

“The late Derek Prince, my grandfather, used to say that Israel was extremely important to God. It is like the first button while buttoning up your shirt. If you get the first button in the wrong hole, then all of the other buttons will end up in the wrong holes. If you don’t love Jerusalem, the rest of your theology will be out of whack because Jesus ruling from Jerusalem is central to God’s master plan.” Peter Wyns

### Israel is God’s First Button

Replacement theology is the theological oxygen that lets anti-Jewish ideologies breathe.

Radical left: oppressor/oppressed lens → double standards for Israel.

Radical right: recycled antisemitic cliché, Holocaust denial, blanket Jew-blaming.

Being right about a few things doesn’t make you righteous. Demons correctly named Jesus (Mark 1:24), and a slave girl with a fortune-telling spirit told the truth about Paul (Acts 16:16–18). Even a broken clock is right twice a day.

- Christian Zionism: not a political cult but a biblical conviction that the God who keeps His promises to the Church also keeps His promises to Israel (Jer 31:35–37; Rom 11:28–29).
- Christians can love Israel theologically without rubber-stamping every policy. We support what aligns with righteousness and resist what does not.
- Loving Israel does not mean hating Palestinians. Our calling is justice, mercy, and truth for all, while refusing the old lie that God is done with the Jewish people.
- Replacement theology has long been the oxygen that lets anti-Jewish ideologies breathe. We renounce it. We also resist the opposite error—turning Israel into an idol.
- Scripture holds both truths together: Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the nations, and God’s covenants with Israel still stand. Gentiles are grafted in to Israel’s olive tree; we are not the new trunk (Rom 11:17–24). So we don’t boast against the branches God planted.
- The Church is not a replacement; we are co-witnesses. Let’s share the stage with humility, preach Christ with confidence, bless the Jewish people, seek the good of our neighbors, and wait in hope for the day when Israel and the nations together reveal God’s final redemption.

### How Replacement Theology Took Root

1. As Gentiles entered the Church, Jewish influence declined.
2. Many Christians viewed Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70 and 135) as divine judgment, confirming that God had rejected Israel.
3. Influenced by Greek philosophy, early theologians like Origen allegorized Scripture, transferring Israel’s promises to the Church.

### The Growth of Supersessionism in Church History

- **Justin Martyr (2nd Century):** Taught that the Church was the true heir of God’s covenant.
- **Origen and Tertullian:** Saw Israel’s rejection as God’s judgment and the Church’s rise as fulfillment.
- **Augustine:** Claimed Jews existed only to prove Christianity true.
- **Reformers:** Luther and Calvin kept this idea, though some Puritans hoped for future Jewish salvation.
- **Modern Era:** After the Holocaust and Israel’s rebirth in 1948, many Christians reexamined this doctrine. Dispensationalism restored belief in Israel’s enduring role.





Despite the replacement theology of the Church Fathers, many of them did believe in the future conversion of Israel to faith.

### What Is Replacement Theology?

Also called *Supersessionism* or *Fulfillment Theology*, it teaches that:

- God's covenant with Israel ended with Christ's coming.
- The Church is now the "new Israel," inheriting Israel's covenants and promises.

### Three Forms of Supersessionism:

1. **Punitive Supersessionism:** God punished Israel for rejecting Christ.
2. **Economic Supersessionism:** Israel's role naturally expired with Christ's coming.
3. **Structural Supersessionism:** Israel serves only as a type; the Church is its fulfillment.

### Five Pillars of Replacement Theology

#### 1. National Israel has been permanently rejected

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

Context matters: The "you" in Matt 21:43 targets Israel's leaders, not the nation for all time.

Even if "nation" points to the Church's role in the kingdom, Gentile inclusion never cancels Israel's future restoration (OT & NT expect both).

Jesus leaves the door open: He pronounces judgment yet promises a future welcome "You will not see me again until..." (Matt 23:37–39).

After 40 days of kingdom teaching, the disciples still ask about restoration to Israel; Jesus corrects timing, not the expectation (Acts 1:6–7).

Paul speaks in the present tense "to them belong the covenants and promises" (Rom 9:4), signaling ongoing covenant status.

#### 2. OT language applied to the Church proves the Church is the 'new Israel'

***And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. Galatians 6:16***

"Israel of God" in Gal 6:16 most naturally refers to Jewish believers, not a re-labeling of the Gentile Church.

"Not all from Israel are Israel" (Rom 9:6) Speaks of an Israel within Israel (believing Jews), not Gentiles becoming Israel.

The "true Jew inwardly" (Rom 2:28–29) argument addresses Jews, not a transfer of Jewish identity to Gentiles (see Rom 2:17–3:20).

1 Pet 2 uses Israel's titles for the Church's vocation, but Scripture can honor non-Israel with Israel-like titles without making them Israel (cf. Egypt called "my people," Isa 19:24–25).



In Gal 3, being Abraham's "sons/seed" by faith makes Gentiles heirs of blessing, not ethnic Jews.

The Church shares Israel's blessings and calling-language, but Scripture never renames the Church "Israel."

### 3. Jew/Gentile unity rules out any future role for national Israel

***For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, Ephesians 2:14***

***having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, Ephesians 2:15***

Gentiles are "brought near" to the commonwealth of Israel (Eph 2:13, 17). Nearness shares benefits; it doesn't merge identities.

Paul's word choice is deliberate: He says "one" and "one new man" (Eph 2:14–15), yet never calls the Church "Israel."

Salvation equality does not collapse distinct roles (cf. men/women, elders/laity, even the Trinity's persons).

Gentiles are grafted among the natural branches; they do not become natural branches. The natural branches (Israel) can be grafted in again (Rom 11:17–24; 11:29).

### 4. Because the Church participates in the New Covenant, Israel no longer holds the OT covenants.

***"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah Jeremiah 31:31***

***But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:33***

The New Covenant is made with the house of Israel and Judah (Jer 31). The Church participates, but the covenant's named parties remain Israel/Judah.

Already / Not Yet: Spiritual blessings (forgiveness, Spirit) are already shared by the Church; national/land dimensions are not yet—awaiting Israel's future.

***For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Romans 11:25***

***And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; Romans 11:26***



***For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.” Romans 11:27***

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

The Church shares New-Covenant grace with Israel; it does not seize Israel’s covenants from Israel.

Covenantal continuity in Acts: Peter calls unbelieving Jews “sons of the covenant” (Acts 3:25), indicating an ongoing covenantal relation.

## **5. NT silence proves Israel will not be restored as a nation.**

The NT explicitly references Israel’s future restoration (Acts 1:6–7), renewed rule over the twelve tribes (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30), future welcome of Messiah (Matt 23:39), Jerusalem’s times (Luke 21:24), temple scenes (2 Thess 2; Rev 11), tribal lists (Rev 7).

OT restoration promises remain in force unless the NT cancels them—it doesn’t.

NT writers, steeped in the OT and living while Israel was still in the land, had no need to restate every OT detail.

Jesus affirms the concept, not the calendar: He refuses to give the timing, not the reality, of Israel’s future restoration (Acts 1:6–7).

**Jesus and the apostles never redefined “Israel” to mean “Church.” The Church shares in Israel’s blessings but never becomes Israel.**

## **26 Questions that Challenge Replacement Theology**

1. If God said, “I will bring you back,” whose reputation is really on the line—Israel’s performance or God’s promise? (Deut 30:3 is not just laying out conditions but making a promise of future return)
2. When Ezekiel saw dry bones become a living nation, did God promise a metaphor about the Church—or a real people called Israel? (Ezek 37:11–14, 21–22)
3. If God doesn’t lie, why would He promise Israel one thing and then “fulfill” it somewhere else in a different way? (Num 23:19; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:17–18)
4. If “Israel” now means “the Church,” why does Paul use “Israel” ten times in Romans 9–11 to mean ethnic Israel without warning that he changed the definition?
5. Jeremiah 31:35–37 says Israel’s nationhood lasts as long as the sun, moon, and stars; since the heavens still run, on what basis do we say Israel is finished?
6. If God can break that cosmic promise, which promise in your Bible is still safe—including the ones you claim for salvation? (Jer 31:35–37)
7. Why does Jesus promise twelve thrones over the twelve tribes if there are no tribes left to lead? (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30)
8. After forty days of kingdom teaching, why didn’t Jesus say, “You misunderstood Israel”—why did He correct the timing but not the expectation of restoration? (Acts 1:3, 6–7)
9. If “Israel” now means “the Church,” why does Luke–Acts never use “Israel” to mean the Church—not once?
10. When Jesus says, “You will not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He...’,” doesn’t “until” mean there is a future welcome—not “never”? (Matt 23:39)



11. If “every eye will see Him” (Rev 1:7), and Jesus says Jerusalem won’t see Him until it welcomes Him (Matt 23:39), doesn’t the world’s seeing await Jerusalem’s welcome?
12. When Paul says, “to them belong the covenants and the promises,” where is the verse that shows God filed the transfer papers to the Church? (Rom 9:4)
13. If the Church replaced Israel, why does Peter still call unbelieving Jews “sons of the covenant”? (Acts 3:25)
14. If God can repossess Israel’s covenants, what protects your confidence that He won’t repossess New-Covenant promises from you? (Jer 31; Heb 8–10)
15. If there’s no future for Israel, why do Jesus’ words about Judea/Jerusalem (Matt 24:15–20) echo Daniel (Dan 9:27; 12:11) and Zechariah’s Day of the Lord—nations gathered, the Mount of Olives split (Zech 12:2–3; 14:2–4)?
16. If Israel has no future, why do the natural readings of 2 Thess 2:2-4 and Rev 11:1-2 keep pointing us to an actual temple in Jerusalem?
17. If the Church replaced Israel, why does Revelation list 144,000 from the tribes and then a separate uncountable multitude from the nations, two distinct groups? (Rev 7:4–9)
18. Why does Jesus speak of “the times of the Gentiles” over Jerusalem if no change is expected when those times are fulfilled? (Luke 21:24)
19. If the Church is Israel, why does Acts keep speaking about Israel and the Church side by side after Pentecost? (Acts 3:12; 4:8–10; 5:31; 21:28)
20. If unity erases identity, why does Paul still say “Jew first and also the Greek” after the cross? (Rom 1:16)
21. If Paul meant “the Church is the new Israel,” why did he write “one new man” instead of “one Israel”? (Eph 2:14–22)
22. If Gentiles are grafted into Israel’s olive tree, when did we become the natural branches? (Rom 11:17–24)
23. Can “irrevocable” really mean “revoked”? If so, what does that do to your assurance in Christ? (Rom 11:29)
24. If Israel’s unbelief could cancel God’s election, what protects us when we stumble? (Deut 7:6–8; Rom 3:3-4; 11:1–2)
25. Has Jerusalem already become “the praise of the earth”? If not, why would we stop praying “and give Him no rest” until it is? (Isa 62:6–7)
26. If “Israel” just means the Church, why does Isaiah still treat Egypt, Assyria, and Israel as three distinct peoples—“my people,” “the work of my hands,” and “my inheritance”? (Isa 19:24–25)

### So then...

The Church must see itself as a participant in God’s larger plan, not as the replacement of God’s first covenant partner, Israel. We are grafted into Israel’s story by grace; we do not erase it.

The Church’s self-understanding must shift from “new Israel” to co-witness. The Church does not exist to push Israel off the stage, but to join Israel’s testimony to the nations about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and about Jesus the Messiah.

True fulfillment is still in the future. At the end of history, in the Messianic consummation, God will unite the purposes of Israel and the Church in one redeemed family. Until then, these callings coexist in tension and mutual responsibility: we honor Israel’s election, pray for Israel’s salvation, and serve the nations in the name of Christ.



Our reading of Scripture should be shaped by Jewish continuity. That means affirming the Hebrew Bible's own witness and letting it speak on its own terms—not flattening everything into mere typology. We learn to read the Old and New Testaments in dialogue with Israel's ongoing story.

Hold both truths at once: we confess Jesus as the promised Messiah, and we confess that God remains faithful to Israel. The same God who keeps His word to Israel is the God who keeps His word to us.

We must return to the New Testament's unfinished story. Paul points to a mystery: the fullness of the nations and the coming turning of Israel together reveal God's final redemption.

So we choose a better way: humble enough to share the stage with Judaism, confident enough to confess Christ, and hopeful enough to wait for the day when Israel and the Church recognize one another in the fullness of God's mercy.

We also name our sin. Christian supersessionism helped feed centuries of antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust. Calling the Jewish people "rejected" or "obsolete" gave cover to contempt and persecution. Many churches have repented of racism or sexism; some have not yet faced their anti-Jewish legacy. By God's grace, we will not be those churches. We repent, we renounce supersessionism and all forms of antisemitism, and we commit ourselves to bless the Jewish people while proclaiming Jesus to every nation.

**Resources:**

- The Destiny of Israel and the Church - Derek Prince
- Christian Antisemitism - Michael L. Brown
- Has the Church Replaced Israel - Michael J. Vlach