kingdom is by the Gospel. The kingdom is the reign of Christ and only those who are in him are his subjects. To be in Christ's kingdom one has to be in Christ, to believe his Gospel. There is no covenant, no kingdom, no Gospel, no salvation outside of him. But in mercy, and for the sake of the OT patriarchs, God promised to convert a significant portion of Jews, especially at the end of the Gospel age.

*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." (Rm 11:26-27)*

## Who did Jesus die for, who does he live for?

The key to God's heart is to see for whom he sent his Son to die. If Israel is God's portion, then his Son would have died for Israel, for the heir of God's inheritance must have sin removed and be clothed in righteousness. This only occurs through the cross of Christ. So who did he die for? Scripture is full of references to this so we must select a mere handful.

*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.* (Eph 5:25-27).

*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* (Rm 8:32, written to Gentiles.)

*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.* (Jn 3:17, the Son was sent into the world, not just for Israel.)

Jesus was sent into this world to die for the church, not for Israel because that is too small. Jewish saints are a part of the church which comprises people from every tribe and nation.

Having died for the church, Jesus was raised up and ascended to the right hand of the Father to reign over the universe, sovereign over all things - for the church. God overrules everything so that it serves his purposes in the church. This is never said of Israel and shows the centrality of God's purposes for the church which is said to be the fulness of Christ.

*And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.* (Eph 1:22-23)

The key office Christ undertakes in heaven is that of High Priest. In this role he continually prays for the church - those 'who came to God through him'. He is never said to pray for Israel in this way.

*Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* (Heb 7:25)

## Does God have two peoples?

Christian Zionists and Jewish Root teachers repeatedly tell us that God has two peoples (the church and Israel), or that there are three types of people:

unregenerate Gentiles, Christians and Jews. Is this true? If so, how do we know which parts of the Bible apply to Christians and which applies only to Jews? Some Dispensationalists insist that the only Christian parts of the Bible are: John's Gospel, Acts and the letters.<sup>10</sup> This means that the great commission is only for Jews and Gentile believers cannot pray the Lord's prayer! If God has two peoples then we cannot hope to understand scripture. One magazine has even called modern Jews a 'sanctified race' which, despite acts of sin and terrorism are 'a people possessing a special covenant relationship with God'.<sup>11</sup>

### Who are God's people?

Essentially, God's people are the seed of Abraham, those with whom God has covenanted to bless but God's people are not of fleshly descent. Being physically descended from Abraham is of no value in promoting relations with God. Even before Jesus' ministry had begun, John the Baptist reprimanded the Jews for trusting in their physical heritage saying, *do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.* (Matt 3:9). And when Jesus was impressed by a Gentile centurion he was prompted to say to the Jews: *"I say to you that many will come from east and west, [Gentiles] and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom [Jews] will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,"* (Matt 8:11-12).

- The term 'people' is used continually of Israel in the OT. In the Greek OT<sup>12</sup> the word used is *laos*, the origin of the word 'laity' and the translation of the Hebrew word for the covenant people: *am*. In the NT, however, this word is used to identify God's people - Christians (e.g: Heb 2:17); the apostles could have used *ethnos* but deliberately chose *laos* to identify Christians as God's people.
- The people of Israel are called *qahal* (assembly) in the OT. This is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word for church (*ekklesia*). The LXX translates *qahal* by *ekklesia*.
- The apostles use Hebrew religious themes for the church like 'temple of God' and 'Jerusalem'.
- Peter applies Exod 19:5-6 and Hos 1:10 to the church to emphasise that believers are God's people, and specifically states that earthly national distinctives have disappeared for God's people, who are one holy nation in

<sup>10</sup> L. S. Chafer, *Dispensationalism*, p34.

<sup>11</sup> *Prophecy Today*, Vol. 13 No. 1, p23-25 (1997); Article 'The Christian View of Israel' by David Dolan.

<sup>12</sup> This was the Septuagint (LXX) translation which was used by Jesus and the apostles. Greek was the lingua franca at the time.

Christ. (1 Pt 2:9-10).

- In Rm 9:6-8 Paul categorically states that Jews after the flesh are not the children of God.

So the NT states that God's people is the church, Christian believers. Even in the OT identification of Israel as the sole 'people of God' was superficial; the idea of only a faithful remnant being the sole applicant arises as early as Elijah (1 Kg 19:8). This means that the majority of Israelites were not considered by God as his people even in religious prophetic times, let alone in the current godless state of Israel. Spirituality is not ethnic.

### **God only has one people**

Moreover, the NT always emphasises that believers are one body (Eph 4:4), one flock (Jn 10:16), one house (Heb 3:2-6). It was prophesied that Jesus would: '*gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad*' (Jn 11:32). When scripture mentions faithful OT Jewish saints, they are said to be part of the church (Acts 7:38, *ekklesia*). Dispensationalists state that the church is a parenthesis, a stop gap in God's plan. Instead, scripture emphasises that the church is the fulness of Christ for whom he orders all things (Eph 1:22-23). It is Israel that is a parenthesis since a time limit is placed on Israel as the channel of God's purposes. This expires when the Messiah comes (Gen 49:10; Jn 8:56; Matt 21:43). Israel possessed the shadow, but the fulness is Christ. Even the greatest OT saints did not inherit the promises, which are only fulfilled in Christ, and cannot be made perfect without the church:

*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (Heb 11:39-40)*

### **Zion**

Even the OT confirms that the word, 'Zion' - the mountain on which Jerusalem is built,<sup>13</sup> is often a reference to the people of God, and this people is now the church. Ps 2:6 '*I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion*', is explained by Eph 2:20-22 as the body of Christ. In Ps 102 :16 the appearance of the Lord in glory is certainly in the church and not a material place. More examples could be given but Heb 12:22-24 alone makes the situation crystal clear:

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the*

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<sup>13</sup> Originally a Jebusite settlement (not captured by Joshua) between the Tyropoean and Kidron valleys, then David's city. Later, Zion referred to the temple mount. Often *Zion* and *Jerusalem* were synonymous or even represented the land and the people as a whole. *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, Ed. P. Walker, Baker, (1994), (sic) p25, p102.



*heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.*

Our understanding of Zion is no longer physical but spiritual. Zion is the place of God's heavenly city, the home of his people identified here as the church, the place where Jesus mediates the New Covenant.

### **Jerusalem**

The same understanding applies to the city of David. Though much is made of it by Zionists, it was not a feature in tribal Israel, nor in the patriarchal period - the key manifestations of the people of God in the OT. In the prophets Jerusalem becomes a symbol of God's plan of salvation for all nations united in worship, the actual material city has drifted into the background again.<sup>14</sup> The idea that modern Jerusalem is a spiritual centre testifying to God is: *'no more than sentimental wishful thinking'*.<sup>15</sup> Even in the OT, God is leading the reader to identify Jerusalem with a heavenly and spiritual inheritance as the place for all God's people. In the NT this is made explicit (e.g. Heb 12, Gal 4). Christians should not lower their focus on to a material object when the reality is in heaven to be grasped by faith. It is there we are commanded to fix our eyes and minds (Col 3:1-3).

## **Is the inheritance of God tied up with the land of Israel?**

### **What is Israel?**

Israel can mean several things in the Bible: ethnic Jews (whatever country they live in), the land of Israel, the political nation of Israel or God's true people (elect believers). The majority of the 70 instances of the word 'Israel' in the NT refer to ethnic Jews or the land of Israel. However, not all Jews are God's elect people, or inward Jews (Rm 2:28-29) or real Israelites (Rom 9:6); in fact, the true believers in Israel were always a remnant, a small portion of the race (Isa 10:21-22; 1 Kg 19:18). We need to exercise care in understanding what the Bible says about Israel at any point.

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<sup>14</sup> *'It is true that the Old Testament attaches no importance to Jerusalem in the simple sense of a geographical location; there is no basis in a Christian reading of the Old Testament for a continuing idea of "sacred space"'*. McConville, *Jerusalem Past & Present*, p50. See his analysis of OT teaching on Jerusalem.

<sup>15</sup> McConville, *ibid* p51.

### **The land = an *eternal* possession**

The promised land of Israel is partly a figure for the inheritance of God in a renewed earth after the second coming (2 Pt 3). When pro-Jewish teachers speak of Jews inheriting the land as an ethnic right, they have to alter the prophecies. '*Forever*' has to be diluted to 1000 years as their scheme puts this inheritance in the millennium; but Heb11:16 clearly shows us that the land is: a better country, a heavenly one on a new earth which is forever. We should remember that God's curse is upon the whole earth as it stands today (Rm 8:22) so that it groans. It is not the place of blessing, certainly not of eternal blessing, and there is no such thing as a 'holy land'. These teachers err in seeing a fleshly, physical fulfilment of the covenant when scripture declares that it is spiritual.

### **The land = the *whole renewed earth* not just Israel**

The promise of the land as an inheritance was ratified to many prophets and fathers (Jacob, Moses, Jeremiah etc). Their focus was on earthly Israel, but Abraham had a wider vision. Ps 37:11 states that the meek shall inherit the land, understood by Jews as Israel; but when Jesus applies this promise to his people it has expanded - the meek now inherit the earth (Matt 5:5). Rm 4:13 makes this clear and shows that Abraham understood this idea. The fulness of Jesus' statement must apply to the new earth (2 Pt 3:13; Rev 21:1) since it is not true now. [Is this why Israel's boundaries were never precisely defined and the several descriptions vary: Gen 15; Exod 23; Num 34; Deut 11; Jos 1? Note also Paul's quote from Deut 5:16 omits mention of the reference to Canaan and thus universalises the idea of the land to anywhere (Eph 6:2).]

### **Do Jews own Israel by divine right?**

Dispensationalists insist that God promised Israel to Abraham which is thus the possession of Jews regardless of their spiritual state. Is this true? All blessing in the OT is conditioned upon obedience, this includes the Abrahamic covenant. Obedience was specifically required of Abraham:

*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him. (Gen 18:19)*

Isaac was reminded to continue in the obedience shown by his father and Heb 11:8 shows that Abraham's faith was revealed in obedience. Circumcision was a sign of the continued obedience necessary and Esau is a prime example of someone losing the inheritance by disobedience. Moses reminded Israel about the danger of losing the blessing by disobedience (Deut 4:23-27); Solomon was similarly reminded (2 Chron 7:19-22). The exiles returning from Babylonian captivity were under no illusions as to the nation's guilt (Neh 9:33). Abraham had obeyed God before he was a Jew and

before he was circumcised. His descendants had the covenant, circumcision, nationhood and the law but failed to obey as Abraham did (Rm 4:11-12). External Jewishness did them no good. Circumcision was the sign of faith, humility and renunciation of the flesh, but it has to be united with true faith, true humility and dependence on God (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16). The physical land was only entered by faith and obedience: Moses could not enter due to his disobedience (Deut 4:21) and a whole generation failed to enter because they had no faith to deal with the inhabitants (Num c14). Jews were only ever *tenants* or even *aliens* in Israel as a gift from God (Lev 25:23).

Jesus' statement that the kingdom would be taken away from the Jews is enough for us to see that fleshly Jews did not inherit the promise made to Abraham, who was not a Jew when the promise was made to him but an expatriot Sumerian from Ur, the apostle Paul emphasises this (Rm 4:10-12). We should also remember that non Jews were included in the covenant promise (Gen 12:3, 17:4). Being Jewish is no guarantee of divine blessing.

Stephen's great speech, which led to his martyrdom by Jews, (Acts 7) forcefully itemises the importance of other nations in patriarchal history: Abraham was a foreigner, God spoke to him in Mesopotamia, he had no temple and he owned no Judaeian land, except for his grave which was in Samaritan Shechem (a place despised by Jews). Joseph was sold by the ancestors of the Jews but was exalted in Egypt where God forced his brothers to flee to. Moses was born there, educated by Pharaoh, lived a third of his life in Midian, God appeared to him outside of Israel in the desert (said to be holy ground), the law was given in Arabia and Moses never set foot in Canaan, and so on. Bear in mind that this speech was inspired by God according to Jesus' promise (Lk 21:14-15).

The argument of Hebrews, especially 5:1-10, 6:13-20, 7:1-8 and 8:1-13 is that Jesus has brought in a new and better covenant which supersedes all the manifestations of covenant in the OT. The promises of God are no longer merely occupied with a small portion of land in the Levant. The covenant is no longer national but spiritual and the inheritance not earthly but heavenly. We have already noted Paul's argument that real Israelites are those with faith and outward circumcision is of no value; consequently God's covenant promises regarding the land do not flow to ethnic circumcised Jews but to the spiritual descendants of Abraham, '*as many as the Lord God shall call*' (Acts 2:39). Abraham understood this as the promises about the land are closely connected with the other promises about being a great nation where God is truly honoured and where all nations are blessed as a result. The promise about the land is interconnected with universal spiritual blessing. You can't have one without the other.

In a very real sense Israel is now subsumed in Christ. All that Israel represented as the family and dwelling place of God is now found in Christ, not in an external object like earthly land. Jesus repeatedly drew this conclusion from the OT in his ministry. Quoting Dan 2-7 he stated that he was the Son of Man, the true Israel; physical Jerusalem will be destroyed but the Son of Man will be vindicated. Jesus, not Israel, was the manifestation of the living God. Those who insist that the OT continues to teach a future for physical Israel and Jerusalem in God's end time purposes do so by taking away from the glory and achievement of Christ. His atonement is thus made incomplete.<sup>16</sup> (See later: *The significance of being in Christ.*)

Israel is, therefore, not Jewish by a divine right of covenant. However, in his providence, God has enabled Jews to re-occupy their ancient land; just as he sovereignly allots land to all tribes and nations (Acts 17:26). But more than this, the historical circumstances of the restoration in 1948 certainly appear to manifest unusual divine ordaining. The subsequent providential protection of the state also reveals the hand of God. This should engender thanksgiving and not presumption. That the Jews have recovered the land of Israel shows the mercy of God and the importance the nation still has in his plans. But God's providential mercy in delivering Israel to the Jews cannot diminish the fact that the primary significance of the covenant promises about the land are spiritual and world wide, pertaining to a new creation.

### **Postscript - Palestinian Christians**

It is also necessary to mention the Palestinians. Without entering into the tangled politics of the modern Palestinian problem, my concern is with Palestinian Christians who have always been present in the land now occupied by Israel. Indeed, a strong historical case can be made for these believers to have equal sovereign rights on the land.

After Jesus judicially took the kingdom away from unbelieving Jews, the land was continually occupied by some believing Palestinian Arabs, whereas Jews were expelled repeatedly during 1800 years. Palestinian Christians are not recent foreigners in Israel; the apostolic church was not composed entirely of Jews in Palestine, but included, Greeks, Romans, Samaritans, Nabataean Arabs, Idumaeen Arabs and others. The Christian community spoke Aramaic or Greek and never left Palestine. Jews, however, were forced to leave, for instance in 70 AD, under Hadrian in 135 AD, in 629 under Heraclius, and in 1095 under the Crusaders. They were not welcome until the 13th century under Saladin; though the Jewish community was comparatively small until the 16th century under Suleiman. By the 5th century Palestine was

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<sup>16</sup> See Tom Wright, 'Jerusalem in the NT', *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, Ed. Walker, Baker/Paternoster, (1994), p61ff..

predominantly Christian until the Muslim Arabs arrived in the 7th century forcing the Christian community to gradually adopt Arabic culture, but many remained in the land faithful to Christ. Thus many Christian Palestinians can trace an uninterrupted history in Israel/Palestine back to apostolic times.<sup>17</sup> We must not forget that when Jewish Zionists moved into the British mandate of Palestine, 750,000 Palestinians (Muslim and Christian) were forced out of their homes and hundreds of settlements were burned to prevent their return. Modern western Christians condemn the Serbs for using identical methods of cleansing. It is sad when contemporary Palestinians (including Christians) continue to be persecuted by an Israeli government; but for Christians to support this persecution, by supporting Israeli policy, is sinful.<sup>18</sup>

The physical land of Israel, like all nations, belongs to God alone (Lev 25:23). When granted to Jews, it was held on the basis of obedience and expulsion was the result of disobedience (Jer 2:7; Lev 20:22; Deut 4:25-26). We need to be careful in taking sides on the issue of the territory of Israel.

## **Does Judaism have anything to teach the church?**

There are two things to be distinguished here: understanding Jewish ritual and culture as a background to the Bible, and following Judaism as a religion. The background to the Biblical texts is mainly Jewish, but also Assyrian, Egyptian, Babylonian, Canaanite, Sumerian, Greek and Roman. Being familiar with the background is very helpful and sometimes vital to understanding what some passages mean.

As a source of spiritual truth, modern Judaism can teach us nothing. Judaism is simply just one of the world's religions which offers false hope since it diverts a person from Christ - the only way to God. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by a Christian learning about, or practising aspects of Judaism. Some expressions of Judaism are blatantly opposed to Christ

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<sup>17</sup>See Naim Ateek, in *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, Ed. Walker, Baker/Paternoster, (1994), p125ff.

<sup>18</sup> Apart from the widespread theft of land and villages, there are many well documented accounts of Israeli atrocities against Palestinians, including massacres of men women and children, torture and murder. Even in modern times insecurity breeds injustice. It is common for families to be punished for the suspected crime of one member or for whole villages to be punished for the acts of 2 or 3 people (e.g. Hebron in May 1980). See Chapman, *Whose Promised Land* pages 68ff, 188ff for examples.

(particularly rabbinic teaching) while other parts of traditional Judaism is overtly occult (like the Kaballah<sup>19</sup>). A few modern Jewish Root teachers have adopted some of these features.

Modern orthodox Judaism has no spiritual connection with Christianity and is of no value to believers since it is a false religion based upon fleshly works. It elevates the thoughts of men to scripture (the Talmud and other rabbinic writings), it is steeped in Greek philosophy and the Kaballah plus many Orthodox Jews believe that a dead rabbi (Menachem Schneerson) is the Messiah. If that were not enough Jews curse Jesus every day by calling him 'Yeshu' in Hebrew. Furthermore, modern Judaism is not even identifiable with OT Judaism. It has no sacrifices or offerings for sin, it has no temple or tabernacle, the Sanhedrin and priesthood were never restored after the deaths of its members.

Rabbinic Judaism was not always the norm, before 70 AD it was a very varied religion with as many as 14 different emphases and groups. There was considerable difference of opinion about what it meant to be a Jew. After this time, the rabbis both added to and subtracted from the Mosaic law when re-establishing modern Judaism at Jamnia after the fall of Jerusalem. Without temple rituals, the law became paramount, but works of the law give no life. Hence as the courageous founder of modern Judaism, Rabbi Jochanan Ben Zakkai, lay dying he became frightened and distressed. He explained to his disciples that it was not death he feared, but meeting God in judgment. Judaism has no saviour because it has no covenant. There is every likelihood that the scathing remarks in Rev 2:9 and 3:9 are directed at this group re-inventing Judaism. Even some modern rabbis condemn modern Judaism: *'Orthodoxy is verging on the brink of idolatry as it replaces the worship of God with the worship of Jewish law and the deification of Judaism itself'*.<sup>20</sup>

A focus upon the Torah (law) is the foundation of the Jewish religion which results in being under God's curse (Gal 3:10). Not only does modern Judaism reject the deity of Jesus and the cross, but it also teaches that salvation is on the basis of the law, which is within the ability of everyone's efforts.<sup>21</sup> For this reason it is unhelpful to call the OT a Jewish document. Both Jews and Christians hold that the OT is a fundamental source for their teachings, but these teachings are opposites. The OT is a Christian document since it pre-

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<sup>19</sup> Various spelled, e.g. Cabbala, this was a form of Jewish theosophy or occult magic which was based upon the use of numbers and names of God to achieve power. It is thus a form of witchcraft.

<sup>20</sup> Rabbi Shmuel Boteach, quoted in *Prayer For Israel* Bulletin Jan/Feb 1997, p1.

<sup>21</sup> Quoting other rabbis, Pinchas Lapide teaches that salvation and atonement are man's own responsibility in *The Rabbi From Tarsus*, Victor Gollancz (1965) p46ff.

eminently relates to Christ.

Christians should have no part with Judaism because, as Paul explains, it is an enemy of the Gospel (Rm 11:28), remember it was religious Jews whom Jesus denounced as being fathered by the Devil (Jn 8:44). The situation now is even worse. Judaism is a false religion opposed to Christ.

## **What was Paul's attitude to Judaism?**

### **Christians must focus on Christ**

First and foremost, the fundamental bedrock of Christianity is a focus and centring upon Christ in every area of life and faith. Only he is God's Son, only he is the saviour of mankind and only he can keep us going in the Christian life (by his Spirit). Any teaching which proposes to help us in our walk or worship must be founded upon Christ and nothing else:

*For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Cor 2:2)*

### **Judaism is a blind system**

Judaism, as a system of doctrine, can teach us nothing, even about the Old Testament because it is a veiled system - it cannot see the truth and can only bring death and condemnation. Only a person who has been converted has his eyes opened.

- Jews had the letter but not the Spirit which means that their covenant can only bring death, not life.

*'God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones ...'*  
(2 Cor 3:6-7)

- The Jewish covenant was a ministry of condemnation, despite any glory it may also have had at times (2 Cor 3:9)
- The Jewish covenant was passing away even when Paul wrote (2 Cor 3:11; Heb 8:13), but was finally cancelled when the temple was destroyed with Jerusalem in 70AD.
- Despite their cancelled covenant with God, the eyes of the Jews were blinded, a veil was placed over their eyes because it is only through Christ that a relationship of communion with God is possible. Only believers can see anything of the glory of God.

*'But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on*

*their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.'* (2 Cor 3:14-16)

*'For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'* (2 Cor 4:6)

### **Judaism is an external system**

The essence of Christianity is that it is spiritual, it belongs to the realm of faith in invisible things. Judaism is completely focused upon external things which are apprehended by the senses, not by the eyes of faith: feasts, ceremonies, food, customs, etc. This is because it is fleshly. It is the flesh which requires outward observance and sense-based ritual. In this Judaism is no different from any other world religion, except that its system was originally inspired by God but has now been cancelled in the New Covenant. Paul specifically commands us not to observe such practices since we have died to such observances of the old nature.

*While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* (2 Cor 4:18)

### **Judaism is a worldly system**

*Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations -- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using -- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.* (Col 2:20-23)

### **Judaism is a bound system**

*But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain.* (Gal 4:9-11)

Paul commands us not to submit ourselves to practices which bind us:  
*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.* (Gal 5:1)

Some Christian Zionists have argued that since we have freedom in Christ, we can celebrate Jewish feasts and practices if we choose to. It helps to focus our faith. This is a specious argument and totally contrary to Paul's teaching. If a man has been freed from a life imprisoned in chains, why would he occasionally put chains on himself to remind him of his freedom? We must



testify to the truth in Christ, our lives must witness to God's grace. To celebrate Jewish rituals dishonours God. Judaism is bondage and fleshly, it is a sin to submit to it in any form.

*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. (Gal 5:13)*

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. (Gal 5:1-2)*

### **Judaism is a Satanic system**

Paul explains that following Jewish practices was a hindrance which did not come from God but from Satan. The Galatians had been persuaded by false teachers (*Judaizers*) to submit to Jewish regulations and what started as a slight emphasis grew to affect the whole church. These teachers were Jews who put a Christian gloss on their teaching to wean people into accepting Jewish ideas. This error later developed into a full blown heresy called *Ebionism* and caused great trouble to the early church.

*You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (Gal 5:7-9)*

*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (Gal 3:1-3)*

### **Judaism is a damaging, worthless system**

*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh ... If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ, (Phil 3:2-8)*

[The words used for 'loss' also mean 'damage'. Jewish attainments in the past are worthless, loss; but adopting Jewish features in a Christian life are damaging.]

Notice that Paul calls those who teach Christians to get involved in Judaism, 'evil workers'. Paul had many Jewish credits in his past, attainments which many today would judge as most valuable; but to Paul these were all worthless and of no merit in the Christian life.

To summarise Paul's position one can simply read a few chapters of Romans. Here Paul states that Israel: did not succeed in attaining the promise (Rm 9:30, 11:7), is ignorant of God's righteousness (Rm 10:3), does not submit to God's righteousness (Rm 10:3), is no different to Gentiles (Rm 10:12), is a disobedient people (Rm 10:21), did not understand (Rm 10:19), is under a God-sent spirit of stupor (Rm 11:8), Judaism does not see or hear God's word (Rm 11:8, 10), its rituals are a snare and do not lead to God (Rm 11:9), is under unbelief (Rm 11:23), Israel has been hardened like Pharaoh (Rm 11:25), is an enemy of God and the Gospel (Rm 11:28), is disobedient (Rm 11:30-31), and is, therefore, rejected (Rm 11:15 see also Matt 21:43 where Jesus says that the kingdom will be taken from Israel and Lk 12:32 where it is given to the church, the flock of which Jesus is the shepherd - Jn 10).

We could say much more about Paul's attitude, but enough has been mentioned to make a clear case that Paul is against believers adopting Jewish practices. When Jacob Prasch calls Paul, '*Rabbi Shaul of Tarsus*',<sup>22</sup> he betrays his complete lack of understanding of Paul's intrinsic position. Paul would have been horrified by that description. After Paul's call to ministry (Acts 13), the Holy Spirit never calls him by the name of Saul again, neither does it ever call him a rabbi; Paul's Spirit given title is 'apostle', which he refers to time and time again.

Having said all this, bear in mind that Judaism is not Israel; though Judaism is a false religion, God still has purposes for Israel because of his love for the patriarchs (see on Rm11 later).

## **Should we focus upon the Jewishness of Christ?**

More and more teachers are not only emphasising the Jewishness of Christ, but some are even preaching about 'Jesus the Rabbi'.<sup>23</sup> This word means 'master' and was a relatively recent title, applied specifically to Jewish

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<sup>22</sup> Jacob Prasch, *Moriel Prayer & Newsletter*, No 7, p11, (UK & Ireland Edition. Winter 1996/7). This title follows the way unregenerate rabbis refer to Paul (e.g. Prof. P. Lapide, 'The Rabbi From Tarsus', in Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul Rabbi and Apostle*, Augsburg 1984.).

<sup>23</sup> PWM, and others, have held seminars on this subject.

doctors of the law, around the time of Christ. Now it is one thing to denigrate Paul by calling him a rabbi, but to do this to Jesus is approaching blasphemy. Jesus never identified himself as a rabbi and never classed himself with these religious teachers. Even at the age of 12, before his commissioning and baptism, he outdistanced the scribes. Furthermore, it was the rabbis who formed the nucleus of his enemies. It was the religious leaders of the time which gathered together to kill the Son of God. If anything, Jesus identified with the people, who were despised by the religious leaders.

After the cross, and facing the rising development of the church, the rabbis concentrated their efforts on counteracting this new threat to Judaism and wrote vehemently against the Lord. It was the rabbis who most comprehensively denigrated Jesus in dogmatic terms more than anyone else. Remember that the focus of opposition to Jesus was the Pharisees, whom he denounced in the strongest terms and this is the group that had experienced the leadership of Hillel, the founder of classical Judaism. Second Temple Judaism, much flouted by Jewish Root teachers, was denounced just as strongly by the Lord as later Rabbinic Judaism was by the early church, including the apostle John (Rev 2:9, 3:9).

The coalition of religious leaders against Jesus must be seen in the light of the parable of the vineyard in Luke 20:9-19. This is a devastating criticism of the religious leaders who knew it was addressed against them (v19). It was the religious leaders, including rabbis, who were responsible for the death of the Lord. Is it right to call Jesus by their chosen name?

Why would we want to use an unbiblical title for Jesus when he has so many excellent descriptions in scripture. Pre-eminently, he is the Son of God. That is his divine title and his most important description as a man. When Paul introduces Christ in the prologue to the book of Romans, he chooses 'Son of God' for both his divine and human derivations (Rm 1:3-4). Other descriptions abound: e.g. lord, saviour, shepherd. Unlike recent Jewish Root teachers, some earlier pro-Jewish apologetic works admitted this: *'It was not with his Jewishness that the Evangelists were mainly concerned. Even St. Matthew ... implies a Christian community set over against the Synagogue ... [and] may have been consciously challenging the rabbinic Judaism of Jamnia. It was not of Jewishness as such that the writers of the new Christian scriptures were anxious to speak'*.<sup>24</sup>

But the most critical piece of evidence is Paul's statement in 2 Cor 5:16:

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<sup>24</sup> Alan Ecclestone, *The Night Sky of the Lord*, Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., (1980), p79.

*Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.*

Even if Jesus chose to be addressed as a rabbi to distinguish himself as a Jewish religious teacher (which he did not, he was called that by religious Jews who knew no better), he is not a Jewish religious teacher anymore (not that he was then). Jesus is now Lord and Saviour and seated at the right hand of God the Father. It is inappropriate, not to say irreverent, to focus attention on this. The fact that Jesus was a Jew in his state of humiliation is no longer how we know him. We must focus upon the fact that he is the Son of God. This is perhaps why John, writing later than the synoptic Gospel authors, emphasises Jesus' pre-incarnate divine role as God's Son. Jesus is the Word, the revelation of God as a Son, sent into the world to save sinners. Jewishness is not a major feature of this.

Paul warns us against concentrating upon Jesus' Jewishness because '*we know him thus no longer*'. It is wrong, therefore, to focus teaching upon Jesus as a Jew or as a rabbi.

## **The significance of being *in Christ***

### **Jesus inherits the Old Testament blessings**

God has summed up all the OT promises, covenants, blessings, Messianic prophecies and types in Christ. He is God's new man. Nothing of the old Adamic race will survive judgment, including ethnic Israel as a distinctive nation. Only what is in Christ is of God. Jesus has inherited all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant which is part of his unsearchable riches (Eph 3:8). The OT had the shadow, but the reality is in Christ (Heb 8:1-2, 5, 10:1). In him we see the fulness of the house of David and the house of God.

### **Jesus is the fulness of what Israel represents**

Christ is the termination of all God's promises, purposes and plans. We have already seen that he is the termination of covenantal promises, he is the termination of the idea of 'Israel', he is the real temple (Jn 2:18-21), even the law is now the 'law of Christ'. Although this is made clear in doctrinal statements by the apostles, even the Gospel writers express this, including Matthew who wrote for Jews. Matthew shows that Jesus has become all that Israel aspired to be - but failed:

- The introductory genealogy shows that Jesus is the true Son of Abraham and of David, he is the real Israel and Israel's king. [The inclusion of four dubious, heathen women (Canaanites: Tamar and Rahab; Moabite Ruth and Hittite Bathsheba) ought to warn Zionists that pure ethnic qualities are

not the issue. God's salvific purposes are universal.]

- Joseph led Israel into Egypt to preserve life (Gen 50:20), Jesus is taken into Egypt by another Joseph to protect him (Matt 2:13-15). Israel was led out by a prophet, Jesus is prophetically called out of Egypt and is the true fulfilment of Hosea's prophecy (Matt 2:15 c.f. Hos 11:1, the key verse here). There are even parallels between Moses' and Jesus' births. The birth and protection of Jesus is the indicator that God has initiated the new future predicated by Hosea 11.
- Matthew quotes Jer 31:5 to link the slaughter of the infants with the 'death' of Israel and removal into exile, chained up in Ramah. Israel's grief continues until Jesus, who escaped, can fulfil his ministry.
- Jesus is the Son in whom the Father is well pleased, not Israel any longer (Matt 3:17, 17:5 c.f. Ex 4:22). Echoing Isa 42:1, which is ascribed by rabbis to Israel as God's servant, Matthew reveals that Jesus is the real Israel, the real servant, the real Son of God.
- Like Israel Jesus must go through a wilderness experience, but triumphs (even using the words from Deuteronomy 6 and 8, part of Moses' sermon on Israel's failure).
- All nations are affected and blessed by his Messiahship (e.g. Magi c2, 29:19).
- Jesus is the remnant representing Israel's hope (Acts 28:20), fulfilling the OT promises.<sup>25</sup>

All the NT writers explain this in a number of ways and from varying viewpoints. When Luke writes about the disciples questioning the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus, he shows that their interest was, 'when would Israel be redeemed?' Instead Jesus ignores the hope for national Israel and answers by explaining how the scriptures concern himself, not the nation. Israel was a signpost to the Christ (Lk 24:25-27). Disciples must not get fixated with the signpost and never reach the destination - Christ. The disciples were not finally clear on this until they were filled with the Spirit (Acts 1:6-8), after this they show no expectation of a future restored political state of Israel, the kingdom is now perceived to be universal gained for people from all nations in Christ. The restoration of Israel is neither ethnic or physical, what is now important is the restoration of all things through Christ. Peter felt the need to explain this to Jews in an early sermon (Acts 3:21), for Peter the inheritance is now heavenly (i.e. in Christ, 1 Pt 3:3-5). A political and earthly inheritance of land has no interest for the apostles at all. Paul makes

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<sup>25</sup> See the argument of David Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel*, Apollos, Leicester, (1995) c2. Similar things can be found in: Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land?*, Lion. Note his quote from CH Dodd, 'The resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of Israel of which the prophets spoke'; (p140).

no mention of the land as an inheritance, but he mentions the concept of being 'in Christ' over 200 times.

Just as Israel was to be God's son, Christ is really beloved God's Son (Lk 3:22). Just as Israel was to be a nation of priests but failed, Christ is God's faithful High Priest (Heb 4:14). Just as Israel was to mediate salvation to the world but was ineffectual, Christ is the universal mediator and bringer of salvation (1 Tim 2:5). Just as Israel was to be God's servant but served herself, Christ is God's true minister (Isa 52:13). The church (as co-heir with Christ) shares in the benefits of Christ's legacy because it is united with Christ. The church hasn't replaced Israel, Christ has. It is the body of Christ which is God's representative on earth, not Israel.

Whatever Israel, the covenants, the temple etc. stood for, they are all now subsumed in Jesus and shared with the new humanity he heads up. It is immensely important to understand this Biblical concept in order to properly interpret OT scriptures. Those who condemn 'Replacement Theology' (used as a term of derision by Christian Zionists) must understand that it is not about the church, but about Christ. Yes, Christ has replaced Israel as the focus of God strategy in the salvation of men.

*'Who is Jesus? and Who is Israel? Jesus is Israel, and Israel is Jesus. From the genealogy to the voice from heaven, Matthew proclaims Jesus as Israel's king who fulfils the role assigned to Israel, God's servant.'*<sup>26</sup>

### **The fulness of the covenant is in Christ alone.**

We must take our eyes off peoples and nations, whether Jewish or Gentile and focus upon Christ. He has obtained the fulness of the inheritance of God. All God's promises find their yes in him. Paul, speaking to Jews in a synagogue said, *'what God promised to the fathers (Israel) this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus'*. He goes on to explain that all the blessings of David were given to Jesus and liberty is given to Christians as a result (Acts 13:32-39).

### **The covenant promise is now shared with those in Christ.**

It is shared with his body, those faithful elect who now *'have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ'* (Eph 1:3). Every blessing includes the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. It is not fulfilled in the flesh, but in the Spirit. We do not need to concentrate upon fleshly Jewish features which are the shadow; we have the reality in Christ:

*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.*

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<sup>26</sup> Holwerda, op. cit. p44

(Col 2:9-10)

### **The Jewish Root denigration of Christ**

Any attempt to direct the attention of believers away from the central position of Christ on to something else is sinful, plain and simple. God is not pleased when Christians become pre-occupied with Israel and try to pretend that they are Jewish by adding alien terms to their language and alien rituals to their culture. Tacking on a few Jewish names and phrases in worship is hypocrisy unless you are Jewish; but practising Jewish rituals is fleshly legalism.

But worse than this, all the attempts at a pro-Jewish 'christian' theology has resulted in either novel, confused doctrine (like the scheme of Karl and Markus Barth), or outright rejection of the claims of Christ. Jewish scholars like Pinchas Lapide hit the crux of the problem: the root of Gentile animosity to Jews is the New Testament, and particularly the doctrine of Christ's fulfilment of the OT. The key 'errors' asserted by Lapide are: that Christ is the Messiah, that he was rejected by the Jews and that he then repudiated them. Since these three items are clearly taught in the NT, it must be rejected if there is to be peace between Jews and Christians.<sup>27</sup> The root of anti-Semitism is not the Reformers but the New Testament according to Lapide, but this is to be expected from non believers.

'Christian' theologians have long stated similar things, particularly those of the Liberal schools. Rosemary Ruether blatantly states that the root of Christian anti-Semitism is its Christology; the NT creates the problem with its focus on Christ as Messiah, who is not (according to her) the final revelation of God's kingdom.<sup>28</sup> John Gager believes that the Gospel is not applicable to Jews, only Gentiles; Jews must obey the law to be saved and not believe in Christ. Jesus is only a Messiah to Gentiles and Paul's criticism of Jews is focused upon Judaizers only who, apparently, misunderstood this.<sup>29</sup>

The dominant catalyst for these theologies is the Holocaust and historic anti-Semitism; but heartfelt anguish for this has led to a complete rejection of the claims of the Bible for its own authority and of Christ's redemption. While modern Jewish Root evangelical Christians would not support people like Ruether (I hope), they are following the same line of reasoning based on history and emotion. Certainly, Christian Zionism has led many scholars to

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<sup>27</sup> See Pinchas Lapide and U. Luz, *Jesus in Two Perspectives: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, Augsburg (1985), p12.

<sup>28</sup> R. R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, chapter 5; Seabury (1974).

<sup>29</sup> J Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, Oxford Univ. Press (1983).

repudiate the need for witnessing to Jews. Anglican Zionist, Margaret Brearley, states that *most* Christian Zionists are opposed to evangelising Jews and defends this position by stating that Christianity was never meant to replace Judaism and that God continues his earthly covenant with Jews who are faithful to it and experience forgiveness without any need of the cross! She also favourably quotes rabbis, Talmud and Midrash which reminded Jews that: *'the air of the land of Israel makes one wise'*, and *'all who dwell in the Land of Israel are considered to be without sin'*<sup>30</sup>

Any such elevation of ethnic Israel in the covenant must devalue the role of Christ, in whom the covenant promises terminate. He is the seed of Abraham and the inheritor of all God's promises. He is the Messiah. He is the head of the church. He is the only way, the truth and the life. He is the only source of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Believers in Christ must be very careful that they are not led into denigrating their Lord by following an erroneous teaching about Israel.

## CRUCIAL SCRIPTURES

### Galatians 4/5

#### The argument

- The promised inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant is with Abraham's offspring (seed):  
*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. (Gal 3:16a)*
- Christ is Abraham's seed:  
*He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to*

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<sup>30</sup> M. Brearley, 'Jerusalem for Christian Zionists', in *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, Ed. Peter Walker, Baker/Paternoster (1994), p121, 105.



*your Seed," who is Christ. (Gal 3:16b)*

- Abraham's offspring is not ethnic Israel:  
*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. (Gal 3:8-9)*
- The promise is extended to those in Christ (believing Jews and Gentiles) not to an earthly nation:  
*Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:7, 29).*  
*The Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. (Eph 3:6)*
- The promise is received through faith not physical descent:  
*that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:14).*
- Christians are truly heirs of the covenant with Christ:  
*Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (Gal 4:7)*  
*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. (Rm 8:16-17)*  
*having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:7)*
- The Abrahamic covenant, the hope of Israel, is now a part of the Gospel ('good news'):  
*And we declare to you glad tidings -- that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. (Acts 13:32-33)*
- The fathers did not receive the promise themselves but saw that the church would:  
*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you ... To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering. (1 Pt 1:10-12)*

There is only one way to know God, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Paul identifies this Gospel with the fruits of the Abrahamic covenant. If this covenant was only for ethnic Jews, then no one could be saved, unless God had instituted two roads to salvation. Those who believe in Christ are included in the Abrahamic covenant. The heirs of Abraham are the elect of all nations, not ethnic Jews.

**The New Testament View of Abraham's Descendants**  
Galatians 3:7-9, 16Galatians 4:22-31

## **Romans 9-11, The Jewish Root concept**

A strange and novel understanding of this passage is being propounded by Christian Zionists and Jewish Root teachers. The point Paul is making concerns the predestination of believers in Christ, and though Israel is used as an illustration, Paul, as always, focuses upon Christ. The consummation of the covenant promise is Christ. Without Christ there is no blessing and no hope. Instead of this, these new teachers focus attention onto Israel emphasising that it is the root of Israel that supports the church.<sup>31</sup> Instead of centring upon God's Son, we are told to concentrate upon a fleshly nation. Can this be right?

### **Summary of the argument in Rm 9-11**

Paul's argument in Rm 11 must be read in the context of the whole letter. Why does Paul mention Israel at all? Paul explains his point in Rm 1:15-17, he is preaching the Gospel to these believers in Rome whom he has not yet met and cannot teach in person. Though some may have been Jews, most were not as Jews had been recently expelled from Rome. Paul is not writing a paper on Israel; he is not explaining Jewish roots to Gentiles; his main purpose is to explain the Gospel in fulness.

A key part of Paul's Gospel teaching was to explain God's purposes in election, and justification by faith which arises from it. The 'invisible' root of our salvation is being chosen by God (Eph 1:4). Paul shows that this is the first link in the chain in Rm 8:30. God's main object lesson, to illustrate election and calling, is the nation of Israel. They are the chosen (= elect) people of the OT. Calling did not depend upon them, in fact God says that they were the least of the nations (Deut 7:7) and God knew they would fail (Ezek 16, read all the severe words, c.f. Rm 10:20). Despite this, God preserved a faithful remnant out of love. Paul's purpose in Rm 9-11 is to explain election by reference to Israel as the historical chosen people of God.

Paul starts with the election of Jacob and the passing by of Esau (Rm 9:9ff).

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<sup>31</sup> For example: *'Romans 11 tells us that the invisible root of the church is Israel'*; Jacob Prasch *Moriel Prayer & Newsletter* Winter 1996-7, p1.

Paul explains that being a Jew is of no value without faith (Rm 9:6-7); faith is the expression of election, only the elect have faith. Esau (a Jew) had no faith and was not elect, and was not loved by God (Rm 9:13). All this points to the sovereignty of God in salvation (Rm 9:16), as the potter illustration makes clear. In this sovereignty, God calls other nations, not just Jews (9:24) and only a part of Israel will be saved (9:27). The 'visible' basis of salvation is shown to be faith (9:32) which is a gift from God (Eph 2:8-10) given to the elect. The key problem with the Jews was to pursue salvation by works (9:32-33, 10:2-4), as such she is a lesson to people of all nations.

Paul elucidates this theme of justification by faith in chapter 10 and adds that preaching the Gospel is vital for this occur. To demonstrate the love of God for the remnant of Israel, Paul explains in chapter 11 that God has not finally repudiated her (11:1-2). At the moment God preserves a remnant as a demonstration of grace (11:6), the rest are hardened and blinded (11:7-10). In God's time, he prophesies that riches will come to the church when a great revival occurs in Israel in the future (11:15).

### **The root**

The root of the church is God's work amongst the Genesis patriarchs (i.e. the first elect people were the fathers), but especially Abraham, already mentioned in v1. Israel did not actually exist as a nation at this point in Genesis, but becomes a nation in Exodus 12. Abraham is said to be the rock from which we are cut (Isa 51:1-2), he is the model of faith, he is the key root in mind here (9:7-8). It is not physical descendants that Paul has in mind, in fact he says clearly that the root is Abraham as a model of faith and election.

Paul explained this doctrinally in Rm 4, and now does so by example. Abraham is scripture's origin point for teaching on the descendants of the covenant and promise. When Paul talks about being a true Israelite he calls himself a '*descendant of Abraham*' (11:1). True Jews (believers) are descended from him via the child of promise (Isaac as an elect believer, 9:6-7; Gal 4:28). Abraham's real seed is Christ, hence all believers in Christ are spiritually descended from Abraham (Rm 9:8; Gal 3:26). Abraham is the starting point for God's promise of blessed descendants from all nations (Gen 12:2-3). Through him the whole lump is holy,<sup>32</sup> that is, consecrated to God's use (c.f. 1 Cor 7:14 where believer's children are dedicated to God). He is the root set apart (made holy) by God when he called him out of Ur. Abraham was separated from the rest of the world to be the father (root) of the people of God. In Abraham all the nations of the world were to be blessed. Israel is

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<sup>32</sup> Paul has in mind the law of first fruits (Lev 23:10-11; Num 15:19-21). The offering of a freshly reaped sheaf and the first cakes of dough consecrated the whole harvest to God.

not the root, Israel is the branches. Israel as a nation came much later.<sup>33</sup> The root is not even an Israelite, but a Sumerian (Chaldean), as Stephen made clear (Acts 7:2-4).

### **The branches**

The consecration of the root ensures the consecration of the whole tree. This means that unholy branches will be removed. The natural branches are Jews, the wild olive branches are Gentiles. Some branches (in fact the majority of Israelites so far, since only a remnant is left 11:5-7) were broken off from being a true descendant of Abraham because they did not have faith (therefore, were not elect). It is faith which keeps the branches on the tree. Lack of faith cuts off natural branches (Jews) and possessing faith grafts on wild olive branches (Gentiles, 11:17ff).

The source of life for both branches is the root which supplies sap (fatness v17, the life of Christ). The root that supports us is faith and obedience to God's call, modelled by Abraham. Paul spent a whole chapter explaining this root of faith earlier in his letter (c4). The root could be considered either as Abraham or the faith of Abraham, but not Israel as a nation, which did not exist at that time. Abraham was, in fact, the father of the Ishmaelites as well as the Israelites. Paul's point is to refer to Abraham as the father of faith, not ethnic qualities. He does exactly the same thing in Galatians. Ethnic Israel does not support the church now, yet this root does (11:18). In fact Paul says that ethnic Israel is the enemy of the church at the moment (11:28).

If it is insisted that the root is Israel, then Abraham's descendants must be seen as ethnic only, not those of faith (contrary to the NT). But, this must include Arabs who are also ethnic descendants of Abraham. If one tries to avoid this pitfall by saying that it is only descendants through Isaac, then we are taking the line of faith which, as Paul insists, includes all Christians. But the root cannot be the whole tree (Paul says that Israel are branches). There is no other conclusion. The root is Abraham, not national Israel.

Paul then draws lessons from all this as well as warnings. He further emphasises a future revival amongst Jews (11:26 with 11:15). But here we must note:

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<sup>33</sup> This is not an obscure interpretation; the vast majority of historic commentators agree with this line. It can be read no other way. The *Amplified Bible* even puts 'Abraham' in brackets after the word 'root'. A few ancient commentators see the root as Christ, but this is not the natural reading of the text. Only Dispensational commentators disagree.

- 'all' Israel does not mean every single living Jew, 'all' frequently means less than 'everyone' e.g. Matt 3:5, 4:24; Mk 4:11 and even Rm 11:32; but it does indicate a significant proportion sufficient to represent the nation. A good interpretation of this much disputed phrase is that it means 'all elect Jews', the full Jewish complement throughout history who believe in Christ, the saved remnant.
- The verse does not say 'then all Israel shall be saved', as if it is after the fulness of the Gentiles has been brought in. 'So' is an adverb of manner, not of time, meaning: 'in this way'. There is no reference here to a future millennial Jewish kingdom, nor a comment upon the 'times of the Gentiles'.
- There is a mystery involved in this (Rm 11:25) which is, no doubt why these verses have provoked so much argument. It cannot be a reference to the normal process of election and conversion throughout history, something special is involved regarding Israel which impacts the church like life from the dead (11:15). As it is a mystery, we need to take care in our interpretation.

So, does Rm 9-11 say that Israel is the root of the church? Nowhere at all. Abraham is the root of ethnic Israel in the flesh but also of the church comprising all who believe like him, Jew and Gentile and this is Paul's point here and in Galatians. We must look at scripture carefully and not follow novel lines of teaching.

## **Eph 2:11-19**

At one time Gentiles were separated from the Messiah and alienated from the people of God - Israel; consequently they had no hope of inclusion in the covenant promises and did not know God (v11-12). However, as a direct result of the cross (v16), the blood of Christ has brought Gentile believers near and has made Jews and Gentile believers one (v13). Jesus has made peace and broken down all the divisions between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ (v14).

In addition he has abolished the law, not just the civil and ceremonial law but specifically the '*law of commandments and ordinances*'. His purpose is to create one new man in peace. Jewish and Gentile distinctives must be ignored in the greater objective of being one in peace (v15).

It is thus that Jews and Gentiles are together, as one man, reconciled to God in one body through the cross (v16) making both fellow citizens of God's household (v19). There is only one house of God, one people of God, one

covenant people - it includes Jews and Gentiles. This means that neither Jews nor Gentiles should emphasise distinctives which tend to cause separation within the body. This is the very opposite of God's purpose in Christ explained by these verses. This is much harder for Jews who have a religious system which was originally ordained by God but is now abrogated, abolished. The ground for celebration is the cross of Christ; not Abraham, not the law, not the feasts, not the Old Covenant. Nothing should be done by Jews or Gentiles to build separating walls between each other, whether rituals or discrimination.

## **The position of the book of Hebrews**

This letter was written shortly before the destruction of the temple, in about 66 AD, to Jewish Christian churches in Judaea, probably from Italy by an unknown writer (though many suspect Luke or Paul). These people were tempted to revert to Judaism as a result of their proximity to the temple and its rituals, persecution against Christians and the failure of the Lord to return as soon as they expected. Their chief problem was a focus upon the externals of religion instead of faith in the promise, hence the long exhortation to look to the unseen.<sup>34</sup>

The writer's main argument is that believing Jews must not go back to Judaism, which is the shadow, but press on with Christ who is the reality (Heb 8:5, 10:1). Hebrews is all about going on, moving from Judaism and the Old Covenant to the Gospel Kingdom which has a new high priest, a new sacrifice and a new covenant. For example, the Old Covenant had a worship system based upon offerings and God was hidden in the Holy of Holies. The Judaistic system was incomplete and ineffectual for dealing with the real issues.

*By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way is not yet opened, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience. (Heb 9:8-9).*

The rituals of the OT have no intrinsic spiritual value, they do not bring life but only point to Christ who has now brought new life and access to God. The New Covenant is not for a future Jewish kingdom but is now:

*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away*

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<sup>34</sup> We cannot enter into support for all these contentions here. Those interested can see a good argument for these positions in F.L. Godet, *Studies in Paul's Letters*.

*sins.* (Heb 10:4)

*But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come ... he entered once for all into the Holy Place ... securing an eternal redemption ... (purifying) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* (Heb 9:11-14)

Jesus is the surety (mediator) of this New Covenant (Heb 7:22) which is better than the old one (Heb 8:6, 9:15) which has passed away (Heb 8:7, 13), because it has opened the way to God, deals with our inner needs and fulfils all the things that the Old Covenant pointed to. This New Covenant is the one prophesied by Jeremiah (Heb 8:8-12) and it was instituted at the cross (Heb 9:25-28, 10:10-18).

God spoke to Israel by prophets, by law, by a worship system, by feasts - they were all part of the old way of relating to God. They all hang together as the old system. You cannot take bits of Judaism out to suit you, they all fit and work together. Jesus has abolished all of this way of approaching God (Heb 10:9) and established a new and living way (Heb 10:20). The law as a means of obeying God's will without grace is abolished, the offerings, as a means of purging the conscience are abolished (Heb 9:11-14); the feasts as a means of celebrating God's actions are abolished and the priesthood is abolished (Heb 4:14-15).

Jesus' priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek now, i.e. it is a spiritual, eternal and righteous priesthood (Heb 5:6-10, 6:20), thus any support for a Jewish re-establishment of the sacrifices, Levitical priesthood or rebuilding of the temple is rebellion against God's redemption in Christ (Heb 10:14). The obscure prophecies in Zechariah and Ezekiel cannot be interpreted to support an idea which contradicts the clear argument of Hebrews and many other NT passages. The cross has cancelled all Old Covenant rituals in God's purposes.

Even in his earthly ministry it was clear that Jesus claimed for himself the reality of the OT rituals and places (Jn 2:19). If one was with Jesus, he did not need to offer sacrifices in the temple (Lk 19:9). *'The force of such sentences is lost unless it is realised that ... Jesus was implicitly claiming to do and be what the temple was and did [he acted as] the replacement of the temple ... His offering of forgiveness and restoration undercut the normal system'*.<sup>35</sup>

The book of Hebrews urges Christians to move on and look away from the

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<sup>35</sup> Tom Wright, 'Jerusalem in the NT', *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God*, Ed. Walker, Baker/Paternoster, (1994), p58.

historic Jewish foundations and look to Jesus who is the pioneer of our faith (Heb 12:2). It represents the opposite of Jewish Root teaching.

## **An overview of John's Gospel**

John shows us that Jesus is the fulfilment of all the Jewish OT institutions. We have no space to examine this in detail and many expositors have demonstrated it (e.g. Barnabus Lindars, C. K. Barrett and Leon Morris). Jesus himself shows this very clearly in his discourse with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:21-23). Worship is no longer in a temple on a holy mountain but is in Spirit and truth (i.e. spiritually in Jesus, Jn 14:6). John progressively demonstrates that Jesus is the end of Messianic learning (c3), the temple worship (c4), the Sabbath (c5), the Passover (c6), the Feasts of Tabernacles (c7) and Dedication (c10). Jewish Root teachers who focus on the Jewish nature of these things are reversing God's eternal purposes in Christ.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **God's focus upon the church which is Christ's body**

#### **There is one covenant people**

There is only one people of God with no dividing wall between them (Eph 2:12-18). There is one household, not two (v19), one new man not two (v15), one body not two (v16), one structure not two (v21), one bride not two (5:32), one flock not two (Jn 10:16), one house not two, which includes Moses (Heb 3:2-6). The church has come into promises made to Israel as part of the inheritance of Christ - including the Holy Spirit, the Messiah, and eternal life. This is the fulfilment of God's original promise made to Abraham that he would bless all nations in him (Gen 12:3,17:4).

#### **There is one covenant**

All covenants between God and men result and flow from the covenant of redemption made between Jesus and the Father in eternity. Covenants inaugurated in the old dispensation were phases of God's great redemptive plan summed up in his Son, the object of which was to secure a whole people, the elect, given to Jesus as a bride by the Father (Jn 17:2,9,20).

Christians are this covenant people, and make up this bride, along with the Old Testament faithful saints who came to faith in God's promised Messiah under one or another covenant scheme (e.g. Noah, David). Each covenant progressively pointed more clearly to the promised Messiah (e.g. he would be of the line of Shem, a child of Abraham, a son of David etc). The fulfilment is



in Jesus who sums up all covenants, all promises, all kingdoms, all sacrifices etc.

The church is God's chosen covenant people, faithful Gentiles and Jews as the seed of Abraham (Rm 9:6-8, 1 Pt 2:9-10). The focus of God's attention in this world is the church, the bride of Christ, and not Israel (Eph 1:22-23). This church is not a 'Gentile church' as claimed by Jewish Root teachers. It began amongst Jews who inherited the promise as the seed of Abraham (natural olive branches). Many Gentiles then were added to it years later (wild olive branches), also becoming part of the seed of Abraham. It is not a Gentile body, it is the body of Christ, not of this earth. There is no such thing as a Gentile church, the phrase is an oxymoron; when one becomes a Christian one ceases to be a Jew or Gentile and becomes a new creature in Christ.

The church has always been in God's mind as his people, symbolised in the OT under the picture of a vineyard (Isa 5:1; Ps 80:8). Jesus explains, in Matt 21:33ff, that the vineyard cannot be ethnic Israel since the kingdom is taken from the Jews (Matt 21:43), the vineyard continues only the tenants are removed, the vineyard is then given to others (faithful Jews and Gentiles). The vineyard = the seed of Abraham = the church = believers of all nations. The church did not begin at Pentecost since people were added to it that day.

This is the historic Christian position, as shown by the church fathers. Justin Martyr writing before 166 AD states:

*'As, therefore, Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we who are quarried out from the bowels of Christ are the true Israelitish race.'*<sup>36</sup>

So too Irenaeus:

*'By His advent He himself fulfilled all things, and still does fulfil in the church the New Covenant foretold by the law. ...*

*'The church is the seed of Abraham.'*<sup>37</sup>

And also Hippolytus speaking of Isaiah:

*'For it is not of the Jews that he spake of old, nor is it of the city of Zion, but of the church.'*<sup>38</sup>

Remember that this was not denied throughout history until the rise of Dispensationalism in the 19th century. Historic Christianity holds the position outlined in this booklet.

## **Has God rejected Israel finally?**

<sup>36</sup> Justin Martyr (D. 166 AD), *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol 1, p267.

<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus (115-190 AD), *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol 1, p511, 563.

<sup>38</sup> Hippolytus (D.235 AD), *Ante Nicene Fathers*, Vol 5, p243.

God has not fully rejected Israel, whom Paul calls *'his people'* (Rm 11:1) At the moment God is calling a remnant whom he saves, not through the law but by grace (Rm 11:6). The law with all its feasts and offerings is not the way forward. Through Israel's failure (to have faith, despite the pointers in the law to Christ) the Gentiles have come in; but though they have stumbled, they have not fallen for ever (Rm 11:11). God has not cast them away (Rm 11:1-2) irretrievably.

Israel's failure has resulted in riches for the world; but God will do a reviving work in Israel to include a large number of Jews which will be like life from the dead to the gentile church (Rm 11:15, 26-27). Just as Israel's terrible failure in rejecting the Messiah led to riches for the Gentiles, their reinstatement will entail 'fulness' in the church (Rm 11:12). They will recognise the Messiah and their desolation will be changed (Lk13:35). A burst of resurrection power and revelation will result from a massive conversion of Jews in the future and this will enrich the church as bringing life to the dead. Christians should be praying for this. As we see a growing trend for evangelicals to ignore or even criticise the word of God, could it be that the major work amongst the Jews is God's means of restoring to the church the authority of the Bible as Jewish teachers are marvellously saved and bring: *'life from the dead'* through their ministry?

At the moment, Jews are said to be enemies of God as regards the Gospel but beloved for the sake of their forefathers. Israel is hardened at the moment until the full elect of the Gentiles are saved (Rm 11:25-26). Then will be this great revival and the elect will be complete - all the elect Jews and all the elect Gentiles; both comprising God's Israel, God's chosen people.

This is not replacement theology which says that God has no purpose for Israel at all and that the church has taken Israel's place. Biblical theology is inclusive, showing that both elect Gentiles and elect Jews comprise the church. God's chosen people are all those who have faith in God's Christ, God's Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

## **The final word**

So we see that God still has love for the remnant of his ancient people Israel and clearly declares that, far from rejecting them, he will soon bring about a national wave of repentance amongst Jews which will revitalise the church. Israel also forms a background for much of the Bible and our church heritage (Rm 9:4). To understand both requires a certain amount of Jewish

understanding. Someone who studies this will be richer in his appreciation for God's word. Also, most of the great saints and workers for God in the Bible are Jews. This must be acknowledged by us since it is by God (Rm 9:5, 11:28).

Having said all this, the current state of Israel is one of rejection of God. The Bible also contains cultural influences and background which is not Jewish. Much of the New Testament is set in a Gentile background, both historically, ideologically and semantically. These must also be studied, particularly the Greek language.

We have no command in scripture to change our natural ethnic state, either formally or by preoccupation. In the natural sense we should endeavour to be good citizens of our own nation, trying to present Gospel truths to other citizens in a normal fashion. This means that meetings, names etc. should be indigenous; to do otherwise would hinder evangelisation of our own people. At the same time, by faith we believe that we are citizens of a heavenly city, and all our hopes and aspirations should be directed there in Christ. Our true nature is that we are new creatures in Christ and no spiritual importance is attached to ethnic traits anymore. However, cultural qualities are a part of society and should not be despised unless sinful. Christians should not force Jewish believers to act like Gentiles to be acceptable to God, but neither should Jewish teachers insist that English believers should adopt Jewish practices and terminology.

Continually harping on about Jewish roots and replacementism is not a central Biblical issue to focus upon. Where is the cross in all this? A focus on the Jewish roots of the body of Christ is not the answer for a deceived church. We must continually centre upon Jesus Christ and him alone; the Jewish root idea is a diversion from Him. Speaking of this tendency, a Jewish pastor, who was a former strict orthodox Jew states: *'the Hebrew Roots movement builds walls ... our unity is in Jesus and not some cultural features. This movement is definitely the modern equivalent of the Judaizers of Paul's days'*.<sup>39</sup> Demonising a straw man as 'replacement theology' is not only inaccurate, it is also in danger of working against God. The argument presented here is not about replacing Israel by the church, but showing how the Bible takes up OT themes and shows their fulfilment in Christ. The reality of these themes is in the Messiah, and is then shared with all his covenant people, whatever their nationality. To deride this is to denigrate God's eternal purpose.

There is also a very serious, and ironic, danger here. Emphasis upon Jews

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<sup>39</sup> *Rabbis & Synagogues or the 'Ekklesia'?* tract, PFI, Bromley (no date).

as the continuing covenant people of God can, and has, led some to treat them as effectively saved. Why preach the Christian Gospel to a man who is in God's kingdom already? Thus Jews can thus be denied the hope of being truly born into God's genuine kingdom by people professing to love them. The formal policy of some Messianic organisations is to reject evangelising Jews altogether.<sup>40</sup> Surely the Biblical view, passionately voiced by Paul, is that we should long for Jews to come to faith in Christ and find their Messiah. The anguish of Paul for his fellow Israelites is notably absent from these 'sympathetic' groups.

Another matter is the consequent wrong ethics engaged against other believers; e.g. support for Israeli policies by Christian Zionists is wrongly placed when that results in sinning against brethren. Recent Jewish domestic policies have discriminated against Jewish and Palestinian Christians.<sup>41</sup> Supporting Israel in this is surely sinful.

Our problems start when we take our eyes off Christ and concentrate on visible, earthly, fleshly things. Some today put their attention on mystical objects as a vain aid to spirituality (prayer sticks, crystals, candles, flags) or mystical efforts (false healings, miracles). Others focus upon fleshly activities like mystical dancing, falling over, blowing trumpets, confession or dead works. Yet others centre on ethnic symbols and trappings (Celtic spirituality, Christian Zionism). The focus upon Israel has fallen into this trap. The Bible, however, focuses attention on Christ, not just objectively in teaching but even in its symbols and typology. The institutions of Israel coalesce into one: Jerusalem becomes a symbol for the kingdom in the prophets. It is also a synonym for the land. The land and the inheritance are interconnected throughout the OT; both become universalised, not limited to Canaan. The covenants with Israel include the ideas of land, inheritance and kingdom. The promises are the expression of the covenant and the inheritance. All of these converge into Christ. He is the fulness of: the kingdom, the inheritance, the promises, the hope. In him is reality of what is represented by the land, the

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<sup>40</sup> For instance: The *International Christian Embassy* in Jerusalem and the *Sisters of Zion*. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has also declared that '*Jews cannot be treated by Christians as unbelievers*'. [See Torrance (Ed): *The Witness of the Jews to God*, Handsell Press (1982).]

<sup>41</sup> For example, some Jewish Christians cannot become Israeli citizens; all Palestinians can suffer: arrest without charge for 18 days, homes searched without warrants, enforced curfews, confiscation of land etc. One Arab pastor's response to Christian Zionist teaching was: '*It is hard to be told that for the return of my Lord Jesus to take place, I must first be expelled from my ancestral home*'. (Quoted in Peter Walker, *Centre Stage, Jerusalem or Jesus*, Cambridge paper 5.1. p6 (March 1996).

kingdom, the people of God, the temple, the tabernacle and the priesthood. He is the mediator of the covenant. He is the summation of the law.

Christ is the root of our lives (Col 2:7) and the focal point of our attention (Col 3:2-3). Encouraging believers to take their gaze off him on to something else is a deceitful work of the enemy. It was Jews who continually heard the words of the law Sabbath by Sabbath, but did not recognise the Messiah it prophesied or understand the prophet's message (Acts 13:27) because they are under the veil of Moses. Why should a believer, born to gaze on the glory of God in Christ, wish to wear a Jewish blindfold?

## Appendix One

### Promises made to Israel applied by the NT to believers

#### Titles and attributes of Israel applied to the Church

##### *Beloved of God*

Ex 15:13; Deut 33:3; Ezra 3:11      Rm 9:25; Eph 5:1; Col 3:12; 1 Jn 3:1

##### *Children of God*

Ex 4:22; Deut 14:1; Isa 1:2,4,      Jn 1:12, 11:52; Rm 8:14, 16; 2 Cor  
6:18;      Gal 3:26

##### *The Field of God*

Jer 12:10      1 Cor 3:9

##### *The Flock of God*

Ps 78:52, 80:1; Isa 40:11      Jn 10:14, 16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25, 5:2-3

##### *The House of God*

Num 12:7      1 Tim 3:15; Heb 13:2, 5, 6, 10:21;  
1 Pt 4:17

##### *The Kingdom of God*

Ex 19:6; 1 Ch 17:14, 28:5      Rm 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; Col 1:13, 4:11;  
Rev 1:6

##### *The people of God*

Ex 6:7; Deut 27:9; 2 Sam 7:23      Rm 9:25; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 4:12, 5:3;  
2 Thess 1:10

##### *Priests of God*

Ex 19:6      1 Pt 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6, 5:10

##### *The Vineyard of God*

Isa 5:3-7; Jer 12:10      Lk 20:16

*The Bride of God*

Isa 54:5-6; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16:32; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:31-32

*The Children of Abraham*

2 Chr 20:7; Ps 105:6; Isa 41:8 Rm 4:11, 16; Gal 3:7, 29, 4:23, 28, 31

*The Chosen people*

Deut 7:7, 10:15; Isa 43:20-21 Col 3:12; 1 Pt 2:9

*The Circumcised*

Gen 17:10, 13; Jud 15:18 Rm 2:29; Phil 3:3; Col 2:11

*Israel*

Gen 32:28; Ex 12:3 etc Gal 6:15-16; Eph 2:12, 19; Rm 9:24-27

*Jerusalem is the city and mother*

Ps 149:2; Isa 12:6, 49:18-22 Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 21:2

*Jews*

Ezra 5:1; Jer 34:8-9; Zech 8:22 Rm 2:28-29; Gal 3:29; Phil 3:3

*The New Covenant was with Israel but now is with believers*

Jer 31:31-33 Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25; 2 Cor 3:6; Heb 8:6, 8, 10

*An Olive Tree*

Jer 11:16; Hos 14:6 Rm 11:24

*Zion*

Ps 9:14, 14:7 etc Heb 12:22-24

**Disobedient Ethnic Jews are none of these things**

E.g.:

*Not Beloved*

Lev 26:28, 30; Jer 12:8, 16:5; Hos 9:15

*Not the Children of God*

Deut 32:5; Jn 8:39, 42, 44

*Not the Kingdom of God*

Matt 8:11-12, 21; 43

*Not the people of God*

Hos 1:9; Jer 5:10

*Not Priests of God*

1 Sam 2:28, 30; Lam 4:13, 16; Ezek 44:10, 13

*Not the Bride of God*

Jer 3:8; Hos 2:2

*Not Children of Abraham*

Jn 8:39; Rm 9:6-7; Gal 4:25, 30

*Not the Chosen people*

Deut 31:17; 2 Kg 17:20; 2 Chron 25:7; Ps 78:59

*Not the Circumcised*

Jer 9:25-26; Rm 2:25, 28; Phil 3:2

*Not Israelites*

Num 15:30-31; Deut 18:19; Acts 3:23; Rm 9:6

*Not Jews*

Rm 2:28; Rev 2:9, 3:9

**Commands to Israel applied to the Church**

Exod 16:18 2 Cor 8:15

Lev 11:45, 19:2 1 Pt 1:16

Deut 5:16 Eph 6:2-3

Deut 17:7, 19:19, 22:24, 24:7	1 Cor 5:13
Deut 19:15	2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19
Isa 35:3	Heb 12:12
Isa 48:20, 52:11	2 Cor 6:17

### References to Israel applied to Christians

Lev 26:11, 12; Ezek 37:27	2 Cor 6:16
Deut 30:12-14	Rm 10:6-8
Deut 31:6	Heb 13:5
Deut 32:36; Ps 135:14	Heb 10:30
Ps 22:22	Heb 2:12
Ps 44:22	Rm 8:36
Ps 95:7-11	Heb 3:7-11
Ps 130:8	Titus 2:14
Isa 28:16	Rm 10:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pt 2:6
Isa 49:8	2 Cor 6:2
Isa 52:7	Rm 10:15
Isa 54:1	Gal 4:27
Jer 31:31-34	Heb 8:8-12
Hos 1:10, 2:23	Rm 9:25-26; 1 Pt 2:10
Hos 13:14	1 Cor 15:55
Joel 2:32	Rm 10:13

### The church = Israel

The application of the title 'Israel' to the church may need some expansion. The crucial passages are: Matt 18:17; Gal 6:15-16 and Rm 9:24-27; Eph 2:12-19.

Firstly the Ephesians passage makes it plain that believers are fellow citizens with Jews in the kingdom of God. There is one country, if it is called Israel, then Christians are part of it, just as Christians are called variants of 'true' or 'inward' Jews several times in the NT. The Christian church is here considered by Paul as the 'commonwealth of Israel'.

Secondly, the Romans passage:

*Even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved." (Rm 9:24-27)*

Paul is speaking about predestination and uses Israel to illustrate his point throughout chapters 9-11. Here he states that God chose some to be a vessel for glory, this is the church comprising Jews and Gentiles. Those who were not part of God's people (Gentiles), now are. As a result Israel has grown to be like the sand of the sea because it is full of spiritual Jews - saved Jews and Gentiles. Hence Gentile Christians are called Israel here in verse 27.

Thirdly, in Matt 18:17 Jesus talks about church discipline. If a person rejects this he is to be treated like a 'Gentile'. Jews at the time divided mankind into Jew and Gentile, those outside the fellowship of the church are to be treated as Gentiles, therefore, those inside the church are as Israel.

Finally, the Galatians passage:

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

Paul uses the phrase *the Israel of God* deliberately to indicate that he is not considering the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel is not in Paul's mind in Galatians 6 at all. It is also important to realise that the word 'and' here is the Greek word *kai* which can mean several things. It does not automatically mean 'and'. Many commentators throughout history, of all persuasions, have taken this to mean 'even' in this text. The 'all' who follow this rule are those who are new creatures in Christ, both circumcised (Jews) and uncircumcised (Gentiles). If *kai* meant 'and', then Israel would not be in the new creation and the verse would contradict Rm 11 and his earlier argument in Galatians. The 'Israel of God' must mean either the church (as most commentators have taken it, apart from Dispensationalists) or alternatively, it may mean the elect of Israel who get saved in the future (though this is a weaker interpretation).

Further than this, there are many passages which imply that the church is Israel, though expressed in a variety of ways: true Israelites and believers are part of the same olive tree Rm 11:17-24; James addresses his letter to Jews but clearly has in mind believers (Jm 2:1); Peter applies OT passages referring to the exclusive Jewish people of God to the church (1 Pt 2:10 c.f. Hos 1:10; Ex 19:5-6); as does John (Rev 1:6 c.f. Ex 19:5); also the church is the circumcision (Phil 3:3).

All the benefits accorded to Israel are now manifest in the church:

- The entrusting of the oracles of God was with Israel (Rm 3:1-2) but Jews have never disseminated them; the church has translated scripture into all languages.
- The adoption (Rm 9:4) is now in the church (Rm 8:15-16).



- The glory (Rm 9:4) is now in the church (Rm 8:18; 2 Cor 3: 10-18).
- The covenants (Rm 9:4) are now with the church (Eph 2:12-13).
- Worshipful service to God (Rm 9:4) is now with the church (Rm 12:1; Phil 3:3; Jn 4:21-23).
- The promises (Rm 9:4) are the church's in Christ (2 Cor 1:20; 2 Pt 1:2-4; Gal 4 :28).

All these things were not transferred to the church from Israel, the church is now Israel as the seed of Abraham.

## Appendix Two

### Everlasting Promises

Some have concentrated upon the use of the word 'eternal' regarding promises to Israel, but this word must be interpreted in context, as scripture shows, according to the sphere being treated. An everlasting priestly covenant with Phinehas (Num 25:12) and one with Aaron (Exod 40:15) was in effect as long as the priesthood was established (Heb 7:18, c8-10); a legal promise was in effect only as long as the law was in effect (2 Cor 3:13-18); physical circumcision was only 'everlasting' for a time (Gen 17:13); in Jer 33:17-22 it is promised that there will always be Levites presenting burnt offerings and meal offerings without interruption, yet this has not occurred for 2000 years because this system is now cancelled in the cross. So the promises to Israel were effective as long as ethnic Israel was the focus of God's dealings as a nation for his earthly purposes.

By reading 1 Kings 2:4 we see that the 'everlasting' promise to David of a son permanently on the throne was, in fact, conditional. God promised to live in Solomon's house forever (2 Chron 7:16) but that house was destroyed. Forever meant as long as the house stood. The same is true of the land (Gen 13:15), 'for ever' (Heb. *ad olam*) here means a hidden unknown period which includes a termination or completion at the end of an era. Israel possessed the land of Canaan until the Mosaic dispensation was terminated. 'Forever' could even be limited to one person's lifetime as in Deut 15:17.

Dispensationalists have to fudge in this connection since they claim an 'everlasting' possession of the land for Jews but reduce it to only 1000 years in the millennium. But they also cannot explain why Israel did not possess Palestine for hundreds of years when the promise was that Abraham would occupy the land, himself, as an 'everlasting possession', which certainly implies uninterrupted ownership. In fact, Abraham was a stranger in Canaan until he died, and the Jews often lost the land to Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans and for 1,878 years after 70AD. The literal interpretation of 'everlasting' always breaks down because the term is a Semitic expression, still in use today, meaning a long, but not indefinite, period.

With the appearance of Christ, the reign of the shadows (in material form) ends. In spiritual form, these things do continue forever: there is an eternal priesthood - in Christ, an eternal kingdom - in Christ, an eternal house - in Christ, an eternal Sabbath rest - in Christ, etc. The forms through which everlasting promises develop are:

- from their inception until Christ's first advent;
- from that point until the second coming, during which the form is developed into a higher phase;
- from the second coming into the eternal, final state which has no end.

'Everlasting' means 'a long, unknown period of time', just as modern legal documents refer to 'in perpetuity' when it means 'indefinitely', 'until a change of circumstances'. Note the scriptural application of this to items like: law, kingdom, circumcision, priesthood, Sabbath etc.

### **Appendix Three**

## **Were the synoptic Gospels written in Hebrew?**

If we believe in the sovereign inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, we must also believe in the providential preservation of it. What use is original inspired monographs if the Bible we use today is nothing like them? Would God intend for the Gospels to be written with a Jewish slant and then prevent that 'necessary' feature from being available to the church for 2000 years? Has every single age of the church been severely disadvantaged apart from a very small minority today who claim a special understanding? Just think about that for a minute, what kind of God would act that way?

There are thousands and thousands of Greek manuscripts for the NT, more than for any other historical document, yet there are no ancient Hebrew or Aramaic texts apart from a very few copied from Greek ones (like the

'Peshitta'). The apostles were commanded to take the Gospel to the whole world and the lingua franca at that time, even for foreign (and many Israeli) Jews, was Greek. Gospels written in Hebrew could not even have been read by most Jews, let alone Gentiles. The NT frequently quotes the OT from the Septuagint ('LXX', Greek) version. The letter to the Hebrews quotes it more than most and whole books have been written on Luke's use of the LXX in Acts! Even the Jewish history books of the Apocrypha come from Greek documents. It was in the providence of God that the Greek Alexander the Great established a world empire with a common language, so that even the Romans did not seek to change it when they became the dominant Mediterranean power.

Many Greeks came to live in Galilee and the area East of the Jordan. The Gospels mention their occupation in the 'Decapolis' (Greek for an area of '10 cities') and indicate their interest in Jesus (Jn 12:21). As Greek became the usual language of trade and intercourse, Palestine was bilingual at the time of Christ. Several scholars have even suggested that Jesus gave many of his discourses in Greek.<sup>42</sup> The high priest even established a place for Greek games in Jerusalem due to their popularity. It was the Jews who were Alexander's bankers in his capital of Alexandria in Egypt.

Even the Jewish historian Josephus wrote his Jewish history in Greek, not Aramaic. Recent statements made by some that he did not can be proved to be untrue by reading what Josephus wrote himself: *'I have so completely perfected the work ...[to] accurately deliver these accounts to the Greeks as is done in these books. ... I have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greeks, and understand the elements of the Greek language'*.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the most modern scholarship makes clear that Josephus not only wrote in Greek, but followed a Greek methodology in his historical writing.<sup>44</sup> He wrote Jewish history, for Gentiles, *'in Greek and Roman idioms'*.<sup>45</sup>

The fact that some of the disciples were unlearned does not prove that they

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<sup>42</sup> R.O.P. Taylor, *The Ground-Work of the Gospels*, (1946), chapter 11.

<sup>43</sup> Flavius Josephus: *Antiq.* Book XIX, Chap IX. Some Christian Zionists have quoted the passage in which this appears but excised 5 lines to give a false impression. His preface and the translator's footnotes also show that he wrote in Greek.

<sup>44</sup> *'The Greek influence dominates the Jewish content to such an extent that even Gärtner, who is interested in showing the Jewish aspects of the works he covers, is forced to admit that Josephus "adheres wholly to the Greek tradition of historical writing".'* Conrad Gempf, *The Book of Acts in its ancient literary setting*, Ed. Winter/Clarke, Eerdmans, (1993), p288.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid* p291

could not read or write Greek. Even if it did, we know that they used secretaries to write their letters for a wide audience. Right from the beginning there were Gentiles from various nations attending the church. The original Gospel sermon of Peter had success amongst men of 15 nations who needed to hear and read Christian teaching. Not all the initial church workers were Jewish either (as some claim). Some apostles and evangelists were Greek. Titus was a Gentile, Apollos was Greek as were many of Paul's co-workers. Furthermore, despite the claims of many, not all the Bible was written by Jews. Luke and Acts were written by a Gentile; Job was a Gentile and the author was probably also. Several books have unknown authors (e.g. Ruth, Esther, Hebrews).

It is now claimed by scholars that the versions of the Gospels possessed by us were written within twenty years of the cross or less, not scores of years later as was previously supposed. [This is very soon in textual criticism terms.] Why would the earliest extant Gospel manuscripts be in Greek if they were written in Hebrew?

There are many other reasons that enable us to be confident that all the NT was written in Greek for a wide audience. These include: doctrinal nuances that depend on Greek words and grammar, not available in Aramaic, the writing of letters and Gospels from Gentile towns like Antioch and Ephesus, the physical evidence and even that Hebraisms appear to emanate from the LXX. There is not the space to pursue all these here. The key question is: if Hebrew documents were written and were necessary, God would have ensured that all the ages of the church possessed them.

### **The Hebrew names of God and Jesus**

Other matters are beginning to arise from this pre-occupation. Some have made a fuss over the name of God, insisting that we must call God by Hebrew names: God -*Yahweh*, and Jesus - *Y'shua*, *Yahshua* or *Jehoshua* (depending whom you are reading). We are told that the Greek *theos* is a pagan word and blasphemous to God. In fact, God used Hebrew terms to describe himself, in the Hebrew OT, which were already terms used for foreign deities (e.g: *El Elyon* was used by the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians). This rather destroys the argument about *theos* and shows the flexibility demonstrated by God on the matter. What is vital is to grow in our knowledge of God and not be distracted by externals. Various nationalities should use words that most closely relate to those in the Bible, whether by meaning or transliteration, they do not have to adopt Jewish idioms.

## **Appendix Four**

## Should we pray specifically for Jerusalem?

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.  
(Ps 122:6)*

This is the only time we are commanded to pray for Jerusalem where the actual word 'pray' is used, and it appears in a Psalm of Ascent sung when Jews went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for one of the three great annual feasts. Is this command applicable to us today?

The Psalm is focused upon the house of the Lord, the temple in Jerusalem as the object of pilgrimage, since the Psalm is bounded by a reference to it at the beginning and at the end. But where is God's temple now? The church is God's dwelling place, believers are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16). No longer do we go on pilgrimage to an earthly temple because God's kingdom is spiritual (Rm 14:17); the external manifestation of the kingdom (as in the OT) is now obsolete (Heb 8:13).

Like the other Songs of Ascent, this Psalm can be understood as a reference to our earthly pilgrimage journeying towards the culmination of salvation begun on earth. It is the realm of the church where spiritual life is conducted. Verse 5 talks about thrones being set there for judgment, thrones of the house of David. But we know that the judgment in the kingdom is given to those in Christ (1 Cor 6:2-3), the apostles specifically (Matt 19:28), and furthermore, the new Jerusalem has places of authority for both Jewish and Gentile believers. The 12 gates are named after the Jewish tribes but the 12 foundations are named after the apostles (Rev 21:12-14).

The entire context of this Psalm is that of the people of the Lord (Christians) on a pilgrimage (this earthly life) journeying towards heaven where their salvation is fully consummated. Earthly Jerusalem cannot be meant here for that realm has passed. In fact Paul states that earthly Jerusalem is in bondage and is not of the line of promise, the promise is spiritual and is now in Christ:

*For these [Isaac and Ishmael] are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar -- for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children -- but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Gal 4:24-26)*

Another relevant scripture regarding Jerusalem in prayer is:

*I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not*

*keep silent and give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa 62:6-7)*

This is the only other exhortation to pray for Jerusalem, even though the word 'pray' is not present. But what is this Jerusalem?

These verses form part of an oracle that begins in Isa 61:1, which is itself part of other words from God regarding the salvation (Isa 60:18) which has come to the Gentiles as well as Israel (Isa 60:3, 5, 9, 11; 61:9). Here, all the people are righteous and a glory to God (60:21). We can 'date' this because Jesus tells us that the oracles of Isa 60-62 (there were no chapter and verse headings when Jesus read this scroll) were fulfilled in his ministry (Lk 4:21). These verses apply to the Gospel age, they are the blessing in the church. It is the church that has heard the 'good news' (61:1) and has been set free. Those who mourned in Zion and who have been consoled (61:3) are the believers in this glad tidings. Peter tells us that it is Christians who are the priests of God (61:6 c.f. 1 Pt 2:9). It is believers who have garments of righteousness (61:10). Isaiah 62 runs straight on from all this, it is the church that God rejoices over (62:5). In this context, Isaiah tells these people, Christians, to pray that God will establish his kingdom, in the earth. In other words that the church which is now persecuted may come into the fulness of God's purposes in a new heaven and earth (2 Pt 3). The next few verses undergird this interpretation as they immediately declare the consummation of salvation when the Lord comes to reward his saints and execute vengeance on his enemies.

The Jerusalem here is the spiritual dwelling of God in his people, the church. It cannot be anything else. To state that this is physical Israel is to deny the truth of many NT doctrines (like the priesthood of all Christian believers) and to deny that the later chapters of Isaiah have any value for Christians. The early church realised this and the apostles gave no command to pray for physical Jerusalem. In fact, even in the Gospels the geographic focus of Messianic attention is directed away from Jerusalem as the 'holy city', towards Galilee. It is here that the risen Jesus appears, not Jerusalem which John especially portrays as the place of Jesus' rejection. Even Matthew, writing for Jews, focuses upon Jesus' lament for Jerusalem '*you who kill the prophets*' (Matt 23:37ff).

The NT concentration is upon the 'Jerusalem above' (Gal 4:26), 'the heavenly city' (Heb 12:22, 13:13-14), 'the new Jerusalem' (Rev 21:2). Earthly Jerusalem is 'in bondage' (Gal 4:25), is 'Sodom and Egypt' (Rev 11:8) and is the place of Jesus' rejection and crucifixion (Jn 1:10-11; Lk 19:41-44). The physical temple (the sacred part of the city) is only a shadow or illustration (Heb 8:5, 9:9) of the true temple in Christ (Jn 1:14, 2:21) now present in believers. The river of living water out of Ezekiel's temple is now a spiritual

outflow from Christ (Jn 7:37-39), a feature of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 22:1-2). Thus the end of the physical temple was predicted by Jesus (Lk 19:43). Even the narrative of early church development in Acts soon transfers from Jerusalem to the missionary journeys of Paul. In ways like these, the eventual destruction of the temple and the city proved to be of no great consequence to the apostles, other than finally marking the end of the old covenant system (Heb 8:13). No expectation of an end time physical temple or an end time focus upon earthly Jerusalem in prayer or prophecy is present in the NT at all. Jerusalem and the temple are spiritual matters now.

## Conclusion

So this means that there is no specific command for believers to pray for Jerusalem. But is it wrong to do so? Well it cannot be wrong to pray for God to have mercy on individuals, lands and governments. Praying for the conversion of people is not sinful. Praying for the conversion of Jews is perfectly acceptable. We should also remember that Paul says that the blindness currently on Israel is temporary and will one day be removed out of love which God has for the patriarchs. If God loves the fathers of these people, then it cannot be wrong to pray for their children, that they would know God as their fathers did. But this does not mean that God loves every Jew or no Jews would go to hell in their sins.

### *Support for Israeli politics*

At this point a further word is necessary. Folk who avidly pray for Israel think that they should treat the nation differently than other states because it is God's people. We have explained that Jews are not racially God's people, God's people are believers. Yet some Christian Zionists have openly stated that Christians should support the policies of Israel:

*'Christians should not only support the idea of a Jewish state, but ... support its policies ... Christians must give support in principle to the State of Israel'.<sup>46</sup>*

This is theology gone seriously awry. Israel is fleshly, and like all human governments has committed serious crimes, including terrorism. The treatment of Palestinians has frequently led to international criticism. Israel may not be as guilty as Arab nations and have many features of value, but it cannot be unquestionably supported by Christians because it is human. Its sins must be condemned as those of any other nation. Again we must not allow our focus to be taken off heavenly matters (Col 3:1-3) and falsely lowered to the flesh, even Jewish flesh.

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<sup>46</sup> Walter Riggans quoted in Colin Chapman, *Whose Promised Land*, Lion (1983) p278.

We need to be careful what we are praying for and must always be Biblical in our praying. It would be wrong to pray for a Jew as if he is loved by God simply because he is a Jew or as if the kingdom belongs to him. Also it would be wrong to justify Israeli politics or military actions on the basis that they are God's people. We pray for Jews just like we pray for other nationalities. Jews need to be saved just as much as anyone else. We should also remember that Israel is aggressively anti-Christian at the moment and grossly involved in sin. The abortion rate is extremely high, occult movements are rapidly increasing, racism is endemic, Jewish Christians are persecuted and so on.

So, praying for Jews is right and proper, but we should not forget other nationalities, particularly ones that are strongly represented in our neighbourhood, to whom we have a special responsibility under the Gospel (Lk 10:27-36). If our church has a prayer meeting every week for Israel but our locality has no Jews, but does have a densely populated Asian community, then we are sinning. Focusing solely upon Israel in regular prayer meetings has no command in scripture and does not warrant special blessing. Finally, we should never pray for unsaved people in terms that suggest they are already part of God's kingdom or family.

## **Appendix Five**

### **Jewishness in the Bible**

Racism is a sin. A racist attitude towards Jews is called anti-Semitism and it is evil. The intolerant attitude of some Christians towards Jews should be condemned and Jews should be evangelised just like anyone else. For Paul, they had priority in his mission activity, though he was less successful with Jews. This was because Paul was Jewish and it is reasonable for him to want to save his own nation; but it was also because of the respect he had for the fathers (patriarchs) of the Jewish nation who have become the pioneering fathers of Christianity. So we too must put our energy into showing love to Jews and sharing the Gospel with them whenever possible.

Despite what I've written earlier about Abraham as the spiritual father of all believers, we cannot say, as some have, that the Bible only treats Jews theologically, that the terms 'Israel', 'Israelite' and 'Jew' only ever refer to the elect. The OT term is used as a literal description of race in the NT, for someone descended from Judah, or someone of the Jewish faith (Acts 28:19; 1 Thess 2:14-16), even in key theological passages which discuss elect and unbelieving Jews (like Rm 11:1). Neither are Christians ever called Jews when they believe the Gospel. When compared to unbelieving Jews,



Christians are called the (true) circumcision or the spiritual sons of Abraham, but the Biblical title of the elect is focused upon Christ (Christian = one belonging to Christ, followers of Christ, disciples of Christ). This is one reason why the titles 'Messianic Jew', 'Fulfilled Jew' are abhorrent to NT faith as they focus upon an ethnic group instead of the Messiah. Sometimes the word 'Jew' has another meaning, like the locus of opposition to Jesus by the religious authorities throughout John's Gospel.

So understanding these titles in Biblical prophecy requires careful analysis of the text to arrive at the right interpretation. There is a theological understanding of Jewishness as well as an ethnic quality. Sometimes prophecy refers to the literal geography of Israel (Mic 5:2) sometimes to spiritual Israel (Ezek 43:7). The NT, however, shows us that God's promises are only to Israel viewed theologically, even in the OT covenant inheritance was by faith (Gen 15:6; Habb 2:4; Heb 4:2). Paul's statement that not all Israelites truly belong to Israel (Rm 9:6) is entirely in tune with the statements of the OT prophets (e.g. Isa 10:20-23, Amos c.9, Mic 7:18) as well as the words of Jesus (Matt 3:9).

But what is a Jew theologically? How does the Bible define a Jew in the light of the cross?

- The gift of being the people of God given to Jews was always conditional (Exod 19:5-6). Israel lost this favour through disobedience. Ethnic Jewishness is not an indicator of being part of God's people since God's kingdom is from every nation:

*They [Jews] stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you [Christians] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people. (1 Pt 2:8-9)*

*For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth. (Rev 5:9-10)*

- Circumcision and Jewishness no longer counts for anything in gaining the favour of God. The Old Covenant is obsolete and salvation is by faith not by race. The Abrahamic covenant was never conditioned upon law or race but upon the sort of faith which Abraham evidenced:

*For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (Rm 4:13)*

*It is men of faith who are sons of Abraham. (Gal 3:7)*

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. (Gal 6:15)*

- Abraham's Biblical significance is that he is the father of those who believe, not as the father of Israel:

*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of*

*the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also. (Rm 4:11).*

- The reason Jesus became a man, a Jew, was to enable all men, especially Gentiles, to have a relationship with God and confirm the promises made to the fathers. This was necessary (though ordained by God) because Israel failed to take the Gospel to the nations as commanded:

*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope." (Rm 15:8-12).*

- So, to emphasise the fact that only those who believe are true sons of Abraham, only those in Christ share the covenant inheritance, Paul defines a true Jew as one who has faith:

*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter. (Rm 2:28-29).*

*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. (Rm 9:6-8)*

*For we [Paul is addressing Gentiles] are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (Phil 3:3)*

- That the term 'Israel' refers to a heart condition, rather than race, is even hinted at in the Old Testament:

*Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. (Ps 73:1)*

In Ps 125:5 'Israel' is contrasted with the crooked and in Gen 32:28 it refers to a person who prevails with God.

So where does this leave us? Jewishness is an earthly description of an ethnic quality that pertains to descendants of Abraham through Isaac. Nothing changes this. A Jew is a Jew just as a Dane is a Dane; Paul could say, 'I am a Jew' (Acts 21:39). On a human level Jewishness is a cultural and

ethnic matter which should be respected. Converted Jews do not have to become English in culture. But as far as God is concerned, as far as the covenant is concerned, a Jew is a descendant of Abraham in a spiritual sense and includes all those who have faith from any nation. Christians, however, must not insult Jews, presuming that only believers can use the term as if ethnic characteristics have vanished, but neither must anyone presume that racial qualities carry any weight in gaining salvation. God's children are only those who have believed in Christ. In the church there is no racial favouritism and we are commanded not to make national distinctions:

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised 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.*

(Gal 3:26-29)

If there is neither Jew nor Gentile in the church, why are some making such a fuss about Jewish Roots and Jewishness? Is this not disobedience?

## Appendix Five

### **‘Replacement Theology’ and the Reformation**

Christian Zionists use the term ‘Replacement Theology’ to denigrate those who hold the historic Biblical position on Israel. Remember, no evangelical believed in a separation between Jew and Gentile in the covenant until the 19th century. The Christian form of Zionism stems wholly from Dispensationalism which arose about 1830. It has also become fashionable to condemn the Reformers, and Calvinism generally, as being anti-Semitic.

The traditional Christian position has always been that God's people are not those after the flesh but after the Spirit, thus ethnic Israel only comes into God's kingdom through the Gospel. But this does not mean that evangelicals were Jew haters. We should bear in mind that the original missions to Jews were established by people who held to Reformed theology. Much that has been recently printed about the anti-Semitism of the Reformers is just scare mongering and plain lies, though some serious errors were made.

Like us all, some of the Reformers made significant mistakes and occasionally wrote invectives which were unwise; but when the whole of their lives is evaluated, it is clear that they were far from being anti-Semites.

Neither were they cruel, harsh tyrants. The church has never known a period when such hard working, godly, inspirational geniuses served God and the church as during the Reformation. I challenge anyone to read accredited biographies of John Calvin, Martin Luther and others and feel any different.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the sort of Lutheran statements latched on by Christian Zionists find very close repetition in the Jewish Talmud which they support; for instance when rabbis incite Jews to burn Christian literature.<sup>48</sup> We cannot pursue this further here.

Reformed theology holds to the Biblical teaching on Israel and Judaism as expounded in this booklet. It is denigrated as 'Replacement Theology' by Dispensationalists because it demonstrates that their system is unbiblical and a divergence from historic faith. The original faith of the following church denominations was Reformed: Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and other independents. It is not possible to hold a Dispensational theological system and yet be Reformed without being inconsistent as the two systems are completely incompatible.

Reformed theology is not discriminatory, but inclusive. It teaches that:

- Christ has replaced Israel as the mediator of God's plan on earth. The spiritual, covenant benefits promised to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ, not in an earthly people.
- It does not emphasise that the church has replaced Israel but that Christ has inherited the promises originally given to Israel, and the church now benefits from this. The inheritance and covenant promises lost by Israel are shared with the church, which is those who believe in Christ; they are not given to Jews on the basis of race. Promises given to Israel in the OT are now available to the church because they belong to Christ.
- The church comprises of people from all nations, Jews and Gentiles.
- In some aspects the church could be said to replace Israel since the church is now the people of God not Israel. This is because the focus of God's purposes on earth is upon Christ not Israel, and the church is in Christ.

The important thing is - what does the Bible say? This booklet has endeavoured to show that the Reformed position is scriptural, whatever derogatory names it may be called by.

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<sup>47</sup> I have a small book awaiting printing on this subject which should be available later this year.

<sup>48</sup> Shabbath 116a. The unedited Talmud is full of inflammatory statements offensive to Christians (see Gittin, 57a; Sanhedrin, 90a; Rosh Hashanah 17a); quoted from *Diakrisis*, Issue 5 (1998).

## Appendix Six

### Should Christians celebrate Jewish Feasts?

We should firstly realise that the Abrahamic covenant did not have any regulations or ordinances, either civil or religious, for 600 years - apart from circumcision. The Jewish festivals are part of the Mosaic Law and were a vital part of the Old Covenant Jewish religious system, pointing towards the fulness that would come with Christ. All of them are connected to the temple and the Levitical priestly order; in fact many require sacrifices and cessation of work. But the law has now changed from a fleshly to a spiritual system (Heb 7:12). To celebrate the feasts is thus to go back to the flesh and completely misses the point of the New Covenant. Feasts cannot impart grace because they have been superseded by the Gospel, as a part of the law they can only minister death. The teaching in Colossians 2 makes this clear:

*Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. Col 2:16-17*

Paul has just explained that a believer has died and been raised with Christ and is now a new creature, a new order of man after the likeness of Jesus. As a result, the believer is no longer dominated by sin and no longer ruled by the written code of law but by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Col 2:14). Paul then puts his finger on the regular items in the Old Covenant which were likely to lead Jews astray i.e: food and drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths. The subtle argument was being put forward by some that Christians should follow these practices but raise them to a higher level of meaning (this is being repeated today). Paul calls this idea: *'philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe'* (v8). If one succumbs to this he has become a *'prey'* (v8) to those predators whose seek to destroy the true testimony of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the reality to which these items pointed. The very regularity of them was to serve as a continual reminder to the Jewish tribes of what was to come. Now the reality has arrived, the pointing shadows should be dropped and the fulness in Christ apprehended. To hold on to the shadows is to miss the reality of Christ's inheritance for the believer.

There is a struggle to do this because it is the ground of a spiritual battle (v15). Satan gives power and encouragement to those who submit to these things in order to prevent them from experiencing the truth in Jesus which

would make them a powerful threat to his false kingdom. Notice Paul's strong language in the verses which follow, Paul saw this as a serious matter. To submit to these shadows was to be *'disqualified', 'puffed up', 'not holding fast to the head'*.

The fulness is in Christ (v9), we have come to fulness of life in Him (10). How can we ignore the feast which God gives us in Christ and be satisfied with stale crumbs? Circumcision in human terms has gone. Circumcision without hands is available (v11) i.e. dying with Christ. The legal code of the law of Moses has gone (v14, 20). The inner response to God's perfect will has replaced it (Col 3:15-16). Rules about food and drink, new moons, feasts and Sabbaths has gone. The reality of what these things pointed to in Christ has arrived. Human precepts, rigorous devotion, self abasement and severity to the body has an appearance of wisdom (v22-23) but Christians have access to the things which are above where Christ is (Col 3:1).

Paul also argues against keeping Jewish feasts and rituals in Galatians. Again his emphasis is to leave the Old Covenant forms and discover the fulness of life in Christ which is what these forms were pointing to. He warns us that to celebrate Jewish feasts is to fall into bondage (Gal 4:9-11; 5:1 see section on Judaism). Indeed, if one focuses upon the Jewish law to the point of keeping its ordinances, one is severed from Christ (Gal 5:4). This is why God decreed the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, to ensure the termination of Old Covenant Judaism which cannot take place without the temple. Feasts are part of the law and Paul argues that the law was temporary, existing only: *'until the seed [Christ] should come'* (Gal 3:19). The moral precepts of the law were subsumed into the 'law of Christ' and raised to a higher level (e.g. hate is as wrong as murder); but the system of the law with its feasts and rituals were cancelled, as Hebrews also makes clear. Feasts have, therefore, ceased. If practising them is slavery, Christians should not celebrate them. The promise to Abraham has continued, is realised in Christ and is continued in us by faith (Gal 3:23-26); but the law as an objective requirement of righteousness has ceased with every ritual contained in it (Gal 3:25). Christ is God's standard of righteousness now.

We should only celebrate the institutions established by Christ and practised by the apostles - these are the Lords' Supper and baptism, anything else is sacramentalism akin to Roman Catholic ritualism.

## Appendix Seven

### **Are the prohibitions of Acts 15 still relevant?**

It is becoming popular today, as part of a growing desire to get back to 'Jewish roots of the faith', to endorse the four sanctions of Acts 15:20, 29.<sup>49</sup> These are to abstain from:

- food sacrificed to idols
- from blood (i.e. food with blood in it)
- from what is strangled (i.e. food with blood in it)
- from unchastity

Now it is clear that these mainly pertain to food. The need to abstain from fornication is reiterated throughout the New Testament and need not concern us further here. The problem is that the food laws are not repeated in the doctrine of the letters.

We are told that these are important aspects of the law<sup>50</sup> which were well within the ability of Gentiles to perform. No sound reason is offered why much weightier moral aspects of the law were not prescribed (e.g. the 10 commandments). The normal Evangelical interpretation of this passage is to see it as meeting the need for facilitating fellowship between converted Jews and Greeks, particularly in Israel, in what was clearly a time of transition. The key issue for understanding this text is to see what the rest of the New Testament says about the specific sanctions. If we can see that any one of them is overturned then it is clear that they were temporary rules for a specific situation which has now passed.

### **1 Cor 8:1-13, 10:19-33**

*Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do. v8*

Paul not only explains that a mature Christian is at liberty to eat food offered to idols, he uses the example of a man of knowledge actually eating in an idol's temple.

Nothing can be clearer than the following:

*Eat whatever is sold in the meat market* (this includes meat offered to idols sold in the market cheaply). v25

*Eat whatever is set before you* (at dinner with an unbeliever). v27

Only for the sake of a weaker man's conscience (if present) should it be refused.

### **Rm 14:3**

<sup>49</sup> For example Clifford Denton in *Tishrei Supplement* No. 3 Dec 1992.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid p2, Denton proposes that Gentiles would hear the law preached in synagogues and thus would not need to have this reiterated here. I find this completely unconvincing. Just when does he think Gentiles went to synagogues and why would a Christian go to a Judaistic meeting which is a different religion?

*Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats. v3*

In verse 1-2 Paul makes it clear that mature faith allows one to eat anything without guilt. Read whole chapter, note especially v17: *The kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* The question of food consumed should not be made a kingdom issue at all.

The point is that eating meat offered to idols is now allowed. Since this overturns one of the four Acts 15 sanctions, it becomes clear that they were only temporary in a changing period.

### **1 Tim 4:1-5**

*In later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits ... who forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving ... everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.*

All food given by God is fit for eating. There is no mention here of meat needing to be bloodless. In fact Paul uses inclusive terms like 'everything' and 'nothing is to be rejected'.

### **Col 2:16-17, 20-23**

*Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food ... Why do you submit to regulations, 'do not handle', 'do not taste' etc.*

Paul clearly spells out that there are no restrictions upon food. To insist that there are is to impose law again upon free Christians. The food laws were part of a system which was a shadow of the reality in Christ (v17); they no longer have authority.

All this shows that it is wrong to suggest that Christians should allow themselves to be fooled into placing restrictions upon eating. In fact Paul implies quite strongly that this is part of a demonic deception at the end.

Much emphasis is placed by those who want to implement Acts 15 about the life being in the blood and that we should not eat it in any form. But what about blood transfusions? Are they going to follow the logical course of their argument and refuse transfusions as part of medical treatment? This will place them firmly in the camp of cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses who practice this. No, there are no restrictions upon Christians regarding blood or food!

## **Appendix Eight**



## Practical church matters

**Calling church leaders 'rabbi'** is specifically forbidden (Matt 23:8). We cannot avoid the issue by saying that 'rabbi' simply means teacher. A rabbi was much more than we understand by 'teacher'. He had an ardent group of disciples who imitated his words and actions. He had power and respect in the community and much of Judaism was eventually re-defined by rabbis, such was their authority. Jesus is telling us not to set authoritarian figures like this up in the church.

**Assemblies should not be called synagogues but 'church'**.<sup>51</sup> NB James' use of *synagogue* is not formal or he would have used it in his introduction. It simply means congregation or assembly. It is the only time it is used in the NT for a Christian gathering and cannot change the force of the multitude of references to *ekklesia* begun by Jesus himself: Matt 18:17.<sup>52</sup> The early Christian gatherings were comprised mainly of converted Jews and these assemblies were always called '*ekklesia*' in Acts. Neither were these Jews called 'Messianic Jews' but rather: 'Christians', 'disciples' or 'followers of the way'. Gatherings of people who say they are Jews, but are not, are called by John: '*synagogues of Satan*' (Rev 2:9).

**Meetings should not take place on Saturday** which is part of the old, fleshly dispensation, but should meet on Sunday thus honouring Jesus' resurrection not the Old Covenant. This is the Biblical precedent (Acts 20:7). The concept of the change in the Sabbath to the first day of the week to celebrate the day of resurrection was initiated in the time of the apostles and confirmed by historical practice. If this was wrong, as some Messianic teachers have said, why did not God do something about this in history. He is absolutely sovereign. Many times in history God has intervened in revival or reformation to correct church doctrine or practice, yet the concept of Sunday meetings has met with universal testimony, except for cults like 7th day Adventism.

**The cross** is often not used as the term for atonement by many Messianic leaders. Instead 'tree of sacrifice' is substituted. The cross is crucial to our faith. It was the centre of Paul's ministry (1 Cor 1:17-18) and his only boast (Gal 6:14-15) because of its fundamental importance. We cannot ignore it.

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<sup>51</sup> *ekklesia*, 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; Gal 1:2 etc

<sup>52</sup> Note the use of the word *synagogue* in the Septuagint (LXX): '*The word synagogue is not in itself a word of religious significance and can be used of any kind of gathering eg Ps 22:16 (LXX 21:17) - "assembly of evil-doers"; Ps 68:30 (LXX 67:31), "multitude of the bulls"*'. Alan Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the NT*, SCM (1977), p 285.

**Messianic Jew** is not a suitable title for Christians. First, it is not scriptural and there are better titles given us in the Bible; but secondly, Orthodox Jews also consider themselves to be Messianic Jews, despite opposing Jesus.

**The kippa (cap) and the talith (shawl)** are not found in the Bible anywhere and it is questionable when they were originated by the rabbis. Christians should certainly not use them for religious significance. These are religious cultural items of a false religion that have no place in Christianity.

**Using the term 'Torah'** is confusing and potentially dangerous. 'Torah' originally meant, 'instruction', 'doctrine', 'direction' or even 'custom' but it now has various meanings to different people:

- the Mosaic law found within the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).
- The whole Pentateuch.
- Priestly regulations.
- The Old Testament ('Torah' is sometimes used this way by the rabbis).
- The Pentateuch plus the oral law of the rabbis, plus the rabbinic commentaries on the law. This is what the rabbis usually mean by the term 'Torah'.

Using the term will thus cause confusion. Why should it be used in an English culture at all? One of the growing dangers of the Jewish Root movement is the use of rabbinic writings to justify a teaching point. This is dangerous. Using the term 'Torah' leans towards and adds weight to this error.

## **Appendix Nine**

### **An example of the dangers of current Jewish Midrashic interpretation**

The Bible must be allowed to interpret itself under the education of the Holy Spirit; we do not need mystical, fleshly methods (especially techniques established by rabbis who opposed Christianity) in order to learn truth.

A popular Jewish Root teacher, using Midrashic ideas, says that Leah is a type of the Gentile church and Rachel is a type of Israel.<sup>53</sup> Just as Jacob had to learn to love Leah before he could get his first love Rachel, so '*Jesus, desiring Israel ... has to take the Gentile church first. Only after he loves the Gentile church as much as he loves Israel (does he get) Israel.*' Elsewhere,

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<sup>53</sup> Jacob Prasch, *Daughters of Zion*, taped message. Moriel Tapes.

wild and extravagant statements are made with no exegetical proof offered like: every time two women are mentioned in the Bible, they always refer to the church and Israel. To some all this sounds novel and attractive, but surely this is just arbitrary interpretation; anyone can make a scripture mean anything they like by this method. This is called 'eisegesis', reading things into the Bible that are not there. In this case, it clearly contradicts other clear scriptures.

The Bible's message is more comforting, that is - God has loved the whole church (Jewish and Gentile) from eternity. Jesus covenanted with the Father before time to die for each of us personally (Eph 1:4-5). John wrote more about love than anyone else in the NT and explained that God's love was to believers from before time, this included Jews, and remember he was a Jew himself. The idea also downgrades the doctrine of Christ. As God, Christ does all things well, he loves from eternity to eternity, he love never changes because his attributes are immutable. He does not grow to love the Gentile church as much as he loves Israel, he has always loved all the elect fully and perfectly from eternity (Eccles 3:14).

Regarding the women, we have a case of two women in Revelation:

- Rev 17:3-18 woman = Babylon (Rev 17:5).
- Rev 12:1-17 woman = the church (or some would say, Israel in the OT).

Again the Midrashic interpretation conflicts with the clear statements of scripture. Are we to believe that in Jn 11 Mary and Martha represent Israel and the church? I suppose that Lk 10 would imply that Martha represents Israel as she is bound up with works. Yet there have been many legalists in the church and many faithful Jews (like Abraham) in Israel. Such distinctions are arbitrary and pointless.

Unfortunately, the unwary can be easily taken in by this sort of mystique propounding to see truth that ordinary folks miss.

## Appendix Ten

### **Are OT prophecies about Israel to be fulfilled in the current or future Jewish state?**

We explained earlier about the importance of careful, Biblical interpretation of OT scripture, particularly prophecies, and that the literal method is fraught with danger. That God still has purposes for Israel as a nation can hardly be denied considering world politics; but this does not mean that this is an outworking of Ezek 37 and other passages which can better be explained; in

fact the complex nature of some prophecies demands very careful interpretation instead of blatant literalism. Frequently Dispensationalists endorse absurd or heretical notions because the literal fulfilment of one verse means the literal fulfilment of the next. For instance:

- **Zech 12-14** is applied to a future Jewish state. But:
  - \* this is in contradiction to Jn 19:37 which quotes Zech 12:10 as being fulfilled at the cross.
  - \* Rev 1:7 repeats this in connection with the second coming of Christ. The mourning results from people having rejected the cross. There is no repentance subsequent to this mourning as the second coming issues in the day of judgment.
  - \* Matt 26:31 quotes Zech 13:7 as being fulfilled at the cross.
  - \* Zech 14:16 refers to feasts which are stated in the NT to have ceased (Col 2:16-17).
  - \* Zech 14:15 shows that nations attack Jerusalem on horses, mules, camels and asses. Consistent literalism means that this cannot be figurative and is thus absurd.
- **Ezek 37-48** contains several passages which are attributed to a future Jewish kingdom or prophesying current Israel, but:
  - \* Ezek 38-39 has armies attacking Israel with swords, spears and wooden weapons. Consistent literalism is thus ridiculous.
  - \* Ezek 45:15, 17, 20 refers to a literal atonement being made in a millennial temple. This is not a memorial but '*kaphar*', sin offerings to make atonement. This is nothing short of blasphemy against Christ's sin offering on the cross and a denial of Heb 10:10-18.
  - \* Ezek 44:14, 48:11 (and Zech 12:11-14) supposedly refers to a millennial kingdom which contains ancient enemies of Israel that are long dead tribes and nations which have vanished completely.
  - \* In Ezek 37 the prophecy of the sticks regarding the joining of Israel and Judah and returning to the land is in the direct context of v24 which is clearly fulfilled in Christ who even uses similar words in Jn 10:16.
  - \* References to the temple or sanctuary have now been fulfilled in the church (1 Cor 3:17). God has no other temple and a physical sanctuary would be an abomination against the work of the cross.
- **Ps 132:13-16** Dispensationalists state that this refers to physical Jerusalem by taking the passage literally; but if this is true note what follows.
  - \* *For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place: "This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor*

*with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation.*

- \* God is going to dwell in a physical place and rest there forever! Yet the NT states that: God is working (Jn 5:17), that he dwells in his people (1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16), that the church is his temple (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21) and that he does not dwell in a place made with hands (Heb 8:1-2, 9:11, 24).
- \* This city has, at least some, hungry poor citizens; but God's dwelling place is full of unsearchable riches for all the citizens (Eph 1:4, 3:8).
- \* This place has a line of priests known to the psalmist as of the tribe of Levi. But the NT states that God's people are all his priests who are not of Levi but in Christ after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6, 10, 6:20, 7:11). Moreover, these NT priests have a heavenly not an earthly ministry and function in a spiritual sanctuary, the earthly sanctuary is finished (Heb 12:22, 8:4-5).
- \* Thus taking the passage literally leads one to totally contradict NT doctrines and treat God irreverently.

Much more could be added but this is sufficient to show that isolated verses cannot be taken out of context to support national Israel as the fulfilment of such prophecies. It leads to serious doctrinal problems of the most irreverent nature. Apart from this consideration, Dispensationalists have to alter the prophecies to make them fit into a future millennium: an everlasting kingdom is reduced to 1000 years, a Levitical system is restored in the millennium but the prophecy in Jer 33 stated that it would continue uninterrupted, and so on.

Examples often proffered of 'proof arguments' that OT prophecies apply to modern Israel and not the return of the exiles from Babylon are as follows:

- *The prophecies occur in the latter days.* But this phrase is used in the OT for events fulfilled in the OT (Num 24:14-19; Gen 49:1, 7, 13; Deut 4:30, 31:29) and is not restricted to the NT or the end of history.
- *Restoration includes the ten tribes.* But these are mentioned as returning after Babylon (Ezra 2:28,70; 1 Chron 9:2-3). The NT mentions the '12' tribes (Jm 1:1; Acts 26:7) and a woman from Asher (Lk 2:36). Though the pure tribal identity may not have been clear by then as a distinct clan, what is clear is that sufficient representatives of the ten tribes returned from deportation so that Ezra sacrificed 12 he goats for the full tribes of Israel.
- *The future return is final with no more deportations and a complete rebuilding of Jerusalem occurs which will remain (Jer 31:40).* But Jeremiah had already written that prophecy is not irrevocable but conditional (Jer 18:9-10). Jonah's prophecy to Nineveh is a classic case. In Jer 19:11 he had also stated that Jerusalem and the Jews would be broken and not

made whole again! On what grounds can Zionists say that Jer 31:40 is unconditional but Jer 19:11 is not?

- *The Jewish state is a partial fulfilment of Jer 29:14, the remainder will soon occur.* But Jer 29:10 speaks of a return after 70 years, understood by Daniel (Dan 9:2) as the return from Babylon. This also applies to Deut 30:1-10; 1 Kg 8:46-52; Ezek 36:17-19, 26-28; Hos 11:10-11.
- *The return is from many nations not just Babylon (Jer 29:14; Isa 11:11-12).* The Babylonian exile spread Jews throughout the empire and sold many as slaves into many lands. The OT speaks of this dispersion: Ezek 27:13; Joel 3:7; Amos 1:6,9. See next point.
- *There are promises of two returns, one from Babylonia/Assyria and a modern one (Isa 11:11-12).* But Isaiah clearly means a first from Egypt under Moses and a second from Assyria (Isa 11:16, 52:4). The exiles then waged war (Isa 11:14) against Philistines, Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites which occurred under the Maccabees, not in modern Palestine, these nations no longer exist (1 Macc 3:41, 5:1-8, 63-68, 10:83-89, 11:60-63).
- *Zech 8:1-8 prophesies a return after the Babylonian exiles were restored.* True, but he is referring to the subsequent return in the days of Ezra and later (Ezra 7:1-10; Neh 11:1-2; 1 Macc 14:8-12).
- *The current return is in unbelief corresponding with Ezek 36:24-26.* But it does not say this here. Even if it did, we have explained that this is not referring to 1948. There is no specified time gap between the return and the giving of a new heart. If anything, v33 implies spiritual cleansing before the development of waste places. Hos 11:10-11 and other passages (e.g. 1 Kg 8:47-50; Deut 30:2-3) indicate that repentance always precedes restoration.
- *The OT promises a physical restoration to the land from all nations which we see in evidence in modern Israel (Isa 35:1; 61:4).* These refer to the return from Babylon, we have already shown that modern Israel is not in view. Jeremiah specifically states that the returns from Babylon will be from all nations (Jer 29:10-14) just as Ezekiel said that they were dispersed into all nations (Ezek 36:16-21). History confirms this (1 Macc. and Josephus). Isaiah continually mentions Assyria, Babylon, Chaldea, Philistia etc. yet the modern return was mainly from Germany and Europe. Even here Zionists also twist material facts as well as prophecies to make their case. Repeatedly they insist that the return of Jews from 'the north' refers to Germany which is north of Israel. Just look at any map and see if this is true. Germany cannot be considered as north of Jerusalem under any circumstances. However, Assyria and the Babylonian empire (e.g., Syria, Lebanon, Turkey) was north of Israel. The interpreters that claim to take a literal view are forced to ignore the literal geography.

All such arguments as these have been countered by Bible scholars. The facts of the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel is in God's hands but we cannot force the OT prophecies to fit in with modern political realities. Such loose interpretation must be resisted; if we accept this sort of exposition, we will accept anything. As an example of such arbitrary interpretation, take the popular book by Derek Prince, *The Last Word on the Middle East*.<sup>54</sup> Commenting on the Isaiah prophecies just mentioned, he defends his view that the establishment of Israel in 1948 is the fulfilment of them.

- He is forced to surmise that God's foiling of false prophets and diviners is a future overthrow of Islam (Isa 44:24-26) which has no basis in the context and is long distant in time from 1948 (p77-80).
- From Isa 43:3-4 he arbitrarily selects 'East' to refer to Asia, 'West' to America, both long distances away from Israel. Then the South is said to be Yemen, a near neighbour. Why? Italy is West of Israel, why is that not involved but America is? Why is only the South of close proximity but West is thousands of miles away. Arbitrary choices like these are continually made to make modern facts fit in with old prophecies already fulfilled in the past (p74-75).
- He states that God '*bestows his grace upon whole nations*' (p74). But God's grace flows only from the cross and is specifically said, in the NT, not to be racial or based on any earthly characteristics.
- From Isa 11:14 he applies part of the verse to Israeli occupation of Palestine to the West towards Gaza but then has to posit a future occupation of large tracts of the East in Jordanian territory. Apart from the fact that this has not happened and is unlikely to happen, it should have happened in the same time frame as the rest of the prediction (p68-69).
- All Isaiah's predictions are contained within the Messianic references ('*Root of Jesse*' v10) but the focus here is placed on Israel instead of Christ. This is not surprising since Prince has earlier stated that, '*the Bible is essentially a record of Israel, written by Israelites*' (p22). This is a travesty, the Bible is God's record of his Divine purpose accomplished through his Son, Jesus Christ.
- Jer 16:14-16 is quoted as being '*obvious*' that the return from Babylon is not indicated, rather the 1948 return is in view. This is appalling. Any sober reading of Jer 16 has to admit that the immediate context is about judgment of exile in Babylon, as are many Jeremiah oracles. From verse 1-13 this judgment is pictured. Verse 13 specifically states that the people are taken from Judaea into an unknown land and then will be returned to Judaea. This is not what happened in 1948 when the Jews returned to Israel from a widespread dispersion throughout many nations for nearly

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<sup>54</sup> Kingsway Pub. Ltd. Eastbourne UK, (1983). Another example would be *Prophecy Today* magazine, e.g. 'The Christian View of Israel', Vol. 13, No. 1.

two thousand years. Further, verse 18 indicates that the exile was due to the pollution of Judaea with the carcasses of idol worship. Again this fits a return from Babylon but not a global return centuries later. Prince takes an arbitrary view of the text that is forced and unnatural and his only defence is that it is 'obvious'! He then attempts to strengthen his view by fantasising that in verse 16 the fishermen are Zionists and the hunters were Nazis. He even declares that God is ruthless (p84). What can we say to such appalling interpretation?

Many more examples could be given, but we will waste no more time on this. Such arbitrary, and sometimes shocking, interpretations contradict NT statements and even common sense, yet many people throughout the world have completely accepted them without question.

We should also mention a further view that the 'unfulfilled' prophecies regarding Israel were fulfilled in Christ rather than the post Babylonian exilic return. In Lk 24:46 Jesus refers to his resurrection as the fulfilment of (probably) Hos 6:2 which speaks of Israel's restoration. Thus some see the restoration prophecies as references to the resurrection. Thus Matt 8:10-12, where people come from the East and West, evokes Isa 43:5-7 and Ps 107:2-3. Certainly, there is no doubt that James uses the great passage about Israel's restoration in Amos 9:11-12 as fulfilled in Christ (Acts 15:13-21). This implies that the acceptance of the Gospel by the Gentiles from all corners of the earth is the expected fulfilment of the promised restoration of Israel. There is no Zionism in Acts!

Christ has inaugurated a new covenant, a new kingdom, a new nation, a new commandment, a new man, a new name, a new song, a new Jerusalem, a new heaven and earth, a new access and a new people because all things are new (Rev 21:1, 2, 5). Old racial delineations of the promise have been cancelled (Eph 2:14-15). If the NT demonstrates that the inheritors of the promises are now those in Christ (Eph 3:6; 2 Cor 1:20; Rev 21:7), then the OT prophecies and promises must be interpreted in line with the NT revelation and not upon the limited OT understanding.

The prophecies are to the seed of Abraham, not ethnic Jews; even in Genesis certain ethnic Jewish tribes were excluded. The NT explains that the seed of Abraham is now the church (Gal 3:8-9; Rm 9:6-8). The prophecies must, therefore relate to the church not Israel. This is clearly maintained by the apostles:

*Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you. (1 Pt 1:10)*

*And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed. (2 Pt 1:19).*



As regards ethnic, national characteristics, the Jews are said to be under the wrath of God:

*For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost. (1 Thess 2:14-16, AV)*

Can the unfulfilled OT prophecies still be applicable to a people on whom wrath has come to the uttermost when the seed of Abraham is clearly stated to be another group? The covenant prophecies must follow the Biblical line of covenant promise which is to those who have faith and to the spiritual Jerusalem above (the church):

*Abraham had two sons ... he [Ishmael] who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman [Isaac] through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar ... and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children -- but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all ... Now we, brethren, [written by a Jew to Celtic Gentiles] as Isaac was, are children of promise. (Gal 4:22-29)*

One final point worth consideration. If all the prophecies used by Christian Zionists are really for Israel, the church loses much of the OT. Most of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zechariah, Joel; much of Daniel, Ezekiel and the Psalms; and some of Zephaniah, Haggai, Genesis, Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Hosea becomes of no instructive use for Christians since it would apply only to Jews.

## Appendix Eleven

### **Are people and nations cursed if they oppose Israel? Should we repent if our nation has?**

Christian Zionists repeatedly claim that the blessings and curses connected with OT Israel are still applicable today and regale us with examples of organisations or nations (like England or Spain) who came unstuck because they disdained or oppressed Israel. Some people have been brought into real fear about this as a result, constantly worrying if they may have, inadvertently, exercised a bad attitude towards Israel. Passages like: Gen

12:3; Joel 3:1-2, 12-14; Isa 60:4ff; Zech 12:2-3; are used to bolster this idea. It is the Zionist version of, *'touch not mine anointed'*, which authoritarian groups wrongly use to forbid questioning of their leaders.

Expectations of cursing frequently fall flat, as when Christian Zionists predicted that Margaret Thatcher would not be elected to a second term because she failed to support Israel sufficiently. Other times history is twisted to support the point. For example, Spain's expulsion of the Jews in 1492 is stated to be the beginning of her downfall, especially in finance.<sup>55</sup> Yet Spain became a major world power after this, especially with the New World treasure flowing into her coffers after the discovery of America in 1492. Later, Spain was able to mount the largest armada ever seen against Elizabethan Britain and produce Holy Roman Emperors who controlled much of Europe like Charles V. Germany is said to be visibly under judgment as a result of the Holocaust but is today the strongest economic power in Europe boasting one of the most modern civil infrastructures. In fact it is difficult to make generalisations based on history. The fortunes of nations rise and fall quite rapidly, often portions of society being blessed while other features suffer. One could make a similar case for the judgment of nations based on their treatment of Christians. Rather than second guessing God, we should leave this matter in his hands until the day of judgment makes all clear.

Derek Prince furnishes an example of this theology: *'God will judge the nations on the basis of their attitude towards the regathering of Israel and the restoration of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem'*.<sup>56</sup> Scripture, however, is very clear that the judgment of all men (the 'nations' are not judged corporately but as individuals) is based upon the standard of the righteous life of Christ who is the living representation of God's law. We are evaluated on the basis of Christ's righteousness not our attitude to an earthly city (Rm 2:16; Jn 12:47-8). OT statements, especially if they appear in figurative prophetic language, cannot overturn the clear doctrinal statements of the NT. This is a frequent failing of Zionists and Dispensationalists.

Using the phrase, *'the brothers of Jesus'* to mean Jews in Matt 25:31-46 does not help their case since Jesus has told us openly that: *whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.* (Matt 12:50; Mk 3:31-35). The family of Jesus is only those who have been justified and adopted as a new creation in Christ because: *'from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in*

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<sup>55</sup> Murray Dixon, *The Rebirth and Restoration of Israel*, Sovereign World, (1983), p89.

<sup>56</sup> Derek Prince, *The Last Word on the Middle East*, p154.

*Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new'* (2 Cor 5:16-17). Jesus is not a Jew any longer, he is not earthly but the firstborn of a new creation. We must not know him after the flesh, when he was a Jew, but after his resurrected life as a heavenly man. Jesus' brothers are believers not Jews. Judgment of men will be affected by their behaviour towards the family of Jesus, Christians, not Jews.

Is there a NT text which suggests a similar threat? Indeed there is:

*If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.* (1 Cor 3:17)

This was written to believers from a Gentile (Greek) background and demonstrates clearly that it is the church which God is jealous over; it is the church which is the fulfilment of the protected status of Jerusalem and Israel.

### **What about repentance?**

Again Derek Prince writes: *'We cannot claim to be part of the church and at the same time disclaim responsibility for the way it has treated the Jews ... We must accept our share of responsibility for Christian anti-Semitism'*.<sup>57</sup> He even suggests that the church cannot know God's full blessing until it has dealt with this guilt. In making this case he, like others, seeks to minimise the guilt of the Jews in the crucifixion.

Without spending too long on this, it is not possible to repent for someone else's sins. Historic cases of anti-Semitism, whether in the church or the nation, are evil and are to be regretted, but we cannot repent of that. Repentance means to change one's mind and disposition about a matter. If you are not an anti-Semite, you cannot repent of it. Such calls for national and church repentance are wrong.

On the question of the guilt of the Jews there is no doubt in scripture. The idea that it was all the Gentile Roman's fault is a fallacy. The prime guilt rests with the Jewish religious leaders, even above Pilate's responsibility (Jn 19:11) and amongst these, Annas and Caiaphas are the most guilty (Matt 27:20). It was the chief priests and the Pharisees who plotted Jesus' death (Jn 11:53, 19:6; Matt 23, 27:20-23). However, guilt also rests upon the Jewish people as a whole. Although Jesus prayed for forgiveness, this was to those who actually nailed him to the cross, Paul speaking years later said that wrath had come upon the Jews for killing Jesus (1 Thess 2:16). The Jewish people did not gain forgiveness but judgment.

*And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children"* (Matt 27:25).

*Jesus, whom you crucified* (Acts 2:36).

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<sup>57</sup> Prince, op. cit. p130-131.

*You denied the Holy One ... and killed the Prince of Life (Acts 3:14-15).  
Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified (Acts 4:10).  
 For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both  
 Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel,  
 were gathered together (Acts 4:27).  
 the Judeans [Jews] ... who killed ... the Lord Jesus (1 Thess 2:14-15).*

As a result of the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, terrible judgment was inevitable and predestined. Jesus warned his hearers that Jerusalem would be burned (Matt 22:2-7), its walls razed (Lk 19:42-44), its temple destroyed (Matt 24:1-2) and the kingdom removed (Matt 21:43). Notice that most of these quotes are from Matthew who was specifically writing to Jews.

History is history and cannot be changed. Scripture declares that the Jews killed their own Messiah and suffered awful judgment for it. But this should not lead to complacency on our part, still less anti-Semitism, since in a sense it was our fault too. Our sins led to the death of the Lord. Denying Jewish guilt will not help the Jews, rather we should seek to explain that with Christ is forgiveness from all sin for those who believe in him, even this great sin. The apostles never denied the guilt of the Jews in the crucifixion, but they did preach the Gospel to them.

### A final overview

## The flow of God's purpose with Israel



Vision of a glorified city (kingdom) and temple



**Christ is the convergence of all these ideals in his life,  
death, resurrection, ascension and glorification**



Christ shares the inheritance with his people who are united *in Him*



The kingdom is the universal reign of Christ  
 The people of God are from all nations  
 The people are a holy nation of royal priests  
 The inheritance/land is the whole earth  
 The city is the whole renewed earth  
 Jerusalem is the bride of Christ  
 The temple is communal (God dwells with men)  
 The holiness of the temple spills out  
 God is glorified in Christ by his people

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