

Chapter Twenty

Replacement Theology

The theology called Replacement Theology, also often called Supersessionism, teaches that the nation of Israel, as God's covenant people, has been replaced or superseded by the entity called "the church". This teaching also claims that much of the Old Testament has been done away with, including the promises of the Millennial Kingdom of Messiah ruling in Jerusalem and the restoration of Israel. In order to make the words of the Bible fit this preconceived outcome, the approach to interpreting the Bible involves the frequent application of allegory where the literal meaning of the words on the page gives way to a "deeper" or "spiritual" meaning. The problem with this bias in interpreting the Scriptures is that there are literally no limits on where this apriori assumption can take you. There remains no objective word that can stop the runaway train from injecting any meaning into a text under scrutiny. In a theologically borderless world, anything goes. So, the seventh day of Shabbat is redefined as Sunday. The festivals of Leviticus 23 are ignored,

and new festivals are added. Baptism is misapplied as an entrance rite for infants. Any blessings from God found in the pages of the Old Testament are claimed for the church. Any curses left therein belong to the Jews.

This approach frequently uses the phrase “New Covenant” in its defense. It is a useful catch-all phrase that is meant to deflect any and all criticism of the theology by asserting that since God has replaced Israel with the church under a New Covenant, the Old Covenant with Israel has been done away with. There are a lot of problems with this approach.

What is the New Covenant?

When we examine what the text actually says, instead of what the theologians tell us what the text means, we find some interesting things. The New Covenant, as it is called, is revealed in Jeremiah 31:31-37, “Behold, the days come,” says the LORD, “that I will make a new covenant with **the house of Israel**, and with **the house of Judah**, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant of mine they broke, although I was a husband to them,” says the LORD. “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 inward parts, and I will write it in their heart. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. They will no longer each teach his neighbor, and every man teach his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD;’ for they will all know me, from their least to their greatest,” says the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” The LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea, so that its waves roar— the LORD of Hosts is his name, says: “If these ordinances depart from before me,” says the LORD, “**then** the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before me forever.” The LORD says: “If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, **then** I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,” says the LORD.”

This passage teaches many fundamental truths about the New Covenant. First, it should be pointed out that the Hebrew word for new is “chadash” which can also mean renewed. It is used this way referring to the “new” or “renewed” moon each month. In fact, the word for month, in Hebrew, is “chodesh”, from the same root. So, the covenant Jeremiah is referring to can be referred to as a covenant renewal. This is important when we consider the recipients of this renewal. The text clearly states

this covenant is to be with **the house of Israel** and **the house of Judah**. This prophecy was written during a time when the northern kingdom of Israel had been dispersed in judgment with only the kingdom of Judah left in the land. This prophecy of a future restoration demonstrates God's gracious intent to have both kingdoms present as recipients.

Second, there is no mention of a “replacement” group of people called “the church”. What is different is not the people group but the many provisions of this renewed covenant. The text informs us that this covenant will be different from the previous covenant. What is this difference?

God says that He will write His Torah on their hearts. Far from a “new” Torah, it is His Torah, the one and only Torah, that He will internalize in people's hearts. He will provide a divine enablement to walk in His ways, as outlined here in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36. This provision of writing the Torah on the hearts of the people is not a new promise. It was promised in Deuteronomy 30:14 and referred to in 1 Corinthians 2:16.

- The Lord will be their God in fulfillment of Exodus 6:7 and Ezekiel 37:27.
- Israel and Judah shall be God's people.
- They shall all know the Lord.

- God will forgive their sin.
- God will regather the people of Israel to their land.
- God will spiritually cleanse Israel.
- God will give the nation a new heart.
- God will put His Spirit within them.
- They will be faithful to the covenant of the Torah.

According to Jeremiah 31:35-37, since the sun, moon, and stars are still in existence and since the heavens can't be measured and the foundations of the earth have not been searched out, we can conclude that God has NOT done away with or replaced Israel.

- The Apostle Paul concurs as he writes in Romans 11:1, "I ask then, did God reject his people? May it never be!"
- In Romans 11:26 he states, "And so all Israel will be saved."
- In Romans 11:28, 29 he further states. "Concerning the Good News, they are enemies for your sake. But

concerning the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

The Apostle Paul did not believe in so-called Replacement Theology, and neither should we.