

GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN TWO KINGDOMS AT ONCE
AND THEY ARE ABOUT TO COLLIDE, CREATING
A CRITICAL MASS FOR THE RETURN OF MESSIAH.

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RON CANTOR

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Italics and bold in scripture references have been added for emphasis by the author. The author has also substituted Messiah for Christ and Ecclesia for Church, where necessary for emphasis.

Cover art by Bill Stephens

For more information and to purchase other books by Ron Cantor, you can visit www.roncantor.com

PRAISE FOR WHEN KINGDOMS COLLIDE...

“I am grateful for Ron Cantor’s ministry. It is a huge gift to the Body of Christ. Ron has a strong prophetic voice that brings fresh understanding and inspiration along with a practical application. His ministry flows from his love for Yeshua and his deep commitment to honor what the scripture says! He walks in both the Jewish and the Gentile worlds with grace and clarity.

In *When Kingdoms Collide*, Ron provides fresh insights into an issue that has divided the Church since the days of the Apostle Paul—in this time between Jesus’ first coming and his second, what about the Jewish people?

SPOILER ALERT: The Bride of the Messiah has a significant role to play in blessing Israel and bringing about the salvation of the Jewish people in these critical and exciting days we are living in before Jesus comes again!”

MIKE BICKLE

International House of Prayer of Kansas City

“By the time Ron pours out a revelation, the Holy Spirit has moved through his unique lens and Messianic filters until it comes pouring out laughing, excited, and usually prophetic.

I love Ron's teaching because it's so authentic to the life he lives. Always brave, he serves up a savory dish of truth and justice with a strong flavor of his love for humanity. I especially love his passion for King Jesus and all things Kingdom. Having been born in the USA and now living life in Israel, he's a lot like the place where the land meets the sea or the east meets the west, simultaneously demonstrating he is actually a resident of Heaven. All that makes him the perfect one to give us this book. His teaching on the collision of kingdoms is well thought out, full of Messianic promise and hope in Jesus.

I was speaking to him on the phone this morning, and he was saying, "you've got to read this chapter and be sure and check out this other part." I couldn't wait to read it because he was so excited about sharing his gift for teaching and the revelation God gave him. After reading this book, I can tell you I am excited about encouraging you to dive into this book like I did today. Knowing how we will see Israel saved and our part in that prophecy being fulfilled is all part of the package of seeing God's Kingdom come. You're going to love this."

TROY BREWER

Founding & Senior Pastor of OpenDoor Church,
Burleson TX

Troy Brewer Ministries, Answer International,
OpenDoor Global Food Banks, and SPARK worldwide
Follower of Jesus and friend to Ron Cantor

“Ron Cantor has an amazing ability to present theology or biblical teaching with passion and clarity that captures a reader while attending to the context of the scriptures in such a way that the presentation is accurate biblical theology. The book *When Kingdoms Collide* is another clear and accurate presentation of truth for these last days. I highly recommend this book.”

DR. DANIEL JUSTER

Restoration from Zion Ministries

“Ron Cantor has written a fascinating book on the role of Israel and the salvation of the Jewish people. It is passionate yet theologically deep. It is a clear and concise expose, filled with biblical and historical content, designed to satisfy the appetite of every believer regardless of the level of maturity and spiritual growth. *When Kingdoms Collide* is more than a book; it is a user manual that will be used as a reference for decades to come. It will make you long for the Second Coming!”

WARD SIMPSON

CEO, GOD TV

“Ever since the Ecclesia (the Church) made its way beyond the borders of Ancient Israel into the rest of the known world, she has been plagued by two devastating doctrines with regards to Israel and the Jewish people. Indeed, modern anti-Semitism and the Holocaust itself can be traced back and accused of

these hideous crimes. In *When Kingdoms Collide*, Ron Cantor brings clarity and correction to these theologies with a clarion call to action. If you have struggled with finding answers to the modern naysayers' doctrines of Fulfillment and Replacement theologies, then look no further. Clear, concise, and accurate; a must-read for today's Christians and Jews alike."

PAUL WILBUR

Internationally acclaimed worship artist

"Ron and I have been friends for fifteen-plus years. He's always been enthusiastic and hopeful. However, this book goes to another level. His bibliography is solid. His scriptures quotes are insightful. Lastly, his passion is contagious. This book is a must-read for those interested in Jewish prophecy, Israel's prominence in End Times, and anyone interested in revival. Wow!"

EVON HORTON

Brownsville Assembly

"Many believers, when they consider the return of King Jesus, do not take into account the role that Israel will play in relationship to His coming Kingdom. God's Kingdom is supernatural and spiritual in nature, but it invades the created world. In this book, Ron Cantor seeks to demonstrate how

God's eternal kingdom will be manifest in real space and time
- particularly as it relates to Israel."

RABBI K A SCHNEIDER

Host, *Discovering The Jewish Jesus*

"Ron insightfully addresses the key prophetic role of Israel in the light of God's covenant promises to Abraham. The Sovereign faithfulness of God ensures that Israel has survived through the ages and is neither forgotten nor replaced.

This book will enlighten those who hunger to know the Messiah and His heart for all peoples and nations and encourage them to prepare for the return of the Messiah and the revelation of the Millennial Kingdom."

DAVID DEMIAN

Director, Watchmen For the Nations

"I have known Ron Cantor for almost 40 years, first as a student and spiritual son and then as a cherished friend and co-worker. Today, more than any other time in his life, God is using him to separate truth from error, especially in matters concerning the Church and Israel. In his latest book, Ron utilizes a unique approach to argue for God's continued promises to the Jewish people in the New Covenant, side by side with His promises to the people from the nations who believe in His Son.

You will be edified, enlightened, challenged, and informed as you read!”

DR. MICHAEL L. BROWN

Host of the Line of Fire radio program and Author
of *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood: The Tragic Story of
the Church and the Jewish People*

“Before I ever finished the second chapter of *When Kingdoms Collide*, I knew that I wanted to endorse this book. While Israel continues to be delegitimized in the press, in politics, and even behind some pulpits, God is looking for those who will carry His heart for His people. In this book, Ron tackles some of the “strongest” objections to Israel’s place in God’s unconditional, unilateral, everlasting covenant with them as well as the legitimacy of Israel’s right to exist as a nation. I’m so thankful that this book has arrived, and I highly recommend it to everyone whose eyes have been opened to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel and the savior of the world.”

SCOTT VOLK

Founder and President, *Together for Israel*

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INTRODUCTION

Believe it or not, I wrote this while riding a bicycle. I was listening to a lecture from renowned theologian N. T. Wright as he talked about God working through the nation of Israel. It hit me like a lightning bolt. I saw something I had never seen before. Theologians have such a hard time figuring out the relationship between the Church (I will use both *Ecclesia* and Church interchangeably) and the Jewish people because they operate in different *realms of authority* or kingdoms.

Now, if that sounds spooky, hang on! Trust me, it *is* rooted in scripture. You will see, and you will be blessed when you get to the end of this book. It had me shouting on my bicycle!

Now, if you're trying to figure out how I wrote this while riding a bike, I wasn't holding my laptop with one hand, typing with the other, and trying to balance the bike. As I got this revelation, I didn't want to wait until I got home. So, I opened up the notes program on my phone and turned on the voice dictation. It definitely took me a few hours to dissect the dictation. And what I thought was going to be a long blog or even a booklet became a full-fledged book as I continued to dive into the subject. I pray that what is written on the following

pages will be a blessing to you. It was a tremendous blessing to me, even while riding my bike!

In this book, I will seek to accomplish several things:

1. Show through scripture that both fulfillment and replacement theology are false theologies. Promises made to Israel have not been transferred to the Church.
2. To establish that the New Testament has a clear expectation of a future revival amongst the Jewish people *in their own land*.
3. To bring an understanding that two parallel kingdoms (the kingdom of man or this world and the kingdom of God or heaven) are moving forward at the same time, one heavenly and one earthly, that will meet at the end of the age, causing a critical mass resulting in the millennial kingdom. The two kingdoms not only help us see how God can be faithful to Israel and the Church at the same time but also how to navigate these difficult times—learning when we are exercising civic duty and when we are exercising Kingdom duty.
4. To bring a deeper understanding of the *emperor imagery* of the Second Coming. In other words, Yeshua returns in the style of the ancient empires to take over the kingdoms of this world.

FINISH THIS BOOK! PLEASE!

My concern is that you won't make it to the end. The jump-up-and-shout moments are in chapters nine and ten. But chapters one through eight give the theological foundation upon which we can build. *Please, read to the end!*

While dictating this to my phone, I asked the Lord if this was really from Him. The first thing I saw was a license plate that said. "SEE YAH." Of course, the person with the vanity plate was simply seeking to say, "see you later," but for a Bible geek like me, who is given to a little flakiness, the message was clear—I was indeed seeing YAH, which is short for YAHWEH!

And then, roughly one year later, just before the final copy of this manuscript went to print—I was listening to a message while driving up I-95 in Virginia. There was a point in the message where I said to myself, *I need to pray*. So I paused the message and said something like, "God, what are you saying...." And just then, I looked a saw a car passed by—and I don't make a habit while driving 70 to look at license plates—whose license plate was C YA! I would have to say the chances of seeing those two license plates one year apart in different parts of Virginia WHILE PRAYING is nearly impossible.

But more than that, I was surprised to find the same revelations of the two kingdoms in two of the greatest theologians—Augustine and Martin Luther. I thought I had discovered something new when in fact, it was something

theologians have been discussing for centuries. Of course, using this doctrine of the two kingdoms to prove God's faithfulness to both Israel and the Church was something neither Augustine nor Luther—both who believe God had rejected the Jews—never intended.

Read this with your Bible open and see if what I'm saying is true. Some of what is in this book is based on years of study, but I wrote it because of the flood of fresh revelation from the scripture that answered so many outstanding questions I had regarding the Ecclesia and Israel. It was this fresh understanding of the context of certain passages that had me jumping and shouting.

Most of all, I pray that those who have believed in replacement theology or fulfillment theology would finally be able to reconcile the marvelous and miraculous birthing of the Ecclesia with God's ongoing work of grace among the Jewish people.

Ron Cantor, September 27, 2022

SECTION I

REPLACEMENT, FULFILLMENT, AND TRANSFERENCE THEOLOGIES

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

Theologians have been wrestling for centuries, seeking to understand Israel's place (if she has one) in the post-New Testament era. I have struggled with this theological conundrum myself. Some scholars, citing Paul in Galatians, say that Israel was all types and shadows; every prophecy from the Hebrew Bible has been fulfilled in the person of Yeshua. New Testament scholar, Gary Burge, teaches, "The New Testament understands that the Abrahamic Covenant has come to fulfillment in Christ"¹ In other words, there is no more ethnic Israel as the people of God. Just the Ecclesia. Listen to Dr. Burge:

For many evangelicals, the modern state of Israel is a revival of the Israel they read about in their Bibles, but when you build a bridge from biblical Israel to modern Israel, there is an enormous gap in history and theology.

¹ Gary Burge, "Dialogue Between Daniel Juster and Gary Burge," *YouTube*, March 14, 2018, 13:30. <https://youtu.be/B0StGGQcQts>.

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Those conservative evangelicals who flock to Israel every year and express solidarity there with the Israeli government, he says, “may not understand that the modern state of Israel isn’t anything like biblical Israel.”²

Israel of today, despite having DNA proof that the present inhabitants are the descendants of the former inhabitants, could not be a fulfillment of the prophecies about her reestablishment. Of course, Burge believes there will be no fulfillment of these prophecies in any way because they were already fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus is now the recipient of the promise of Holy Land held by Jacob,” which is allegedly one of the “central themes in Johannine Christology.” Again, “the New Testament relocates the properties of the Holy Land and discovers them in Christ himself.”³

Others claim that Israel was just a type and shadow of something better—the Church. Yet, in Paul’s descriptions of

² Tom G. Jelten, “To Some Zionist Christians And Jews, The Bible Says Jerusalem Is Israel’s Capital,” *NPR*, September 12, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/12/09/569553464/to-some-zionist-christians-and-jews-the-bible-says-jerusalem-is-israels-capital>.

³ Michael Brown, *Our Hands are Stained with Blood*, (Destiny Image: Shippensburg, 2019) 167.

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the Church, he reveals that it is made up of ethnic Jews⁴ and Gentiles. Or that Israel was “the church in the wilderness” (Acts 7:38), a mistranslation that simply means the assembly or community of Hebrews with Moses.

There is no question that the Hebrew Bible is full of types and shadows pointing to Yeshua, but does that nullify Israel? Dr. David Rudolph, who heads the Jewish studies program at The King’s University, shared an excellent response to this question. We see in Ephesians that the husband-and-wife relationship is merely a picture of Messiah and his bride, the Ecclesia. “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Messiah and the ecclesia” (Eph. 5:32). We do not throw out the institution of marriage because the fulfillment of it is Messiah and the Church, do we? What if I told my wife, “You know where Paul told me to love my wife...well, he was really referring to Messiah and the Church. Sorry...I don’t have to love you.” No exegete (bible text interpreter) would ever conclude that. We can see that marriage is still a needed institution in this age, and Paul was addressing both husbands and wives, as well as Messiah and the Church. In the same way, Yeshua can be the fulfillment of the Hebrew scriptures and yet not do away with the people through whom He came.

⁴ Jews are technically descendants of Judah alone, but it has come to refer to all physical descendants of Abraham. That is how we will use the term.

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Burge claims that unbelieving Israel cannot inherit any promises of God; that Israel cannot be what God imagined.

God's vineyard, the land of Israel, now only has one vine, Jesus. The people of Israel cannot claim to be planted as vines in the land; they cannot be rooted in the vineyard unless first they are grafted into Jesus. Branches that attempt living in the land, the vineyard, which refused to be attached to Jesus will be cast out and burned.⁵

Yet, God is faithful to promises to unbelievers every day. For instance, the world has not been flooded again since Noah. While, of course, being found in Yeshua is far better than any piece of real estate, it is not up to us to decide to whom God can keep His covenant and to whom He can break His promises. As Romans 9 teaches us, God has His own plans and purposes; He is sovereign. His reasoning for restoring largely unbelieving Israel to her ancient homeland is for his glory. In the end, the Jewish people will be found in Yeshua, as we will see in the following pages. Romans 3:4 is very clear regarding God's faithfulness to unbelieving Israel: "Let God be true and every man a liar." In other words, even if the Jewish people are unfaithful, He will be faithful. Many scholars claim that is why God alone made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, relieving Abraham of any responsibility.

⁵ Gary Burge, *Whose Land? Whose Promise?* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2013), 176.

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Read Genesis 15 carefully. In ancient days, that is how covenants were made. Sacrificial animals were cut in two, and their severed bodies placed in two lines. Both parties entering into the covenant would then walk between the carcasses. By doing so, they were symbolically saying, “If I break this binding agreement, if I fail to uphold my side of the pact, then let me suffer the same fate that these animals have suffered.” But something was different in Genesis 15. Only God passed through the pieces! This was a one-way deal.⁶

As the sun was setting, *Abram fell into a deep sleep*, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him... When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day, *the Lord made a covenant with Abram* and said, “To your descendants, I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.” (Gen. 15:12, 17-21)

How strange that would be to use Israel for 1,600 years in God’s plan, make incredible covenantal promises, only to reject

⁶ Brown, 169.

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them. Burge believes that God has moved on from the literal fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham to something that is an exclusive spiritual fulfillment in the body of believers. Again, he says, “The New Testament understands that the Abrahamic Covenant has come to fulfillment in Christ.” That means that God’s promises to Israel are inexplicably *transferred* to the Church. Ethnic Israel no longer has any covenant with God.

“The New Testament is asking a different set of questions,” claims Burge, “and once they are heard, the older questions of territorial theologies become obsolete.”⁷ But remember God’s original promise to Abraham, He said, “I will make you into a great nation... and through you, I will bless all nations” (Gen. 12:2-3). It’s not an either/or, but both. God does not have to break his covenant with Abraham in order to build the global Ecclesia.

One must not underestimate the weightiness of the word *covenant*. In Hebrew, the word *brit* (covenant) is stronger than it is in English. When my colleague, Asher Intrater, published his book, *Covenant Relationships*, in Hebrew, some people here in Israel struggled with the word *brit* because of the depth and strength of the word. In the end, he changed the name to *chaver na’aman* (faithful friend). When God makes covenant with Abraham, there is no reversal. “A covenant is a solemn promise

⁷ Brown, 168.

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made binding by an oath which may be a verbal formula or a symbolic action.”⁸ That is the point of the covenant. And the type of covenant that God made with Abraham, known in antiquity as a royal land grant, is binding on God. As we saw above in Genesis 15, God sets it up that way.

In response, God contracts a solemn covenant with the patriarch, who becomes the *passive* beneficiary of His unilateral obligation, unconditionally assumed. It would seem that the form of this covenant is modeled after the royal land-grant treaty common in the ancient Near East.⁹

This type of grant, common in antiquity, *was perpetual and unconditional*. The king, or sovereign, possessed all the land and granted parcels of it to loyal subjects as rewards for faithful service.¹⁰

Let’s go deeper just to see how serious covenant is. When God promises the land of Canaan to Abram, he asks, “Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” (Gen. 15:8). To prove his seriousness to Abraham, God could have sent an earthquake, parted a sea (as He would do in

⁸ William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 113.

⁹ N. M. Sama, *The JPS Torah Commentary; Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 88.

¹⁰ “Royal Land Grant,” *Jerusalem Prayer Team*, October 9th, 2019, <https://www.jerusalemprayerteam.org/2019/10/09/a-royal-land-grant/>.

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the future), or some other supernatural act. However, in order to give Abram the confidence that He would indeed do it, He does something even more powerful than what we call today “An act of God,” He makes a covenant with him.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants, I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.” (Gen. 15:18-21)

In other words, the most powerful thing in the universe that God could do for Abram to prove that God’s “land grant” was real was simply to make or *cut covenant* with him. Abram no longer questions God on the subject. It has been settled. God’s very reputation is at stake. That is one reason why replacement or fulfillment theology is so despicable. Not only does it have undertones of antisemitism, but it makes God out to be unfaithful to his covenant promises.

Michael Rydelnik rightly says, “The Bible progresses in its presentation of revelation, *without canceling the previous revelation or canceling the commitments God has previously*

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made.”¹¹ The New Testament is an inspired commentary on the Hebrew scriptures. There is *nothing new* in the New Covenant when speaking of theology. There is no theology in the New Covenant that I cannot show you at least a hint of it in the Hebrew Bible. The Bible is moving forward in revealing the greater meaning of these ancient texts, not canceling them out.

But that was not the view of many of the Church Fathers. They saw no more need for Israel—the people or the land. Speaking of Origen (3rd century) and Irenaeus (2nd century), scholar David Burrell writes, “The only Jerusalem relevant to that faith was the ‘new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, adorned as a bride’” (Rev. 21:1).¹² Origen interpreted Yeshua’s words, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24), as referring to *spiritual Israel*, all lost souls—not the Jewish people.¹³ Of course, then, saying *only* is redundant, as all souls were lost at the time. A quick reading of Matthew 15

¹¹ Michael Rydelnik, “The Hermeneutics of the Conflict,” in *Israel, the Church and the Middle East: A Biblical Response to the Current Conflict*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2018), 64.

¹² David Burrell, “Jerusalem after Jesus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmeuhl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapter 13, A Brief Overview of History, Kindle Edition.

¹³ Origen: “Since we have been taught by Paul that there is one Israel according to the flesh and another according to the Spirit, when the Saviour says: ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Matt 15:24), we do not understand Him as [referring] to them who have an earthly wisdom ... Rather, we understand that there is a nation of souls, named Israel.” (On first principles 4.1.22, Origen 1979:194–96) when he uses Israel here, he is not referring to Israel, but to the ecclesia. They are the new Israel in his mind.

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shows that Yeshua could have only been referring to physical Israel.

Fulfillment theology says it has *all been fulfilled*. To the Jewish people, they say, “Thanks for participating, but we have no more need for you. You are welcome to re-enter through another door as Christians, but you are no longer the covenant people of God. You did your job through the birth of Jesus; God has no more need of you.” *Replacement theology* is harsher, “All has not been fulfilled! We, the Church, are the new Israel—you *have been replaced*. All of the promises that were once given by God to you now belong to us. He has rejected you for us.”

GOOD NEWS. REALLY?

Matthew quotes Micah—Messiah will be a “ruler to *my people Israel*.” How do theologians do theology without asking how such verses play out? He is a ruler to Israel, but after His death, Israel is not Israel? How confusing to the key players in the opening act of the New Testament. In the narratives of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Simeon, Zechariah, Elizabeth ... the issue is *what this Savior will do for Israel*.¹⁴ The answer to that question cannot be *take your covenants, promises, and land*

¹⁴ Matt. 1:20-21, Lk. 1:16-17, 29-33, 69-75, 2:11, 30-32, 34, 38.

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*and transfer it to another.*¹⁵ The shepherds (priestly shepherds overseeing the lambs to be sacrificed) that see an angel are told about *good news!*

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you *good news that will cause great joy* for all the people. Today *in the town of David* a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.” (Luke 2:8-11)

To be clear, when the angel says the good news is for “the people,” it is singular, meaning Israel. Robert Stein agrees that, yes, the gospel will eventually go to the nations, but it starts with Israel.

Are Gentiles included here, or is this a reference only to the Jewish people? Luke envisioned the gospel as being for all people, including the Gentiles (Acts 15:1–29; 18:10); but here, as in 3:21; 7:29; 8:47, the people of Israel were primarily in Luke’s mind. The

¹⁵ Matthew 21:43-45 is not speaking about taking the Kingdom from Israel and giving it to the church but taking it from the control of this Sanhedrin in giving it to the Jewish apostles. This fits into the idea of a Jewish rooted olive tree in which the nations are grafted in.

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singular “people” refers everywhere else in Luke to the people of Israel.¹⁶

The angel is bringing “good news” to the people of Israel. But Burge and Wright’s idea of transfer from Israel to a new identity makes no sense at best and is cruel at worst.

Hey shepherds, I have good news for you. In a very short time, you’re going to be replaced with a new entity, your land is going to be taken from you, and God is going to transfer all the blessings he has promised you and the calling he has placed upon you to others. By the way, for most of the next 2,000 years, that group is not only going to take your promises and covenants, but they will accuse you of deicide (killing God) and will hunt you down like prey. Go tell everyone the good news!

Of course, that is ludicrous. And let’s not forget, as I will remind you a few times in this book, that the calling on Israel, according to Paul, is “irrevocable!” (Rom. 11:29). Others, like myself, argue from Romans 11 that God will be faithful to his promises to the Jewish people and even bring a national revival before the coming of the Lord (Zech. 12:10, Rom. 11:26, Ezek. 36:24-28, Hos. 3:4-5). This includes the land promises He made to Abraham and his descendants *forever* (Gen. 13:15, 15:18,

¹⁶ Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 108.

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17:8). Paul is very clear in Romans 11:1, 11 that God has not rejected Israel.

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin...Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. (Rom. 11:1, 11)

When Paul says “by no means” (v. 1) or “not at all” (v. 11), he is using the strongest negative words in Greek, saying “*no, may it never be,*” as the NASB puts it. If Paul were writing today, he might say, “Perish the thought!” or “What in the world are you talking about?” The KJV is clear: “God forbid.” Paul then goes on to show how first, Israel’s rejection of Messiah is not final and, second, how God will use it to bless the Gentiles.

Some argue that the Jewish people rejected the gospel, and therefore God has rejected them. But did the Jewish people reject the gospel? Certainly, a large number did; no one would argue that. But who do you think wrote the New Testament? Jews. Who do you think spread the gospel from Israel to the nations? Jews. Who faithfully received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost so that the Gentiles would be able to eventually partake? Jews. The entire early church, for roughly the first decade, was entirely Jewish. And when Paul comes to Jerusalem 20 years after the resurrection, he finds tens of thousands of

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Jews who believe and are zealous for the Torah (Acts 21:10). If Abraham was able to get God to spare Sodom if there were just ten righteous, how much more would God spare Israel with tens of thousands of Jewish believers? This is the principle of the remnant.

Paul goes on to share this powerful biblical principle. God can bless the whole based on the obedience of a remnant. Elijah thought he was the only one faithful (Romans 11:3), but there were still 7,000 faithful (v. 4). “So too, at the present time, *there is a remnant* chosen by grace (v. 5). God obeys his own laws, and as long as there is a remnant of believing Jews, He will honor his covenant to Abraham. If God was going to spare Sodom based on the obedience of just ten people, how much more will He spare Israel when there are tens of thousands of Jewish followers of Yeshua?

THE LAND TESTIFIES

We see Israel’s restoration to the land in 1948 and then again to Jerusalem in 1967 as proof of God’s faithfulness to his promises. The word *forever* or *everlasting* that we see in these promises of the land to Israel, in the Hebrew is *olam* or *ad olam*—and quite literally means *forever* or *everlasting*! God’s reputation as *faithful* hinges on his faithfulness to Israel (Jer. 33:35-37). It’s one of the primary reasons we know that we can trust Him. But even stronger language is used elsewhere. *Min olam v’ad olam* literally means *from forever and until forever*.

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We would translate it in our vernacular as *forever and ever*. It is used in relation to the land promises made to Abraham and his descendants. Rydelnick¹⁷ points out that this phrase is used to describe the unchanging character attributes of God, such as his eternal existence, “from everlasting to everlasting, you are God” (Ps. 90:2). Will that end? Will God stop existing? No, of course not. That is why such strong language is used. So, when the same language, *min olam v’ad olam* (forever and ever), is used to describe God’s commitment to Israel, you can know that it is serious. In fact, the only two times this phrase is used in scripture where it is *not* referring to God is when God is referring to God’s giving of the land to Israel!¹⁸

...then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors *forever and ever*. (Jer. 7:7)

They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the Lord gave to you and your ancestors *forever and ever*.” (Jer. 25:5)

However, others like Burge, and even Wright, seem to teach that God was secretly using Israel *only* to bring forth the Messiah, a great honor, but once that was accomplished, there was no longer any great purpose for Israel. The promises have

¹⁷ Rydelnick, 67.

¹⁸ Rydelnick, 68.

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been transferred:

Wright argues that through the coming of Christ, God's relationship with the Jewish people has been reconfigured so that Israel's covenant blessings, responsibilities, and calling have all been "transferred" to the church as a whole, thus resulting in the erasure of divinely given Jewish boundary markers of identity. Or, to put it in more politically correct language, these boundary markers have all been universalized.¹⁹

They teach that there has been a fundamental change in the definition of *the people of God*. It is no longer one ethnic nation, Israel, but people from many nations. That would be like me using my wife to bring forth children and then divorcing her because she was no longer needed. No, she would have a place of honor as her children mature and carry on our legacy.

Yet, God says that his calling on Israel is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). We have a plethora of unfulfilled promises in the Old Covenant regarding Israel's future restoration and glory. Not only does God call Israel's calling *irrevocable*, but He reminds us that He cannot lie!

When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by

¹⁹ David Rudolph, "Zionism in Pauline Literature," in *The New Christian Zionism*, ed. Gerald R. McDermott, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 167.

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himself, saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” And so, after waiting patiently, *Abraham received what was promised.* (Heb. 6:13-15)

Of all the examples God uses to prove that He cannot lie (v. 18), He uses the example of Abraham. And He says that “Abraham received what was promised,” meaning the birth of Isaac, not the Church. God’s faithfulness to Abraham regarding the Jewish people and the Land of Israel is proof that we can trust Him regarding His promises to the Ecclesia! It is not either/or, but both!

What do we make of this promise? Was God joking, playing with us, or faithful (remember, He *cannot* lie!)?

This is what the Lord says: “If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David, my servant, and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. *For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them*” (Jeremiah 33:25-26).

You see, when someone who cannot lie makes an oath, it is doubly powerful. He sought to “make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised” (v. 17). God will be faithful to all believers, and if we doubt, we simply need to look to Israel as a sign of his faithfulness.

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But Wright says in Jesus's death, by dealing with sin, "God has done what He always promised to Abraham, namely, to give him a global family who will inherit the world."²⁰ Sounds great, *except that is not all God promised to Abraham*. Before He promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, God told him that He would make them into one great nation (Gen. 12:2), and that nation is Israel. He also promised Abraham on several occasions that the land of Canaan would be an everlasting (and we know what everlasting means!) possession to Abraham and his descendants. How can Wright hold on so dearly to one promise while so carelessly discarding the others?

What do we make of all this?

²⁰ N. T. Wright, "N. T. Wright on the Messiah and the People of God," *YouTube*, October 12, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMyenQv_1YA 59:24.

CHAPTER TWO

ISRAEL BECOMES A NATION—AGAIN!

One of the reasons that proponents of these opposing views have butted heads over the centuries, I believe, is because we don't understand God's *two-dimensional eschatology* where two kingdoms, both under God's authority, are racing to the final trumpet when they will merge. Presently, it is necessary that both kingdoms take place at the same time because they serve different purposes. This is a powerful revelation if you can catch it. The fact is, I see the truth in some of the arguments of fulfillment theology. There's no question that the New Covenant is fulfilled in the person of Yeshua. There is no question that Yeshua is *a* fulfillment of Abraham's seed, as Paul argues in Galatians 3. And there's no question that the people of God now include people from every nation, tongue, and tribe who confess faith in Yeshua—Abraham's spiritual seed.

But here is where I depart from fulfillment theology. The mystery is that, yes, these promises are fulfilled in Yeshua, but they are also fulfilled in the people of Israel, and I shall seek to prove that with scripture.

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God's promise to Abraham and his natural seed is a *natural* promise that has nothing to do with the salvation of souls. It *does* have to do with God creating a people through which He would reveal the Messiah, but not give up on that people after the Messiah had come. We have prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments that speak of God's ancient covenant people having an awakening in the end times. It's happening right now! More Jewish people have come to faith in the past few decades than ever before.

Israel yet has a purpose, and one day Messiah will rule from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:3-9). He continued to watch over Israel, and when things looked completely down and out for the Jewish people after the Holocaust, God rebirthed her according to the ancient prophecies regarding the restoration of the nation of Israel. This threw a massive monkey wrench into both replacement theology (the Church has replaced Israel) and fulfillment theology (every prophecy that seemed to point to a future for Israel was allegorical and was fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus).

Think about it. Around 2,500 years ago, most of the Hebrew prophets who have books named after them—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the like—all prophesied that God would bring the Jewish people back from *all the nations* of the world (not merely Babylon or Persia), where He had scattered them,

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and placed them back in the land that He had previously promised to Abraham and his descendants forever.²¹ How was that fulfilled in Yeshua? If you could've convinced me of that before 1948, you for sure lost me after Israel was rebirthed as a nation. Surely one of their proofs was that Israel was still scattered and nationless.

In fact, much of the second-century anti-Jewish sentiment that created supersessionism (replacement theology—God is done with Israel) was on the backdrop of both the crushed revolt of 70 CE, resulting in the destruction of both Jerusalem and the Second Temple and the exile of the Jews, as well as the defeat of the Bar Chokhba Jewish revolt in 132 to 135 CE.

So, for these early theologians, the decisive defeats of the Jewish people were clear and obvious evidence of God's rejection of Israel. I actually get it. But you have to understand the ways of the God of Israel. The entire story of the Jews reveals this principle. From Abraham, who had to wait 100 years to have an heir, to Jacob, who thought his brother would kill him, to Joseph, who was sold as a slave and put in jail, to Moses before the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army in pursuit (after spending 40 years waiting in the desert!), to Daniel who was thrown into a lions' den, to Esther who risked her life for Israel, to David who was promised to be king and then had to run for his life, God always fulfills his promises, but there is

²¹ Ezek. 36:24, Is. 11:12, Jer. 30:10, Zech. 10:8-10, Is. 43:5-6, Jer. 16:14-15.

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often a long season where it often *appears and feels like* He has abandoned his people.

So, while I understand why the Church fathers of the second century, Justin, Barnabas (pseudo name, not the Barnabas from Acts), Ignatius, and Irenaeus became anti-Israel and anti-Torah, they needed to wait about 1,900 years before concluding something *from history* (not theology). But what would they say now? Israel's destiny has been reversed. *He who scattered them did indeed regather them*, as the prophet said (Jer. 31:10)!

Dr. Burge admits that Augustine believed that God had a role for Israel: "Augustine believed that the Jews continued to have a valid role in history, only since they were a witness to the Scriptures which foretold Christ."²² But he doesn't share the whole story. Augustine was credited with saying that "the Jews *deserved death*" and that the only reason God left the Jewish people on earth was "to wander the earth to witness the victory of the Church over the synagogue!"²³ (I guess they had to come up with a reason that the Jewish people didn't get swallowed up into other nations like the Hittites, Jebusites, Philistines, etc.—because it sure could not have been that God was being faithful to his promises! [Jer. 31:35-37])

²² Gary Burge, "Dialogue Between Daniel Juster and Gary Burge," 6:55.

²³ David Reagan, "Has the Church replaced Israel?" *One for Israel*, June 1, 2016, <https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/has-the-church-replaced-israel/>.

THE HERMENEUTICAL JEW

In order to understand Augustine and the view of the Jewish people from Christianity that would follow all the way up until the Enlightenment, you have to understand the term “Hermeneutical Jew.” It was coined by Jeremy Cohen, “The Christian idea of Jewish identity crystallized around *the theological purpose the Jew served in Christendom*; Christians perceived the Jews to be who they were supposed to be, not who they actually were, and related to them accordingly.”²⁴

Augustine developed the theology that there was a theological purpose in the continued existence of the Jewish people. Let me emphasize, he did not come to this theory through interaction with Jewish people. Dr. Jen Rosner points out that “Augustine and many of the other Christian theologians who will increasingly build upon a Christian theology of Judaism, or more properly, *anti-Judaism*, never encountered actual Jews. They were responding to an image, *a Hermeneutical Jew*, a Jew that was conjured up in their minds based upon primarily their reading of Scripture.”²⁵

I am just going to summarize here, but if you would like to read more on this subject, I wrote a three-part blog here.

²⁴ Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2.

²⁵ Jen Rosner, “Antisemitism,” *YouTube*, accessed on August 14, 2019, 3:50, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jj0AkpIQ0Q>.

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Listen to Augustine in his own words:

By the evidence of their own Scriptures, they bear witness for us that we have not fabricated the prophecies about Christ...It follows that when the Jews do not believe in our Scriptures, their Scriptures are fulfilled in them while they read them with blind eyes...It is in order to give this testimony which, in spite of themselves, they supply for our benefit by their possession and preservation of those books [of the Old Testament] that they are themselves dispersed among all nations, wherever the Christian Church spreads...Hence the prophecy in the Book of Psalms: "Slay them not, lest they forget your law; scatter them by your might." (City of God 18:46)

There is quite a bit here, so let's unpack it. Augustine argues:

1. The fact that the Jewish people stand by the Hebrew scripture authenticates the prophecies of Yeshua.
2. He refers to the Hebrew Bible as *their* scriptures and the New Testament as *ours*.
3. And he states that the fact that Jews do not follow Yeshua proves scripture to be true. For it was Isaiah that predicted the blindness that would come to the Jewish people (Is. 6:9-10). Yeshua himself employs these verses in rebuking the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 15:8-9). Paul confirms it (Rom. 11:25)

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4. The scattering of Israel proves the truth of *their* scriptures which point to *ours*.
5. He closes by misapplying Psalm 59—maybe the greatest (meaning it was helpful) misuse of scripture of all time. While the passage refers to Israel’s enemies, Augustine applies it to Israel by saying, “slay them not....” While the Gentile Church was horribly anti-Jewish and antisemitic for the next 700 years, it did not resort to genocide on theological grounds until the Crusades, which began in 1099 CE, thanks to Augustine misusing this passage.

Augustine wrote that God had dispersed the Jews but had not destroyed them. In his view, God had kept Jews alive as a permanent reminder that Christianity had replaced Judaism as the true faith. He argued that the humiliated, defeated Jews showed what happens to those who reject God’s truth.

Although Augustine did not want the Jews to be murdered, he did want them to suffer for what he claimed they had done to Jesus. And he wanted them to be present at the “end of days” when Jesus returned so that they could see that they had been wrong.²⁶

²⁶ Phyllis Goldstein, *A Convenient Hatred: A History of Anti-Semitism*, (Boston: Facing History and Ourselves, 2011), 37.

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Christians were taught that the only reason Jewish people were still on earth was to be a “witness people,” testifying in their unbelief and wretched state to the validity of Christianity. It’s not completely untrue—the best lies always have a degree of truth. As I said above, quoting the physician of Frederick the Great that the Jewish people are the greatest proof that the God of Israel is real. But the Gentiles were called to “provoke Israel to jealousy” (Rom. 11:11); to woo them into the Kingdom through love and good works. Yet this Augustinian theology would be used to project the worst kind of hatred and racism towards the Jewish people from so-called Christians, thinking they were doing a service to God.

He compared Israel to Cain:

Saint Augustine even likens the Jewish people to Cain, the first criminal recorded in biblical history, who had murdered his own brother and merited death but instead had been condemned to wander unhappily ever after. The Torah is the mark of Cain granted to the “deicide people,” who have misinterpreted their own scriptures and continue to live in blindness and error.²⁷

To be clear, the mark of Cain protected Cain. Augustine was arguing that the Jews should be protected, but at the same

²⁷ Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession, Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), chap. 1, Kindle.

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time, accusing them of deicide—killing Jesus. It’s like someone coming to the defense of another being picked on by bullies. He stops the bullies from hurting the little fellow but then admits that the little fellow *deserves to be beaten up* but forbids the bullies from continuing.

They fully deserve to be eradicated for their crime, but Saint Augustine prefers that they be preserved as “witnesses” to Christian truth until the end of time when they will finally turn to Christ at the Last Judgment. This witness theory protected the Jews from mass murder but ensured their continued suffering and humiliation.”²⁸

Such language led to violence against the Jews. “As early as 414, church leaders in Alexandria led an assault on synagogues that destroyed the city’s Jewish community for a time.”²⁹ Hitler need look no further than the Church for ample rhetoric to stir up the masses of Christians in Germany against the Jewish people. Martin Luther was one of his favorites.

But the greatest theological proof that God had rejected Israel forever for this theology of antisemitism was surely the dispersion from the land. The fact that the Jews still wandered from country to country, separated from their homeland, was surely the judgment of God. It all made sense.

²⁸ Wistrich, chap. 1.

²⁹ Goldstein, 37.

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Surely to those Christians throughout the ages, it must have been confusing to read those passages in Luke about Israel.

- To Zechariah, the angel says, “John will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God.” (1:16 ERV).
- Miriam sings, “God has helped Israel—the people he chose to serve him. *He did not forget his promise to give [Israel] his mercy.* He has done what he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.” (1:54-55 ERV)
- Zechariah shouts, “Praise to the Lord God of Israel. He has come to help his people and has given them freedom.” (1:68 ERV)
- Simeon prophesies that Yeshua is “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” (2:32)

What did Augustine and these Christians throughout history think Dr. Luke meant by *Israel* in these passages? For them, hundreds of years later, Israel was as much a reality to them as the ancient Philistines. *She had been judged and dispersed. Now the Jewish people, wretched as they are, are a “witness people,” testifying that God has favored the Church over them.* Seeing Israel in Luke was like a fairy tale. *Where is this Israel?* But clearly, Luke is referring to ethnic Israel, and this “witness people” did testify to the reality of the God of Israel.

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Frederick the Great is supposed to have asked his physician Zimmermann once whether he could give him a single completely certain proof for the existence of God, and he is said to have received the laconic answer, “Your majesty, the Jews!”³⁰

And Zimmerman testified based on the fact that the Jewish people were simply still a people. Yet a greater proof was just around the corner: 1948—The restoration of Israel as a nation. If we could speak to Augustine, or even the more rabid antisemitic John Chrysostom, or any of the Church fathers who embraced a theology that God hated and rejected Israel; if we could just ask them: “Do you still hold to the theology, in light of the fact that all of those promises that you claimed were now for the enjoyment and pleasure of the Church are being fulfilled in natural Israel...in light of the fact that the Jewish exiles have come home, just as God promised... in light of the fact that Israel is flourishing in her ancient homeland, just as the prophets predicted? And, in light of the fact that Jews are beginning to embrace Jesus *without leaving Judaism?*” *Your proof text that Israel’s existence as a poor, wretch witness has been turned on its head as nations flock to her for technology, natural gas, security methods, high-tech cyber threat deterrents, medical advancements, and more!*

³⁰ Dean G. Stroud, *Preaching in Hitler’s Shadow: Sermons of Resistance in the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), 81.

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Indeed, if the Church fathers were alive today, they would be stunned at Israel's turn of fortunes. Just like Moses, who moped around Midian for 40 years and returned to lead his people to freedom, Israel was down for the count, and against all odds, she became a nation again! The resurrection of the nation of Israel is the greatest proof of all that the God of Israel is the Creator of the universe.

A COINCIDENCE THAT MUST HAVE SURPRISED EVEN GOD ALMIGHTY?

Can we believe that it is just a coincidence that before Israel was reborn in 1948, there were Jewish people literally all over the world, just as the prophets predicted? You could not only find Jews in North America but all over South America, in Africa, in India, and even in China, not to mention both Eastern and Western Europe. Despite 52 attempted genocides against the Jewish people,³¹ somehow, without a country, she remained an identifiable people group.

And is it just a coincidence that suddenly, these people, many of them secularists, felt drawn back to the land of their ancestors to settle it? They concluded that they would be persecuted in any other nation other than the historic land of Israel. They would only be safe once they got home. Then a madman seeks to kill millions of them in Europe. Out of

³¹ This was told to me by a respected Israeli tour guide, who received the information at the renown Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

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the ashes of the Holocaust comes forth the fulfillment of this prophecy, and Israel became a nation again in 1948. *Is this just happenstance?* The very thing that fulfillment theology claims is merely allegorical takes place against all odds, and they still deny it was the hand of God. Understand, there is no testimony in the annals of history of an ethnic people being physically separated from their geographic location for more than two or three generations and remaining an identifiable people group. The Jewish people were separated from their homeland for roughly 1800 years and survived.

It is hard for me to believe that an intellectually honest theologian cannot see this as a prophetic fulfillment. It happened just as the prophets said it would! It's no secret that Dr. Burge has taken up the Palestinian cause, and I would suggest that it has shaped his theology and many others who deny that the nation-state of Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy. Their biases blind them to what is right in front of them. I'm not suggesting that national Israel is perfect by any means (what country is?) or that we should not be compassionate to the Palestinians. I am saying that God is faithful to his covenant, even if it takes 2,000 years. The physical nation of Israel today is a testimony that not every promise to the children of Abraham was fulfilled in the person of the Messiah, even if the *greatest fulfillment* is in Him.

If you will hang with me, this is all going to make sense very soon. Trust me!

CHAPTER THREE

IGNORANCE LEADS TO ARROGANCE

Let's take a look at the most important verses in Romans 11.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way, all Israel will be saved. (Rom. 11:25–26)

Let's break this down:

1. Paul does not want Gentile believers to be ignorant
2. ...of a mystery...
3. because ignorance of this mystery will lead to pride
4. the mystery is that Israel has been somewhat spiritually blinded to the truth of the Messiah
5. but after the gospel has prospered amongst the Gentile nations

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6. the blindness will be removed from the Jewish people

7. and the result is that all Israel comes to faith

Now let's ask ourselves a crucial question: If all of God's promises to Israel were fulfilled in Jesus and are no longer relevant to the Jewish people today, why does Paul speak of God's *future* work with Israel as a *theological mystery*? I submit to you that the theologians who are most arrogant against the Jewish people are those who believe that God is finished with the Jewish people. On the other hand, theologians who look to Israel as the older brother in the fashion of the prodigal son story have a humbler disposition towards the Jewish people, recognizing that it is through Israel that they have the Messiah. Therefore, they seek to bless and reach the Jewish people. This is important because Paul says that the ignorance regarding the mystery will lead to arrogance against the Jewish people.

Look at the strong words Paul uses [in Romans 11]—arrogant, ignorant, conceited. What a critically important subject for the Church to understand! Ignorance of God's purposes for Israel breeds conceit. And a conceited Church is a Church resisted by the Lord, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).³²

³² Brown, 191.

IGNORANCE LEADS TO ARROGANCE

Paul is arguing in Romans 11 that not only is Israel only temporarily blinded to the gospel, but if the now predominantly Gentile Church doesn't understand God's ultimate plan to rescue Israel (v. 12, 15, 23-24), they may find themselves in trouble! "To the extent that the Church has recognized her Jewish roots and the rightful place of Israel, the Church has had light."³³ To misunderstand this mystery would lead to pride and, according to verses 21-22 of Romans 11, could even lead to people *losing their salvation*. Those are Paul's words, *not mine*.

For if God did not spare the natural branches [Israel], *he will not spare you either* [if you judge them harshly]. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness [towards Israel]. *Otherwise, you also will be cut off.* (Rom. 11:21-22)

To be clear, I don't think that Paul was speaking of individual believers losing their salvation, but ecclesiastical bodies could be led into apostasy, just as Israel was, if the Church judged the Jewish people harshly. This is the law of judgment (Rom. 2:2)—you become the thing you judge. The context here is Gentile believers boasting over lost Jewish people. Read Romans 11 verse by verse for yourself. (If you want a fuller understanding of the drama behind Romans 11, [click here](#).)

³³ Brown, 190.

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You see, just as Israel has experienced a spiritual blindness, Paul warned the Church that she, too, could enter into a *theological blindness* by not understanding the mystery of the coming restoration of Israel, and such blindness would lead to pride and apostasy. I submit to you that this prophetic warning came to pass in the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. They turned viciously against the Jewish people and lost their way. (Learn more about how the Catholic Church turned against Israel in my book *Identity Theft* [roncantor.com/shop]) Maybe that is why Paul gave this prophecy to the Romans and not to the Philippians or the Ephesians.

Fortunately, the Roman Catholic Church repudiated replacement theology in *Nostra Aetate*, which came out of Vatican II in 1965. The language is even stronger in the Catechism of 1995. Sadly, most Catholics don't even know that this is what they are supposed to believe regarding Israel:

The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel," for "a hardening has come upon part of Israel" in their "unbelief" toward Jesus. St. Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: "Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth

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of his holy prophets from of old.” St. Paul echoes him: “For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” The “full inclusion” of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of “the full number of the Gentiles,” will enable the People of God to achieve “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” in which “God may be all in all.”³⁴

TWO COVENANTS, TWO FULFILLMENTS, TWO SPHERES

Note again that this modern regathering of the Jews to Israel and honoring of the Abrahamic covenant has nothing to do with eternal salvation. This is what many fulfillment and replacement theologians do not see. They think that if we say that God’s hand is still on national Israel, there is some guarantee of eternal salvation. The Abrahamic covenant does not speak of eternal life. It was never promised. But it is a sign, a wonder, and a testimony to the world that the one true God *is* God.

Of course, God’s will is that the Jewish people embrace the New Covenant as well. After all, it wasn’t promised to Mongolia or Brazil (though, technically, it was in Gen. 12:3, “all the nations will be blessed through you”) but to Israel. “I will make a New Covenant with the people of Judah and the people of Israel” (Jer. 31:31). And they will come in.

³⁴ “Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Edition,” *St. Charles Borromeo*, 674, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p1s2c2a7.htm>.

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There are so many scriptures³⁵ that speak of national Israel experiencing a revival in the end-times, at the end of this age. We see this even now with the emergence of Messianic Judaism and the rediscovering of the Jewish Jesus among scholars—both Jewish and Christian, and we will see even more as we approach the end of the age. So many of the Ezekiel passages of Israel’s restoration end with, “then they will know that I am Yahweh.” This phrase appears 72 times in Ezekiel.

Walter Kaiser, President-Emeritus of Gordon Cromwell Seminary, says, “the term ‘Israel’ never loses its unique national, geo-political, or ethnic flavor. This is not because God has favorites or that he is chauvinistic, but rather because God is faithful and true to his word.”³⁶

The rebirth of the nation of Israel and the regathering of the Jewish exiles from all over the earth is the greatest fulfillment of prophecy in modern history, bar none. It testifies to the world of God’s faithfulness to his covenant. But it does not guarantee salvation. *Like with all peoples, Jewish people need the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua.*

Again, it is the two spheres. God blesses the Jewish people with the land of Israel on the lower sphere of authority. But

³⁵ Romans 11:26, Zech. 12:10, Hosea 3:4-5, Jer. 31:31-33, Ezek. 36:25ff.

³⁶ Walter Kaiser, “What’s so important about Premillennialism?” accessed on August 19, 2022, <http://www.walterckaiserjr.com/Israel%20and%20pre-millennialism.html>.

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salvation can only be found in that higher sphere, where Yeshua died for the sins of the world. Gary Burge and other fulfillment theologians teach that because you can only receive salvation through Yeshua, God cannot bless natural Israel. He asks rhetorically. “If someone has a Jewish lineage and does not share the faith of Abraham, must less faith in Christ, are they entitled benefits [from the Abrahamic covenant]?”³⁷

First, none of us are entitled to anything. Every breath we have is a gift of God. A better way of saying this is, “Will God honor his covenant with Abraham despite Jewish unbelief?” Paul answers that decisively with an emphatic *yes*, in Romans 3: “What if some [of Israel] were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness? Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar” (Rom 3:3-4).

The idea that God’s grace is only at work in believers is not biblical. On the second plane—in the kingdom of heaven—yes, salvation comes to those who confess faith in Him. But, on the lower plane—the kingdom of man—God is blessing unbelievers every day. Jesus said that the Father “sends rain comes on the righteous and the unrighteous” (and to be clear, *rain here in Israel is a blessing*, not a curse, as one famous preacher preached it. Jesus was preaching in the drought-ridden Middle East, not Seattle!) (Matt. 5:45). And God can keep a covenant with unbelievers. The Noahic covenant that

³⁷ Burge, “Dialogue Between Daniel Juster and Gary Burge.” 11:35.

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He would never flood the world again is enjoyed by the most wicked people on earth. God's grace is seen in lost people all the time. The fact that unbelievers don't die from a sickness is God's grace. The fact that the ground yields a harvest for believers and unbelievers is God's grace. So yes, God can bless Israel today, keeping his Abrahamic covenant with Abraham's physical seed, while looking toward their future entrance into the second realm, the Kingdom of God, that will come at "the fullness of the Gentiles" when "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26).

Abraham was told, "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you" (Gen. 12:2). He was also told, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (v. 3) and "You will be the father of many nations" (17:4). The fulfillment of the first part of the promise is in the nation of Israel. The fulfillment of the second part is the Ecclesia. One does not cancel out the other, as Burge and Wright teach. The first is confirmed through physical circumcision. The second is through circumcision of the heart. We will soon look at the end of Romans 2 and the beginning of Romans 3 because there, too, Paul has been horribly misunderstood because of our literal, western minds.

The New Testament does fulfill the Mosaic covenant in the sense that Jesus fulfills the law and takes sin upon Himself, and becomes the once-for-all-time-and-all-sin sacrifice. He fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 53, which speaks of the suffering

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servant who takes on the sins of Israel, is rejected and killed, and then rises from the dead. But by fulfilling the Torah, He does not do away with what is revealed in it—*just the sacrificial system* (see *problem passages* below on Hebrews 8:13).³⁸ The Torah is a revelation of the character of God. Paul calls it holy, spiritual, and good in Romans 7. The tens of thousands of Jewish believers in Acts 21:20 are described as “zealous for the Torah.” Paul agrees with James and the other apostles to carry out a public act of offering at the Temple for the purpose of clearing up *the false rumors that he is no longer living according to Moses and the traditions of the Jewish people* (Acts 21:21ff). The miracle of the new covenant is that by the Holy Spirit, the Torah is now written on our hearts (Jer. 31:31-33, Ezek. 36:25-27ff). If it is done away with, why has God written something so irrelevant on our hearts?

So, two things can be true at once:

1. Jesus has died for the sins of Israel and the nations, and all who trust in Him experience eternal salvation.

³⁸ Hebrews 8:13, in speaking of the Mosaic Covenant, it says that that which is obsolete will soon disappear. But that could not possibly be referring to the entire Hebrew bible, as those were the very scriptures that Paul referred to as *God breathed* in writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:16). Understand that this was just a few years before the destruction of the Temple. Clearly the author of Hebrews is referring to the fact that the sacrificial system, which did become obsolete in light of Yeshua's death, will soon be destroyed. But certainly not entirely of the Hebrew Bible.

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2. God continues to work through the people of Israel based on the Abrahamic covenant, and they, too, will come into the kingdom en masse just before the return of the Messiah.

SECTION II

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF MAN

CHAPTER FOUR

DUAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE TWO KINGDOMS

Whenever the Church has failed to see these two different kingdoms—of man and of God—corruption soon enters. The apostles do not imagine a theocracy.³⁹ Jesus never prepares them to *rule* the kingdom of man but calls them to focus on proclaiming the kingdom of God. That doesn't mean that a believer cannot run for office, but he must understand that if he wins, he serves in an earthly, temporal sphere. It is not the kingdom of God. But I share this at a time when whole ministries have turned their focus into “saving America.” They equate one political party with the kingdom of God and the other with the kingdom of darkness. When more than 10 million (some say 100 million) Americans prayed for the overturning of the 2020 election and God did not answer their prayers, that should have been a clue that our focus was on man and not on God. The survival of God's kingdom is not dependent on any earthly kingdom or earthly ruler. God is capable of bringing revival under any president.

³⁹ A form of government where religious representatives rule in the name of God (or a god) as in Iran.

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Many of the popes felt that they should not merely lead the Catholic Church but have political authority to govern over regions. Contrary to the teaching of Yeshua, some felt that even earthly rulers were under the pope's authority.

Some scholars believe that the high water mark of papal political influence was reached in November 1302, when Boniface VIII (c. 1234–1303) issued the bull *Unam Sanctam*, in which he proclaimed that “every human creature is subject to the Roman pontiff.”⁴⁰

Did you hear that? The pope not only has spiritual authority over Catholics but political authority over every human being! Sadly, the Middle Ages is filled with political popes fighting one another for power.

God is working in *two spheres at the same time*. Let me explain. I have dual citizenship. I am a citizen of the state of Israel and a citizen of America. The same laws do not govern both countries. In the same way, every believer is a citizen of Earth and a citizen of Heaven, where we look for the coming of Yeshua (Phil. 3:20). But we are also citizens of Planet Earth. Certain laws govern our citizenship on Earth. And that's where the prophetic promises to Israel lie—for now.

⁴⁰ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian History: An Introduction* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 119.

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The idea is that the kingdom that is to come has broken into this age. It is a foretaste and provokes us to pray, “Let your kingdom come, let your will be done.” Many theologians teach the idea that for believers, the kingdom is an “already, but not yet” state of the coming kingdom—the Messianic age.

The “already but not yet” paradigm was developed by Princeton theologian Gerhardus Vos early in the 20th century. In the 1950s, George Eldon Ladd, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, argued that there are two meanings to the kingdom of God: 1) God’s authority and right to rule and 2) the realm in which God exercises His authority. The kingdom, then, is described in Scripture both as a realm presently entered and as one entered in the future. Ladd concluded that the kingdom of God is both present and future.⁴¹

Ladd believed that the Bible taught of two ages: ‘This Age’ and ‘The Age to Come.’ In ‘This Age’, there will be hostility to Christianity but in the ‘Age to Come’ those who have followed Jesus will be free from oppression and given eternal life. He believed that ‘The Age to Come’ would be inaugurated by the second coming of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. Ladd argued that there is an overlap between

⁴¹ “What Is the Concept of ‘Already but Not Yet’?” *Got Questions*, May 29, 2014, <https://www.gotquestions.org/already-not-yet.html>.

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the two ages; he suggested that, although the ‘Age to Come’ is in the future, it can still be “tasted” now, and its power can penetrate ‘This Age.’ The Vineyard movement’s statement of faith relating to the last book of the Bible, Revelation, states that God’s kingdom came through Jesus and continues to come through the Holy Spirit. It suggests that, when Jesus comes again, Satan will be defeated, the dead will be raised, the final judgment will happen, and God’s kingdom will be fully established.⁴²

Kaiser speaks of these two kingdoms to which we belong.

The Two Ages: But besides the two advents of Messiah, there are also two ages: in Hebrew- “‘Olam Hazzeh,” “This age,” and “‘Olam Habba,” “The age to come.” The New Testament Greek employs these same two divisions of time *some thirty times*: “Aion ho houtos,” “This age,” and “Aion ho mellon,” “The age to come.” The “Age to come” overlaps “this Age” with the work of Christ in casting out demons, and especially in his resurrection from the dead. While the “age to come” is still only in its incipient form, for the second advent will come in the future in its

⁴² “Kingdom Theology,” *Wikipedia Foundation*, May 15, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_theology.

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full realization.⁴³

Despite Augustine's strange views of the Jewish people (we will see later), he was the first to develop the idea of the two kingdoms. He was distraught over how many viewed Rome as the "eternal kingdom," and he sought to remind people that the earthly kingdoms would one day fall away. There is only one eternal city—the New Jerusalem. To the shock of many Roman Christians, Rome had fallen to the Visigoths in 410. They were convinced that Rome, the greatest empire in history, would lead them right into the Kingdom of God. "Refugees from Rome and southern Italy began flooding North Africa, bringing with them the burning question of the moment. Why had Rome been sacked?"⁴⁴

Augustine's fundamental point is made with reference to the image of "two cities" – the earthly city, and the heavenly city. They are not to be confused. Augustine here has in mind the theology developed by an earlier writer, Eusebius of Caesarea, who tended to think of the Christianized Roman Empire as a divinely ordained instrument to rule the civilized world. Augustine set out a *very different position*, avoiding any suggestion that any human political system or structure was to

⁴³ Kaiser, "What's so important about Premillennialism?"

⁴⁴ McGrath, 47.

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be regarded as possessing divine sanction or ultimate authority.⁴⁵

Many in America today are making the same mistake associating America and its destiny with the Kingdom of God. Some expected, egged on by false prophecies, that Donald Trump was going to lead the United States to become a theocracy of sorts. one prominent charismatic leader said on January 5th, 2020, when millions still expected the election to be overturned, “We will rule and reign through Donald Trump, under the lordship of Jesus Christ.” Even months after the election, Trump prophet Johnny Enlow posted online his vision of Trump:

As I was praying today I saw a vision of DJT seated on a throne holding a golden scepter. He also had a golden crown on his head. This, I was shown, is his PRESENT status from heaven’s perspective. That becomes all I need to know, as to should I back off saying “the steal will not hold.” Heaven does not recognize JB having any scepter nor wearing any crown. From heaven’s perspective, there is only the legitimacy of DJT.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ McGrath, 47.

⁴⁶ Johnny Enlow, “The Prophets Were Right: Vision of a Golden Scepter,” *Facebook*, April 30, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Restore7/posts/the-prophets-were-right-vision-of-a-golden-scepterenough-months-have-gone-by-sin/3163745300558955/>.

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In the state of Georgia, not even a year after the election, someone put up a billboard with a picture of Trump and the American flag with the words, “Unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders.” Of course, that is blasphemous. The passage speaks of the Kingdom of Yeshua.

This is what I call *Kingdom confusion*. And that’s what the Romans were going through when Rome was sacked. When you equate America or Rome with the Kingdom of God, you will most definitely be disappointed. The tragedy of today is how many millions of believers are following this false premise.

THY KINGDOM COME

When the disciples asked Yeshua, “How should we pray?” He gave them an outline. After the initial prelude of praises and adoration for God the Father, we get to business. “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is on heaven.” We tend to separate this into two requests—kingdom and will. But I believe what Yeshua is saying is that His will is for His kingdom to be established on earth as it is heaven! And we are to daily ask God to bring this ultimate task to pass. We are sojourners here in a foreign land, even as Abraham was in Canaan. We are to be longing for the Kingdom of God to break through.

Jesus did not only come to establish his Ecclesia, the congregation of Jesus-followers—but also his kingdom reign! Members of the Ecclesia are citizens of the kingdom. They are two separate but codependent aspects of what God is building.

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You can't have a people without a government, and you can't have a kingdom without people. God's ultimate goal is to establish his kingdom on earth, even as it already exists and operates in heaven.

While the coming kingdom has reached into this present age and we participate in it, firstly, it is a mere deposit in the same way that He has “put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, *guaranteeing what is to come*” (2 Cor. 1:22, see also 5:5 and Eph. 1:14), and secondly, we still operate in this age/kingdom/realm.

We see this in the life of Jesus. He is fully God and fully man, and He must walk the tightrope of submitting to both worlds. So, on the one hand, He tells his parents, “I must be about my Father's business” (Lk. 2:39). Later, when his family is looking for him, He says that his family members are those who do the will of God (Mk. 3:35). Yet He pays taxes. He submits to his Father, *and* He submits to Caesar, as well as to the Jewish religious authorities. It is only when submission to earthly authorities conflicts with submitting to the heavenly authority that there is a problem. Of course, He always chooses the heavenly authority. For instance, when He violently cleanses the Temple, or when He heals on the Sabbath, or when He reaches out to the woman at the well—He is breaking religious tradition and the accepted customs of his day for a higher good. And, yet, He goes to the Temple for all the holidays to worship as an observant Jew. He is willing to break earthly norms to

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fulfill his heavenly calling. But for the most part, He is a good citizen of earth. Or it would've been the Romans that came after Him (as they were vicious with would-be insurrectionists) long before He was delivered to Pilate by his own people.

The Bible teaches us how to be good citizens of our countries. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 encourages us to pray for “kings and all those in authority.” And let me remind you that new row was the king in authority that Paul was telling them to pray for. Nero was a sadist and murderer. I know of a church, like many others, that prays for President Trump every Sunday according to this very scripture. I asked my friend who goes to this church if they pray for President Biden. He responded, “No, they think he is hell-bound.” All the more reason to pray for him, don't you think?

Romans 13 tells us to submit to governmental authorities. It also backs up Yeshua's teaching on paying taxes (v. 6), which confirms that we are indeed living within two kingdoms:

1. Kingdom of God: Give to God what is God's.
2. Kingdom of Earth: Give to Caesar (i.e., all earthly governmental authority) that which belongs to Caesar.

The Abrahamic covenant is in sphere one, while the New Covenant is in the second, higher sphere. This is our heavenly citizenship (Phil. 3:20). This is the sphere in which we preach the gospel and develop our theology on salvation; it's where

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we do spiritual warfare, have devotions, and where miracles, signs, and wonders take place. Israel and other nation-states are on plane number one, while the Ecclesia is on the second plane. You can have believers in politics (and we should!), but it never works when you seek to Christianize a nation by force. After studying for 14 weeks in an intensive Christian history class, let me testify to you that it never works for the good when the government is also the church! The Ecclesia is not a nation-state, and nations are not the Ecclesia, no matter how hard Rome tried to make the two merge. What Catholicism tried to accomplish, God will do—but not for a little while.

Now to be clear, while we are to honor the authorities in both kingdoms, there are times when these two kingdoms collide. For the most part, they don't. We radically preach Jesus and pay our taxes. But sometimes, they do. Nazi Germany is a good example.

CHAPTER FIVE

MARTIN LUTHER AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

It was only after I finished the manuscript of this book that I accidentally discovered Luther's *doctrine of the two kingdoms* in an optional video for a class I recently took on *Studies in Antisemitism and the Holocaust*.

Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms held, "... held that the kingdom of State and the kingdom of God represent different modes of God's care of human beings. And that one kingdom should not meddle in the realm of the other."⁴⁷ He had been puzzled at what appeared to be contradictory passages. "Luther was confronted with seemingly contradictory statements in the Bible. Some passages exhort Christians to obey the rulers placed over them and to repay evil with retribution, but others, such as the Sermon on the Mount, call for passivity in the face of oppression."⁴⁸ Look at these passages.

⁴⁷ eck1517, "Theologians under Hitler," *YouTube*, July 23, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOJNGoJB0t8>.

⁴⁸ "Two Kingdoms Doctrine," *Wikimedia Foundation*, August 19, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_kingdoms_doctrine.

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You have heard that it was said, “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. (Matt. 5:38-41)

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary:

If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)

Romans 13 (the very next chapter after Romans 12:21 above!) and 1 Peter 2 uphold the place of the State to inflict punishment on lawbreakers. Indulge me in quoting the whole passage.

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels

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against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (Rom. 13:1-7)

How does Romans 13 line up with Romans 12? One says that evildoers should be punished (13:4), and the other demands that we respond to evil with grace (13:14, 17). Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 certainly uphold the State's role to inflict punishment on lawbreakers. It is clear that "everyone [is] be subject to the governing authorities" and that "there is no authority except that which God has established" (v. 1). Paul equates rebellion against the state with rebellion against God (v. 2).

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Jesus himself demonstrates this by paying taxes, but adds the caveat of differentiating our obligation to Caesar from ours to God (Matt. 22:21). My experience is that most believers agree with Paul in Romans 13—*until the government does something they don't like*. Then they twist it to make the passage say what Paul is *not* saying. For instance, I have heard the claim that if the government does not punish all wrongdoing, as is its responsibility, then they forfeit its right to govern anyone. This logic was used during the first year of the pandemic. Of course, that goes against the whole reason that Paul shares this. No government is perfect. But without government, you have anarchy. Even evil men become the instruments of God when they are in authority.

Let me remind you, at the time, Nero, one of the most ruthless men to live, a cold-blooded killer, was emperor when Paul wrote this. Peter goes further and says, “honor the emperor” (1 Pet. 2:17). Why would they write this? *Nero had both of them martyred!* These are evil men—Hitler and Nero. The answer is found in v. 12. “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, on the day He visits us.” In our commitment to the kingdoms of men, we are to live in such a way that brings glory to God. That is why during the outbreak of Corona, as my government in Israel was doing everything it could to deal with an unexpected deadly pandemic, I did everything I could do to make life easy for them.

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I was shocked when several pastors made a video comparing the Israeli government to the Nazis. They felt like Israel encouraging the vaccine could be equated to Josef Mengele doing the most obscene experiments on Jewish people. Keep in mind that every member of the Israeli Knesset (parliament) took the same vaccine. Only the worst antisemites would call Jewish people Nazis. But these were pro-Israel evangelical pastors. (I confronted both of them, and while they took down the video, they clearly did not own up to the seriousness of their accusations.) At a time when politicians and doctors were simply trying to keep people alive, many Christians could not have been a more deplorable witness for Jesus. They had Kingdom confusion. As I took the vaccine, I said to God something like, “I am no doctor. But I am a good citizen. You know what’s in this, and I trust you to protect me.” To be clear, in matters like this, you need to follow your conscience. But if your conscience demands that you don’t take the vaccine, something that I would respect, it doesn’t give you the right to spread unverified claims and call the government Nazis. No, that is sin. Peter tells us that in our relationship with the government, we are to live our lives in a way that has a positive effect on unbelievers— *“they may see your good deeds and glorify God.”*

Peter and Paul had no time for challenging government—the world needed the gospel, and that was their all-consuming focus. That was the Great Commission. So, on the one hand, Paul could tell believers to live “quiet and peaceable lives”

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urging us to pray for leaders and those in authority” (1 Tim. 2:1-2) —because that is what we do in the kingdom of men to attract people to the kingdom of God—but then boldly preach Jesus, even if it was against the law, and at times they “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). So, when it comes to the kingdom of man, we are to be Clarke Kent. But when it comes to the Kingdom of God—we are supermen (and women).

This confusion, that turning the other cheek is the opposite of enforcing the law, brought Luther to the two kingdoms doctrine, which holds that there were two kingdoms working at once: One of men and one of God—but all under God’s sovereignty. In the kingdom of God, I turn the other cheek. One is how I handle myself as a believer in personal interactions, the other is how the State keeps order. Even if I turn the other cheek as a member of the Kingdom of God, that doesn’t mean that my offender will not have to face the kingdom of man.

A good example is a recent episode that took place at the Oscars, where Will Smith slapped Chris Rock in the face on live television. Shortly thereafter, Chris Rock announced that he had no plans to press charges. But Smith committed a crime and still may have to answer to the State of California for his actions. He was banned from the Academy for 10 years.

Believers live in two kingdoms at once (Phil. 3:20). On a personal level, I am called to walk in love and forgiveness, boldly share the Gospel, and seek God’s face. But in the

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kingdom of man, as Luther called it, I am submitted to the government. I can't say to government—you're unspiritual, and you have no dominion over me. In earthly affairs (such as taxes, traffic laws, stealing, jury duty, etc.) I must submit to the government just like my unbelieving neighbors. I cannot drive down the road at 200 miles an hour, intoxicated, and then tell the police officer that he has no jurisdiction over me because I am a child of the King.

But what happens when the Nazis take over? Well, let's look at something a bit more innocuous. Many states cannot compel someone to work on their religious holiday. That is where the kingdom of God comes in conflict with the kingdom of men. Or force conscientious objectors to go to war. Many governments will seek to honor those convictions. But if not, that person's conscience may demand that they engage in civil disobedience because of their commitment to a higher law.

This passage should shed some light on the issue: "*As far as it depends on you*, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). He didn't say, "live at peace with everyone," but do so, "As far it depends on you...." In other words, you do everything in your power to be at peace with everyone, but the minute the State seeks to infringe on your God-given mandate to spread the Gospel, you must break that peace.

And let's not forget that Peter and Paul did not live in a democracy. Surely, they would not have advocated a complete

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disconnection of believers to the State when there was the freedom to engage. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with believers seeking to make a difference through politics. But Dietrich Bonhoeffer (see below) would say that it is your duty as a member of the kingdom of man, *not the kingdom of God*. If I decide to run for Congress, I don't do it to impose my religion on the country. Certainly, I will fight for righteous policy. But I'm also there to be a "1 Peter 2:12" witness to others in politics; to shine my light (Matt. 5:16).

I don't think, however, as many are doing more and more, that they would have merged politics and the pulpit. John Piper, Tim Keller, and Don Carson see the preaching of God's Word as far superior to opining on politics and culture when it comes to pulpit ministry.⁴⁹ A preacher can weigh in on moral and cultural issues without becoming political.

LUTHER'S DOCTRINE AND THE NAZIS

What does all this have to do with Nazi Germany? Everything! In Nazi Germany, there were three Christian responses to Hitler:

1. Join with the Nazis.

⁴⁹ The Gospel Coalition, "Keller, Piper, and Carson on Staying the Course in a Changing Culture," *YouTube*, February 29, 2016, video, 00:51, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTSWxY0yLo8>.

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2. Don't get involved in politics, *using Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms*.
3. Protect the innocent and fight back.

THE GERMAN CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

“Within the German Evangelical Church, the pro-Nazi ‘German Christian’ (*Deutsche Christen*) movement emerged in the early 1930s. It attempted to fuse Christianity and National Socialism and promoted a ‘racially-pure’ church by attacking Jewish influences on Christianity.”⁵⁰ One study says, “forty percent of the pastors were, at least for some time during the Third Reich, oriented toward the German Christian movement.”⁵¹ This movement “attracted between a quarter and a third of Protestant church members.”⁵² They would pervert Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms.

The *Deutsche Christen* were moved by a perverse conceit disguised as an evangelistic crusade: they were supposedly bringing the Christian faith to the Nazis, who seemed to be veering toward paganism. Acting in the name of Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms—that God has established two kingdoms

⁵⁰ “Christianity and the Holocaust,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed on April 24, 2022, <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/christianity-and-the-holocaust>.

⁵¹ Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 5.

⁵² Heschel, 3.

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(*zwei Reiche*): the kingdom of the earth, which he rules through human government and law; and the kingdom of heaven, which he directs by grace and through the church—the German Christians determined to achieve an accommodation (however tortured) of the Führer principle and the Aryan paragraph (1933 law that forbade non-Aryans, such as Jews, to be public servants) under church law. And this they would do in a spirit of obedience to God!⁵³

In zealous obedience to the State, no Jewish convert would be allowed to work as a minister.

Martin Luther was the hero of the German Christians, but not for his reformation theology. “‘I was born for my beloved Germans: it is them I want to serve.’ Thus, Nazis saw Luther as a servant not so much of Christ or of the Church but of the German race and nation (*Volk*⁵⁴). Such references linking Luther and Hitler were quite acceptable in Nazi Germany, and this allowed Protestants to feel right at home in the new Reich,

⁵³ Charles Marsh, *Strange Glory* (New York City: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014), 162.

⁵⁴ Dean Stroud puts this in parentheses because *volk* became a cult-like catchphrase for the Nazis. The *volk* meant, “the folks” — the average German, suffering because of the power of the Jew. Jews were not only accused of controlling wars and banks, and being unhinged capitalists, but also of being Communist. Any perceived enemy was obviously backed by the Jew. It was the Jew vs. *the volk*.

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and the Nazis could appeal to an honored German tradition.”⁵⁵ The Nazis loved Luther’s “*Von den Juden und ihren Lügen, (On the Jews and their Lies)*. This work earned Luther the title of an ‘anti-Semitic Hero’ from the Nazi perspective.”⁵⁶

These pastors were fighting for Germany; To remove the humiliation of World War I. You would have Christian rallies with highly nationalistic German overtones. Sadly, we’re seeing similar things in America today. Recently, in San Antonio, a Christian/political conference was hosted by a large church. One of the guest speakers led the crowd in several chants of “Let’s Go Brandon,” which is a euphemism for “blank” Joe Biden. In a church. I’m not saying that America is becoming Nazi Germany. I am saying that merging religion and politics quickly becomes racist nationalism.

We can see how far and how quickly the German Christians embraced Nazism in the November 1933 speech from Reinhold Krause, leader of the Nazi Party in Berlin. “In the Berlin Sports Palace, the German Christian Faith Movement had staged what turned out to be a spectacular and grotesque stadium crusade

⁵⁵ Dean Stroud, *Preaching in Hitler’s Shadow, Sermons of Resistance in the Third Reich* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 36.

⁵⁶ Janet L. Gesme, “Martin Luther’s Two Kingdoms Theory: An Analysis through the Lens of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Religionless Christianity,” WLC.MA thesis, (Portland: Portland State Univ., 2013), 58.

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for the soul of the Aryan nation.”⁵⁷ Krause⁵⁸ “derided the Old Testament as a book about miserly Jews, pimps, and cattle dealers that should be ripped out of the Bible and mentioned only as a foil representing a tyrannized faith. Hymns, liturgy, and preaching must...serve and quicken the spirit of pure Germanism. He demanded that the cross be removed from churches and that the colorful banners that draped church halls and sanctuaries, those marking feasts in the Christian calendar, be replaced by the red and black of swastikas.”⁵⁹

In 1938, Friedrich Werner, an influential German Christian leader, “came up with the idea that an appropriate gesture for Hitler’s birthday would be for all pastors to swear an oath of loyalty to their *führer*, just as military officers did. Those who refused would be dismissed from their pastorates.”⁶⁰

This is not to say that Nazism was pro-Christian. Hitler and the Nazis viewed Christianity as a weak, effeminate religion. “Along with worshiping a Jewish God, traditional Christianity praises virtues that Nazis found repugnant: love of neighbor,

⁵⁷ Marsh, 205.

⁵⁸ Krause was relieved of his duties after this, but not because of *what* he said, but because it was not what Hitler wanted publicized before the upcoming 1936 Olympics. He formed the German People’s Church Movement. This body would take the Deutsche Christen mission of reconciling Christianity and Nazism to new, hitherto unimagined extremes of heresy, with its sole thesis that a pure German faith “means the end of the Christian Church.” Marsh, 206.

⁵⁹ Marsh, 205.

⁶⁰ Stroud, 191.

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forgiveness, peacemaking, and humility, to name but a few. Especially incomprehensible for Nazis was the Christian law to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”⁶¹

THE CONFESSING CHURCH

This movement “developed during the 1930s from their resistance to Adolf Hitler’s attempt to make the churches an instrument of National Socialist (Nazi) propaganda and politics.”⁶² They understood Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms as forbidding them from resisting the State but also protested Hitler’s attempt to enter the Church. “Despite their opposition to the German Christian movement, the Confessing Church did not object to most elements of Nazism, and some people within the movement were Nazi Party members;”⁶³ they just didn’t want Nazism in the Church.

In fact, two top bishops who appealed to Hitler in 1934, along with Martin Niemöller, ended up signing “a statement of unconditional loyalty to Hitler; Niemöller did not.”⁶⁴ It is important to note that not only were German Christians not political, but they left social work up to the State. “They

⁶¹ Stroud, 30-31.

⁶² “Confessing Church,” *Britannica*, April 8, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Confessing-Church>.

⁶³ “Protestant Churches and the Nazi State,” *Facing History and Ourselves*, accessed on April 23, 2022, <https://www.facinghistory.org/holocaust-and-human-behavior/chapter-5/protestant-churches-and-nazi-state>.

⁶⁴ “Protestant Churches and the Nazi State.”

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assigned the institutionalized church the task of proclaiming God's Word within the four walls of the church and claimed that social work should not be done by the church."⁶⁵

RESISTERS

Germany was ill-equipped theologically to deal with Hitler. There was no doctrine for moving against the State. "German tradition had no room for political resistance from a theological perspective, because for more than four hundred years the evangelical churches in Germany had been closely tied to the state for protection."⁶⁶ A third group arose to actively resist the Nazis and to seek to rescue the vulnerable. The most famous member of this group is Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

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Sometimes these kingdoms collide. Luther had not thought of a murderous regime such as the Nazis when developing his doctrine. Luther's main goal was to get the Pope out of politics, but he did not deal with the opposite concern—the State taking over the Church. "Today, as we read the sermons (of pastors who resisted the Nazis) and as we look back on the timid Christian response to the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes, we need to remember how unforeseen the evils of Nazi

⁶⁵ Gesme, 58.

⁶⁶ Stroud, 48.

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Germany were and how unprepared Christian tradition was to respond to them.⁶⁷

Martin Luther's theory of politics was based on his so-called doctrine of the 'two kingdoms.' This insisted that Church and State are strictly separate spheres, which must not encroach on one another's territory. *By the early twentieth century, that original theory had evolved, or degenerated, to the point at which the Church doubted its right to express opinions on any political matter at all.* It might, at a pinch, offer some generalized ethical principles, but it accepted that how to apply those principles in the messy world of politics was beyond its sphere of competence. In effect, if a government ever appealed to reasons of State to justify its actions, Lutheran churches had no reply. God had—evidently—permitted the Nazis to take power. The Church could hardly defy his manifest will.⁶⁸

But just like in so many other countries, from Communist Romania, where more than 5,000 priests were imprisoned,

⁶⁷ Stroud, 48-49.

⁶⁸ Alec Ryrie, "Two Kingdoms in the Third Reich," *Gresham College*, November 18, 1998, <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/two-kingdoms-in-the-third-reich#:~:text=Martin%20Luther's%20theory%20of%20politics,encroach%20on%20one%20another's%20territory.>

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to Communist China, where the true believers resisted the government-sponsored “Three Self Church,” there have been those who have said with the apostles, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges. As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). But there have also been those who compromised their faith to please despots and dictators.

As the Nazis grew in power, many Christian leaders began to struggle with their racism and persecution. “What is often called ‘the Church struggle’ (*Kirchenkampf*) refers broadly to the situation of the Christian churches in Germany from Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 to the end of the Second World War in 1945.”⁶⁹

The theological giant “Karl Barth issued a call to arms against the German Christian movement and against any marriage of Christianity with Nazism.”⁷⁰ Pastor Paul Schneider urged his congregation to resist Nazism and to obey God rather than man. It was too much for his flock to handle. “Less than a month after he preached this sermon, Schneider was forced out of the pulpit and reassigned to the churches of Dickenshied and Womrath, where the congregations were more supportive of the

⁶⁹ Michael DeJonge, “How does the church resist an unjust state? Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology of resistance,” *ABC*, accessed on March 15, 2022, <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/dietrich-bonhoeffers-theology-of-resistance/10766546>.

⁷⁰ Stroud, 45.

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Confessing Church.”⁷¹ (The *Confessing Church* was the name of the anti-Hitler, true evangelical church.) Schneider became the first evangelical pastor to die in a concentration camp.

German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s response to Nazism has been one of the most hotly contested and discussed topics since his death at the hands of the Nazis in 1945. Because he didn’t survive the war, biographers have been seeking to piece his life together for almost 80 years. We, too, will take a modest stab at it.

Being Lutheran, Bonhoeffer did not immediately develop his theories on civil disobedience. He was, like most theologians and pastors of his day, non-political. Nevertheless, he would soon find his voice on the matter. He spoke against the Nazis and called the Church to choose sides. He advocated for helping the Jews. He taught: “The Church has an *unconditional obligation* to the victims of any ordering of society, even if they do not belong to the Christian community” (emphasis added).⁷²

Bonhoeffer began “to flesh out his ideas on how the Church should engage a State that was destroying the innocent. Many Christians simply did not know what to do. They did not know what they could do or even what they should do. Bonhoeffer

⁷¹ Stroud, 88.

⁷² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *A Testament to Freedom: The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and E. Burton Nelson (New York City: HarperOne, 2009), 132.

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offered three radical responses to the injustice that would place Christians in real danger from the State if they were to take the side of the Jewish victims.”⁷³ It appears that Bonhoeffer began to oppose Luther’s doctrine of *zwei Rieche* at this time (even if not outright) by suggesting that first, we must “question state injustice and call the state to responsibility; the second was to help the victims of injustice, whether they were church members or not.”⁷⁴ Ultimately, however, the Church might find itself called ‘not only to help the victims who have fallen under the wheel but to fall into the spokes of the wheel itself in order to halt the machinery of injustice.’⁷⁵ Better translated, “the Church has to throw itself *between the spokes of the wheel* in order to stop it! (emphasis added).”⁷⁶ He would grow further away from the idea that the Christian must pledge loyalty to

⁷³ Stroud, 49.

⁷⁴ Sadly, many pastors were for protecting Jews, if they were members of the Church. But they had not stomach to stand up for unconverted Jews. They based this on a misunderstanding of Galatians 3:28, concluding that Jewish converts were no longer Jewish, but “in Christ.” Of course, that would mean that women and men are no longer men or women.

⁷⁵ Victoria Barnett, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Church and the Jewish Question,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed on April 24, 2022, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/special-focus/dietrich-bonhoeffer/church-and-jewish-question>.

⁷⁶ Renate Wind, “A Spoke in the Wheel: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and His Development into Political Resistance,” *Graduate Theological Union*, March 31, 2003, <https://www.gtu.edu/news-events/events/lecture-address/other/a-spoke-in-the-wheel-dietrich-bonhoeffer-and-his-development-into-political-resistance>.

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the State. “Four years later ... he would begin to criticize the Two Kingdoms Theory harshly.”⁷⁷

Later, in *Ethics*, which was published posthumously, he passionately wrote: “The Church ... was silent when it should have cried out because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven.... It has stood by while violence and wrong were being done under cover of ... the name of Jesus Christ.... The Church confesses that it has witnessed the lawless application of brute force, the physical and spiritual suffering of countless innocent people, oppression, hatred, and murder and that it has not found ways to hasten their aid.”⁷⁸

In other words, he would agree with Paul and Peter about doing your best—”as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Rom. 12;18)—and seeking to obey the government. But he would conclude that when grave injustice is taking place, such as the murdering of millions of Jews, one must take their stand against the government. This was my attitude back in the early 90s when I blocked an abortion clinic with several other citizens concerned about the lives of the unborn.

KILLING HITLER

It was in this third point that Bonhoeffer met his demise for his participation in a failed attempt to assassinate Hitler in

⁷⁷ Gesme, 66.

⁷⁸ Marsh, 289.

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1944. He was hung just weeks before the end of the war. Was it right for him to try and kill Hitler? As mentioned above, it was Nero, a Hitleresque madman who had killed countless Christians, who was ruling the empire when both Paul and Peter wrote of obeying earthly authorities. These are weighty theological issues with which we must wrestle. If you had a gun to Hitler's head in 1939, would God have wanted you to pull the trigger? My emotions scream, "*SHOOT!*" But we don't do theology through our emotions—and yet, we also don't do theology divorced from them.

Is it biblical to kill an evil leader? Do Peter and Paul have an expectation that believers will seek to assassinate Nero? It seems not (Romans 11:1-7, 1 Pet. 2:17)—but to stay focused on preaching the gospel (Acts 20:24). In the Hebrew Bible, we have Jehu, a zealous warrior, killing the evil Jezebel (2 Kings 9). However, he was given a mandate by Elisha, and the Hebrew prophets spoke the word and will of the Lord. The word of the Lord was higher than the law of the king.

As opposed to Jehu, King David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14) and yet not afraid to use his sword. He had two opportunities to kill his nemesis King Saul but would not lift his hand against the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24:6). He wasn't saying that Saul was godly, but he understood that all authority comes from God—even bad authority, as Paul confirms (Rom. 13:1).

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So, can we conclude that if killing Hitler would save others, it would be justified? Bonhoeffer thought so, and he based his theory on Luther—the same Luther who wrote that we should submit to the State. “Luther nicknamed the Antichrist ‘Beowulf.’ When the Beowulf enters a village, he said, the peasants have the obligation to slay him; should they fail to do so, they will incur guilt. This is why Bonhoeffer participated in a plot to kill Hitler.”⁷⁹

The pacifist wasn’t making the case to go around assassinating heads of State—this was a unique case.

The more one goes into the details of Bonhoeffer’s Christocentric ethics, the more it is clear that his involvement in the violent plot against Hitler was continuous with his previous acts of nonviolent resistance. In Bonhoeffer’s perspective, if he was a Christian pacifist before the rise of Hitler, he remained one, even as he later became involved in the assassination plot. His involvement was exceptional, a response dictated by the necessity of the concrete moment, itself willed by God. The consistency of his response rests squarely on what he regarded as his personal relationship with Jesus Christ, trusting in the mercy of the One who called him to act responsibly.

⁷⁹ Steven Wedgeworth, “Bonhoeffer and the Two Kingdoms,” *The Calvinist International*, June 24, 2013, <https://calvinistinternational.com/2013/06/24/bonhoeffer-and-the-two-kingdoms>.

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Whether one acts or refrains from acting responsibly, one's hands are dirty since no one can escape from the moral ambiguity of what life confronts us with.⁸⁰

For Bonhoeffer, he was left with two bad choices. Inaction would be sin, and assassination would be as well. He trusted in God's mercy. His friend, Eberhard Bethge, "once related that when [Bonhoeffer] became involved in this conspiracy, he said, 'Of course, Christ's words that those who draw the sword will die by the sword also apply to us (co-conspirators). But right now, reason dictates that we must do this, and then, of course, we still have to turn to God for forgiveness in Christ.' Bonhoeffer added, 'For the first time I understand what Luther meant when he wrote ... 'Sin boldly but even more boldly believe and rejoice in Christ.'"

Luther's controversial quote should not be seen as a license to sin but to show that there was no sin so great that Messiah's love couldn't cover it (1 Pet. 4:8). Luther wrote in the same paragraph, "No sin can separate us from Him ... Do you think such an exalted Lamb paid merely a small price with a meager

⁸⁰ Dennis P. McCann, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of Dirty Hands: What Counts as Christian Martyrdom?" *Journal of the Macau Ricci Institute* 6 (September 2020), <https://mrijournal.riccimac.org/index.php/en/issues/issue-6/132-dietrich-bonhoeffer-and-the-problem-of-dirty-hands-what-counts-as-christian-martyrdom>.

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sacrifice for our sins?”⁸¹ Bonhoeffer, it seems, viewed killing Hitler as a *necessary sin* that God would forgive.

RIGHTS VS. RESCUE

Putting the assassination issue aside, let’s look at Bonhoeffer’s points one and two. We have seen recently in America that ministers, like Bonhoeffer’s biographer Eric Metaxas, invoke the German pastor in opposing cultural changes that are perceived as persecution, but that is to misuse Bonhoeffer. He is not asking German believers to stand up for *their rights*; he is asking them to speak out on behalf of the others “because the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven.”⁸²

“In this essay (where he gives his three points), Bonhoeffer challenged Christians in Nazi Germany to become radical *in their love of neighbor* in a dangerous way” (emphasis added).⁸³ And scripture speaks to this issue.

- Moses rescues Israel from a political power. “God was using him to rescue them” (Acts 7:25).

⁸¹ Martin Luther, “Let Your Sins Be Strong: A Letter From Luther to Melancthon,” Christian.net, August 1, 1521, <https://christian.net/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/letsinsbe.txt>.

⁸² Marsh, 289.

⁸³ Stroud, 49.

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- “Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter” (Prov. 24:11).
- Yeshua rescues the women caught in adultery.
- Esther risks her life to rescue the Jews at Mordechai’s urging.

It is important to remember that the German Confessing Church was not protesting things they disagreed with in politics but the attempted Nazification of the Church. Paul Schneider asked his congregation, “Or perhaps [the population] just want(s) to subject the Church to the political authority of the State and shape the life of the Church to fit the current political views as the ‘German Christians’ (Nazi ‘Christians’) are currently doing.”⁸⁴

When an agent of the State tells an agent of God and his word what he can and cannot preach, the agent of God must disobey. Why? Because the agent of the State has authority to collect taxes, punish evildoers, give out speeding tickets and keep public order—but *he has no authority in this other kingdom*, where God reigns as sovereign.

At this point, we can make some theological deductions:

1. Believers should seek to obey the law of the State—the kingdom of man (Rom. 13:1-7).

⁸⁴ Stroud, 91.

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2. When the law of man collides with God's law, the believer must "obey God rather than man." (Acts 4:20)
3. The believer has a divine mandate to speak out and even act against injustice and to help victims (Luke 10:25-37, the good Samaritan).
4. If part of obeying government is to allow unbelievers to see our good deeds, as Peter says (1 Pet. 2:12), then certainly helping those being murdered would be a good deed, and turning a blind eye would be a bad deed—a sin of omission. The lack of social work in the German Church was a convenient misuse of the doctrine of the two kingdoms.
5. The question of using violence against an evil person is never seen in the Gospels or Acts. Jesus rebuked Peter for using his sword (Matt. 26:52). However, we do see God take things into his own hands (Acts 12:23). But in seeking to stop the worst genocide in human history, Bonhoeffer felt it was justified, and God would forgive him.

Let me make one more point. Could it be that in the kingdom of men, it is justified to assassinate a mass murderer, not in your duty as a believer, but in your duty as a good citizen of the State? I wrote the previous comment before I found this from Uwe Siemon-Netto, a distinguished scholar who had conversations with the aforementioned friend of Bonhoeffer, Eberhard Bethge,

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about Bonhoeffer's consent to participate in the assassination of Adolf Hitler. Bonhoeffer "did not act in his capacity as a citizen of the spiritual right-hand kingdom—Christ's realm—when he conspired to kill Hitler. He did so in his role as a resident of the secular left-hand kingdom—the realm of reason where God reigns in a hidden way."⁸⁵

LUTHER AND CORONAVIRUS

In the last few years, we have struggled with finding the line between these two kingdoms. A massive worldwide pandemic brought with it lockdowns, mask mandates, and vaccines. In the same way that many government officials were caught off guard and acted foolishly, many church leaders mistook incompetence and unreadiness for persecution.

It was a challenge when congregations were shut down, as those called to ministry have a sacred duty to teach the scriptures and the people to fellowship. So how do you navigate this? If the local municipality is demanding that churches do not meet, what should our response be? Well, that would depend: In which kingdom are they exercising authority?

1. If, in an effort to save lives, they shut down *all gatherings*, no matter who the group was, then it

⁸⁵ Uwe Siemon-Netto, "Welcome back Dietrich," *The Lutheran Witness*, Vol. 125, No. 2, (February 2006), <https://reporter.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/LWfeb06.pdf>.

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would be legitimate. Luther would say that the State has authority for this.

2. But if they said, “We will allow for gatherings for group X, but religious groups cannot meet,” they would be singling out people of faith for persecution. They would be operating in a kingdom where they have no authority, and we would not be required to obey—Bonhoeffer would tell us. One pastor in California brought this to the courts and won. At issue was not *meeting or not meeting* but selective enforcement: “California pastors voiced their dissatisfaction, questioning why small Bible study sessions are not permitted while all other minor events, marketplaces, and businesses are allowed.”⁸⁶

I hope you see the difference between the two kingdoms in which we live. I’m not talking about the pandemic, masks, vaccines, or the 2020 U.S. elections. I’m talking about *theology*—how does the Bible teach us to deal with such situations where the kingdoms collide? How can we be sure that they are really colliding, and it is not just us assuming such? And as I wrote in *Birth Pangs* which came out in September 2020, I believe the pandemic was a dress rehearsal for coming

⁸⁶ Sarah Mae, “California Churches Win Court Battle Against Newsom And His Lockdowns – And Will Be Repaid Attorney’s Fees As Well,” Christianity Daily, May 20, 2021, <https://www.christianitydaily.com/articles/11933/20210520/california-churches-win-court-battle-against-newsom-and-his-lockdowns---and-will-be-repaid-attorney-s-fees-as-well.htm>.

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persecution—maybe the Great Tribulation. (You can read Birth Pangs free here.) I am writing about these issues now because we may have to make hard decisions in the future. We need to understand what the Bible says about the two kingdoms and how to navigate between them.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH MODERN ISRAEL?

God works in the spirit and in the physical realm. He has spiritual kids, those who are born again—the Spiritual seed of Abraham—and he has natural kids, the physical seed of Abraham—the Jewish people. His dealings with Israel are in the physical realm, and we still need to share the gospel with them, like all nations. The entrance of God’s kingdom through Yeshua did not cancel out God’s dealings with the unsaved world. His covenants and promises do not become null and void. God’s promise to restore Israel as a geopolitical entity happened, and it happened in the kingdom of men. But soon, these two kingdoms—the kingdom of men and God—will collide.

Many theologians see the powerful revelation in God using Israel to bring forth Jesus for the salvation of mankind, but with the advent of the Ecclesia, they see no place for natural Israel. They see the Ecclesia replacing Israel as God’s people. But maybe God can have two peoples. Yes, God actually can and does, and I understand that this may be confusing. But this is why Paul prayed for the Gentiles, *that they would*

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have a revelation of this mystery of Israel in Romans 11:25.
If mysteries were simple, they wouldn't be called mysteries.

The year 1948 turned the replacement/fulfillment theological world upside down. Or at least it should have. If God no longer had a plan for natural Israel, how could she survive for 2,000 years without a country, only to be regathered? While this shocking turn of events did alter the theology of many, there are still a plethora of scholars who are still nevertheless ignorant (Paul's words, not mine) of the mystery of Israel. I challenge every theologian (and every believer) to reread Romans 11:25 and then ask yourself, "Is my understanding of Romans 11:25 revolutionary enough to be considered a '*mystery revealed*'?" If not, then you still don't get it. When Paul uses this word *mystērion*, it is to reveal something that was not clear to the Ecclesia: we will receive new bodies (1 Cor 15:51), that Gentile believers become joint heirs with Israel (Eph. 3:6), God's plan of salvation (Romans 16:25) and, of course, Israel's end-time awakening and the role of the Gentiles in bringing that about (Romans 11:25).

So, how do we make sense of this? It's very simple: While every believer is part of the global Ecclesia (God's people), God is still committed to natural Israel via the Abrahamic covenant. He has two people: the inheritors of salvation, Abraham's spiritual children, and the Jewish people, his physical kids, most of whom are in desperate need of salvation. Jewish believers are part of both groups.

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Before you say that's not fair, let me remind you that Messianic Jews are the most despised people on earth. Hated for being Jewish and hated for being believers. Then, hated by many Jews for believing in Yeshua and hated by many Christians for continuing to live as Jews. Being chosen isn't always so great. We were Jewish enough for Crusaders to kill, Inquisitionists to persecute, and Hitler to gas. We were "Christian" enough to be kicked out of the synagogue, sometimes stoned, and (in some cases) denied citizenship to the modern state of Israel. Be careful what you wish for.

CHAPTER SIX

DOMINIONS AND THE TWO KINGDOMS

Now here's the exciting twist. Both of those realms will eventually merge with each other, resulting in the millennial kingdom. You could say they hit critical mass as Yeshua is descending from heaven towards Jerusalem with the armies of heaven behind Him. This explosive event results in a new Kingdom governed by Yeshua Himself.

However, *they cannot merge now*—and this is where dominion theology is off (and becoming dangerous). Dominion theology, as taught by people like the aforementioned Johnny Enlow, has fueled the hyper-politicization of evangelicalism in America. Dominionism is a form of post-millennialism (the idea that Yeshua returns after the thousand-year millennium) that promotes a theonomy (God's law governs the world) in this age and that conservative believers are called to “take dominion” over the world, by taking control of political and cultural institutions. While the Seven Mountains theory, where Christians are called to have influence in seven cultural mountains—media, government, education, economy, religion, family, and celebration/arts—was initially more about *influence*

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for the kingdom, it has been hijacked to mean that we must take over those institutions and force a godly agenda. Many of the leaders in the Dominionist camp fully expected Trump to take over the *political mountain* for Jesus. They teach that Jesus cannot come back until we take dominion. We must bring about the full manifestation of the kingdom, and only then can Jesus come back. This would include the full evangelization of the world to Jesus (or a very large part). The kingdom of God *will* come in full manifestation, but *only* when Yeshua Himself appears in the clouds of heaven (1 Thes. 4:17, Rev. 1:7) and touches down on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3-4).

This is one of the reasons why Enlow and many other ministers were so convinced that Donald Trump was God's man and that he was going to win the 2020 election. They wrongly believed that he was part of God's plan to lead us into this age of utopia. Let me remind you of the quote of one of the leaders of one of the largest church networks in the world from the rally in Washington, DC, on January 5th, "We are going to rule and reign through Donald Trump, under the lordship of Jesus Christ." Despite President Trump's lack of character, it was enough that he would institute biblical policies and continue to nominate conservative Supreme Court judges. Enlow and other dominionists believed it would grow and grow until there was theonomy based on the Judeo-Christian ethic.

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In speaking of God putting Trump back into office, reversing the election (nine months after the fact) in July 2021, Enlow wrote on Facebook.

It will not just be a reversal (of the 2020 election) that takes place. There will be a whole upside-down turning of world systems. In that intense and even furious process, it will be the Kingdom of God that is suddenly right-side up. That is how the new era will take off. Eye hath not seen it. We are there.⁸⁷

Sounds exciting, doesn't it? The biggest problem is that *someone* is missing in the equation. His name is Yeshua. Indeed, all those things will take place (well, not the reversal of the 2020 election). A new kingdom is coming, but the dominionists teach that we bring it about. Ironically, while Jesus is missing, Donald Trump, an unbeliever (if we're going to judge by the only measure we have, which is fruit ... and I don't think we can keep saying forever that he is a baby believer), is front and center. Go figure. *This is idol worship.*

There has been almost a complete merging of right-wing American politics with Christianity. Understand, I am a conservative. I have never voted for a Democrat in my life. I have been arrested for blocking the entrance to an abortion

⁸⁷ Johnny Enlow, "Facebook Post," *Facebook*, July 29, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Restore7/posts/pfbid02BPqgbvtd1u5yEvTpfxX8LM2c4tsZLEQzSfMCkkfax-hsjdL6jYdz1zgEz4SbnXDeul>.

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clinic. But my devotion is to Yeshua alone. Let me give you one glaring example of the danger of this movement. Just recently, a Christian leader tweeted out a supposed scripture quote from a popular US politician with this: “America’s governor coming in hot with scripture today.” The only problem was that the scripture had been *altered*. Here is the *scripture*, “You gotta be ready for battle. So put on the full armor of God.” So far, it is fine, but then ... “Take a stand against the *Left’s* schemes.” The word Devil was replaced with Left. That is exactly the opposite of what Paul says in Ephesians 6, where he says that our battle *is not* against flesh and blood. The politician took a scripture and changed the wording for political purposes. He weaponized the Bible to attack his opponents *and gin up the base*.

And the people love it! There is nothing that the Trump prophets can do that does not delight them. It is the greatest deception I have ever seen. No matter how many prophecies *don’t* come to pass, they continue to grow in popularity and financial support.

Sure, many people encouraged us and expressed deep concern. But far too many defended the altering of scripture as if it was in the original text! Make no mistake—I do not support what I see as an attack on Judeo-Christian values coming from progressives. I do not support the redefining of gender or marriage. But we must find a way to take a stand against those things without compromising our witness. We still

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represent Jesus. We must be salt and life. We must remember that Satan is our enemy, and these people are our mission field!

The government they seek will not be established by any human being. No, for those two realms to merge into one, you will need a *perfect government* and a *perfect governor*. We're not going to have that before Yeshua comes back.

It breaks my heart to report to you that the leadership of the Body of believers today is in absolutely no condition to lead us into a Messianic age. You have ministers engrossed in sexual sin and other ones condoning it, even attacking those who expose it. It seems that every week we hear of another mega-church pastor who used his authority to obtain sexual favors from staff members or congregants. The prophetic movement has lost almost all credibility after the coronavirus and the 2020 elections. There is mismanagement of funds, abusive behavior, and far worse. Many leaders are ineffective in shepherding their flocks; how are they going to govern the world? Are we going to put one of the famous prosperity preachers over the treasury department? We are in no condition to run the world's institution. But there is One who is.

When Jesus comes back, He will establish his Kingdom *in Israel* as the Son of David and will rule the entire world. Only then will we see these passages finding their fulfillment.

For dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. (Ps. 22:28)

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The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. (Zech. 14:9)

Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's. (Obadiah 21)

Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isa. 2:3)

Born-again people will have glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:52-54) as there will be a *merging* of the earthly kingdom and the Kingdom of heaven coming down (Rev. 19:11ff). Only then will the Lord's name be one over all the earth (Zech. 14:9). I've never seen the possible hidden meaning in this verse before, but when it says that *his name shall be one*, maybe it is a secret hint that these two kingdoms will merge into *one* kingdom.

No longer will there be Caesar and God. *Just God.*

So, while, clearly, God has called the Church to be a light to the world in terms of personal salvation, that does not cancel out the calling in Isaiah to the Jewish people to be a light for the nations. While the Church is now given the same promise that Israel was given in Exodus 19, to be a priestly nation, that

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does not cancel out Israel's role as a nation of priests. *It's that they serve in two different realms.*

The Ecclesia, made up of Jew and Gentile, preaches the gospel and calls men to embrace salvation through Yeshua. Israel continues to be a light to the world in this earthly realm. While the nation of Israel does not preach the gospel, it has developed technologies that other nations of the world are using, far outpacing other nations when you consider that Israel only has nine million citizens. Israel develops technology for farming and agriculture, medical breakthroughs (Israel has led the way in dealing with the COVID-19 virus), and Jewish people win Nobel peace prizes *at about 75 times the rate we should* if you consider that Jewish people make up .2 percent of the world's population, but we have won 20 percent of Nobel peace prizes!⁸⁸ God is using national Israel to be a blessing to the whole world even though many theologians have written her off. What is even more ironic is that the two most hated groups on earth are the nation of Israel and the Ecclesia of Yeshua, the Messiah.

⁸⁸ "List of Jewish Nobel laureates," *Wikipedia Foundation*, accessed May 3, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Jewish_Nobel_laureates#:~:text=Nobel%20Prizes%20have%20been%20awarded,at%20least%2020%25%20were%20Jews.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT DID THE FOUNDING FATHERS REALLY SAY?

I know that many of those reading this book are not from America. However, I think there is a lot we can learn from the United States Constitution as believers. Recently, the Supreme Court in the US ruled that a high school football coach's First Amendment rights were violated when he was told that he could not privately pray on public property (the middle of the football field) after football games because students were joining him. Some parents said that their kids felt pressured. Of course, he was not pressuring them. Many conservatives hailed this as a victory, and dominionists, who see the Church taking over all the world's institutions, certainly delighted in this decision.

So here is my question. What if tomorrow, a Muslim coach takes his prayer mat to the 50-yard line after games to prayer? And then, Christian kids (and others) who love their coach start praying with him? What if some of those kids start attending his mosque? What if the coach was a satanist?! According to the ruling, would his speech be protected as well?

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While America was surely founded by people with a Christian tradition, it was not founded *just for Christians*. That would not be a democracy (see more below). This is why we have private religious schools, where children can be educated according to the religious beliefs of their parents—beyond math and science, etc. Surely you would agree that Christians should not have *more rights* than the rest of the population. Right? We must always remember that our strength is in humility and servanthood, as Yeshua taught the disciples on so many occasions like this one:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Matt. 20:25-28)

With that in mind, do you think this was the right ruling? How would you feel next week if Hindu and Buddhist coaches prayed in full view of students? (As to whether it was the correct constitutional position, see conclusion below—Not that I am a constitutional lawyer, by any means, but I have studied theology and history...and both will come into play here.)

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Personally, I am not sure I want prayer in public schools *unless it is from students*. Why? I would not want any teacher to feel the freedom to attract my children (hypothetically speaking, as my “kids” are in their 30s) to *their* religion. I do not want the government in my congregation, but neither do I feel that any one particular religion needs to be in the schools. Of course, students can evangelize, pray, and have Bible clubs...which is guaranteed in the Constitution in the first amendment. (I came to Yeshua because of two zealous seniors in high school who shared Jesus *every day!*)

WHEN DID THE HISTORIC CHURCH BEGIN TO DECLINE?

The *decline* in the Church began when Constantine, the first Roman emperor to become a Christian, made Christianity legal in 312 CE. *The Church was much more powerful without the help of the State*. Before this, it was mostly illegal, and believers were persecuted. For the first 300 years, it was considered the greatest honor to be martyred for your faith. Then, suddenly, it was legal. And the power was diminished.

[W]ith the church’s institutionalization—and in the early fourth century’s changing of the status of the church from a minority to a state-recognized religious establishment—charismatic manifestations seem to have tamed some.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Veli Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 32.

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Some 70 years later, in 380 CE, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Christian leaders went from being persecuted to being celebrated. “Its bishops were once merely leaders of congregations; they now became pillars of Roman society, *with power and influence*.”⁹⁰ It wasn’t long until the Church had “temporal” power, meaning that in addition to spiritual authority, it could *also govern politically over nations*. “The Roman Catholic Church made religion and government *inseparable* in portions of Europe during the Middle Ages.”⁹¹ Sadly, “Christianity began to change. Some welcomed its new power and influence; others were anxious that its new status would compromise its beliefs and, above all, its values.”⁹² The latter proved to be right.

RELIGION IN AMERICA

The Puritans fled the persecution of James I and Charles I in England to *the New World*.

Their society was a theocracy that governed every aspect of their lives. Freedom of religion and freedom of speech or of the press were as foreign to the Puritans as to the Church of England. When other colonists

⁹⁰ McGrath, 43.

⁹¹ Daniel Baracskey, “Puritans,” *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1372/puritans>.

⁹² McGrath, 44.

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arrived with differing beliefs, they were driven out by the Puritans.⁹³

Roger Williams, who founded Rhode Island, fled Massachusetts after suggesting the separation of Church and State to the Puritans. Williams believed, “Church and state should be separate; above all, the state should not be able to enforce the first four of the Ten Commandments.”⁹⁴ Yes, the state would enforce laws against murder or defrauding someone, but not your commitment to God—that would be for inside the congregation and, of course, your heart. For instance, *Sabbath-keeping* should not be a legally punishable offense, whereas fraud should be.

Williams’s Rhode Island was free for people of any denomination of Christianity and for Jews, as well. This did not quench evangelistic fervor but took the task out of the hands of the State and put it in the hands of the Church, where it belonged. The founding fathers rejected the Puritans’ view and copied the Rhode Island example. It’s very important for us to recognize this. “The First Amendment specifically prohibits the kind of national religious establishment that had once dominated colonies such as Massachusetts.”⁹⁵ The Church of England had been the state religion in many of the colonies—this is one of

⁹³ “Puritans.”

⁹⁴ McGrath, 201.

⁹⁵ “Puritans.”

the main reasons for the Declaration of Independence. “No Protestant denomination was designated as the ‘established church’ in its place.”⁹⁶

THE GRUESOME “THIRTY YEARS’ WAR”

Nothing is worse for evangelism than the State and the Church being merged. Have you heard of the “Thirty Years’ War”?

‘The Thirty Years’ War was largely waged within the Holy Roman Empire from 1618 to 1648. One of the most destructive wars in European history, it caused an estimated 4.5 to 8 million deaths, and some areas of Germany experienced population declines of over 50%.⁹⁷

Who was fighting this war? This was a war between the Catholic Church and the German reform churches. Yes, as many as eight million died fighting in the name of Christianity! The only good that came out of this war was “a yearning for peace led to a new emphasis on toleration, and growing impatience with religious disputes.”⁹⁸ They came to the realization that “religion was to be a matter of private belief, not state policy.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ “Puritans.”

⁹⁷ “Thirty Years’ War.” Wikimedia Foundation, 21 Aug. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years%27_War.

⁹⁸ McGrath, 215.

⁹⁹ McGrath, 215.

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We should learn from them, lest history repeats itself. Today, many on both the far-right and far-left are stirring up both religious and Marxist zeal. The Marxists don't listen to me, but I can tell you this. If you want to save America from Marxism, win them to Jesus! Pray for a revival! Don't look for a violent battle. That is how even believers ended up in the Capitol building on January 6. Yes, I know of a Messianic rabbi who was arrested, pleaded guilty, and was sentenced because of his involvement in the U.S. Capitol incident on January 6. He expressed extreme remorse at his sentencing, but I can only wonder what he was preaching to his congregation in the months leading up to it.

SEPARATION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

I would hope that Colorado Congresswoman Lauren Boebert would study a little Church history in between posing with her children with assault rifles. Recently, she *eloquently* declared in a church...

The church is supposed to direct the government. The government is not supposed to direct the church. That is not how our Founding Fathers intended it, and I'm tired of this separation of church and state junk. That's not in the Constitution. It was in a stinking letter, and it means nothing like what they say it does.

I cannot stress enough how dangerous such rhetoric is. Boebert is wrong, of course. I don't take much of what she

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says too seriously, as she is a sensationalist, an exhibitionist. She says crazy stuff to get noticed. But she also has a huge following. It should be noted that she dropped out of high school and earned her GED. I'm not seeking to poke fun at her but simply to establish that she is not an academic and certainly not an authority on the Constitution. She's more likely to repeat something she heard from somewhere else without knowing the context—such as the background of the Separation of Church and State. The problem is that she has a huge platform and can affect the opinions of millions of people with her uneducated quips.

We've already established that Jesus himself separated the Church and the State. Paul and Peter make the distinction. Augustine argued for it after the sacking of Rome. Luther demanded it—to get the pope out of the State. And our founders adopted it for the protection of both the Church and the State.

The “stinking letter” that Congresswoman Boebert referred to was from Thomas Jefferson, the eloquent author of the Declaration of Independence and the third President of the United States. Here is the relevant part of the letter that he wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions

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only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.

“The religious diversity of the newly established United States of America was such that any decision along these lines would have led to intense in-fighting. An alternative solution was therefore proposed.”¹⁰⁰ The idea of a separation between these two influential entities was unique and bold—and biblical!

Jefferson wanted to assure Americans of two things: 1) the government would not interfere in the affairs of the Church. And 2) the government would not favor one religion over another or establish a state religion (as had been the habit in Europe since 380 CE).

For many at the time, such as the Baptist minister Isaac Backus (1724–1806), this separation amounted to a virtual guarantee that America would be a Christian nation, whose churches would be free from political interference and manipulation. As Backus argued, when “church and state are separate, the effects are happy, and they do not at all interfere with each other:

¹⁰⁰ McGrath, 229.

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but where they have been confounded together, no tongue nor pen can fully describe the mischiefs that have ensued.” Backus saw the “wall of separation between church and state” as ensuring freedom of religious belief and practice for all, and privilege for none.¹⁰¹

There is nothing in the teaching of Yeshua that would lead us to believe that he has an expectation that the Church would take over nations. No, we are best in *spiritual* guerrilla warfare. When the apostles asked about Israel becoming a kingdom again, Yeshua said, “Not yet...first get filled with the Holy Spirit and take my gospel to every nation!” (Paraphrase of Matt. 28:18ff and Acts 1:6-8). Revelation 11:15 speaks about the day when the kingdoms of the world will come under the sovereignty of God, but that is not until Jesus returns.

THE BEST WAY TO WIN PEOPLE TO YESHUA

Remember, the apostles had no political power. They were persecuted by the Jewish establishment and the Roman authorities ... and nothing could stop them. They moved in signs and wonders, not as a political force. And they were very successful. As an evangelist, I’m not writing this because I don’t want to see every human being embrace our Messiah. Rather, it is because I believe the best and most successful method is from outside the government.

¹⁰¹ McGrath, 230.

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Please don't misunderstand me. I want to see more believers involved in politics. You can be a believer, shining your light in the political world, without demanding that the State enforce one particular religion. A Christian president should not force Christianity on the nation but should demonstrate his faith through his integrity of life—faithfulness to his wife, honesty with the people, promoting people for the right reasons, and no scandals. Yes, he (or she) should speak about his (or her) faith. Why not?! But that doesn't make it a state religion.

THE GLORY OF AMERICA

The beauty of American democracy is not that we force one religion on the whole nation or even give one religion a superior place, but that we have the freedom to seek, through freedom of speech, religion, and expression, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to persuade our fellow citizens that Yeshua is “the way, the truth and the life.” One of the reasons that Muslims will leave very violent jihadist cultures for America, and never consider Islamic terror, is because freedom is amazing!

Everything else has been tried in history since Rome's embrace of Christendom. The Church ruled the State. The State ruled the Church. Clergy were appointed by the pope. Clergy were appointed by the emperor. During the French Revolution, clergy “became employees of the state, elected by their parish

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or bishopric.”¹⁰² If that is not a recipe for corruption, I don’t know what is! Thomas Jefferson’s separation between Church and State was revolutionary, and it has worked for 250 years.

The First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” So, the case of the praying coach is somewhere in the middle. The school is clearly not establishing a religion, but it may have been prohibiting the free exercise of one. Can someone exercise their freedom of religion on school grounds? We have been arguing over that for a long time. But understand that if Americans do conclude (and it is now law) that a Christian coach can pray in view of his students, based on the Constitution, those same freedoms apply to Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Satanists, etc. I am not looking for America to be a Christian nation but a nation of Christians (and Messianic Jews) who come to faith through a massive revival!

WAS AMERICA REALLY ESTABLISHED AS A CHRISTIAN NATION?

So, with this ruling and its future implications in full view, let’s take a broader view of America’s history and look at the two kingdoms’ principles again. First, I want to remind you that prior to America, there had not been yet in history any long-standing republic where the separation between Church

¹⁰² McGrath, 231.

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and State was a reality. Either the State controlled the Church, or the Church controlled the population. Both models produced extreme abuses. In fleeing English tyranny, the founders were not anti-religion but wanted to protect the Church from the State, as well as the people from feeling that they had to swear allegiance to a particular church, as in England. There were three opinions regarding the relation of the State to the Church.

1. Patrick Henry felt that the State needed to control religion to maintain order. He proposed to tax by the State for the Church, but that each individual could choose which Church his tax would support.
2. “Rationalists such as Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) and James Madison (1751–1836) argued that the separation of church and state was essential to guarantee liberty of conscience.”¹⁰³
3. Those of the smaller denominations wanted a complete separation. They felt that when the Church and the State were merged, corruption ensued. This author agrees with them 100%. That does not mean that you cannot be a Christian in politics. It means that you understand the difference between secular authority and congregational authority—something that Europe could not figure

¹⁰³ McGrath, 255.

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out from 312 CE until recently. “The establishment clause separates Church from State, but not religion from politics or public life. Individual citizens are free to bring their religious convictions into the public arena.”¹⁰⁴

The second of these positions soon achieved political dominance. Jefferson and Madison believed that the separation of the religious and civil realms was the best way to ensure domestic peace and to avoid the oppression and injustice that could arise from religious establishment. They had no desire for the new American republic to be damaged by wars of religion like those that had caused such damage in Europe [*referring to the Thirty Years War which produced up to eight million deaths*] in the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁵

All of the Framers understood that “no establishment” meant no national church and no government involvement in religion. Thomas Jefferson and James

¹⁰⁴ “The First Amendment Says Nothing about ‘Separation of Church and State’ or a ‘Wall of Separation between Church and State.’ Where Did This Idea Come from? Is It Really Part of the Law?,” Freedom Forum Institute, accessed August 21, 2022, <https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/about/faq/the-first-amendment-says-nothing-about-separation-of-church-and-state-or-a-wall-of-separation-between-church-and-state-where-did-this-idea-come-from-is-it-really/>.

¹⁰⁵ McGrath, 255.

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Madison believed that without separating Church from State, there could be no real religious freedom.¹⁰⁶

While Jefferson was the brilliant architect of the Declaration of Independence, he was not a Christian but a deist. It is a mistake to believe that every one of the founding fathers was evangelical in how we understand that word today. Deists believe that God created this world but left it to us humans to figure it out, giving us enough wits to make the right decisions. Remember the misinformed words of Congresswoman Lauren Boebert of Colorado above, the Church should direct the State. *There's no question that Jefferson was not recommending such a thing.* He was not a protestant. Large sections of his New Testament had been cut out, which you can see at his home in Monticello. He kept all of the moral teachings while discarding accounts of the miraculous. But even had he been a believer, the point of America was freedom. If the Church was indeed supposed “direct the government,” then *which church?* Presbyterians? Catholics? Baptists? That was the very thing that Jefferson sought to convey to the Baptists in Connecticut, that there would be no State Church dictating government.

In 1779, Jefferson introduced in Virginia a “Bill to Establish Religious Freedom.” The groundbreaking idea argued “for freedom of religion, including the right not to support any

¹⁰⁶ “The First amendment says Nothing about Separation of Church and State...”

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religion. The government should not, he argued, compel anyone to support a religion in which they did not believe. There should be no religious test for anyone intending to hold public office.”¹⁰⁷

Virginia was still not ready for such an idea. The bill failed. But several years later, it was re-introduced and passed in 1786 by a margin of 60-27. The next year America would adopt a constitution. Two years later, the Bill of Rights was added—the first ten amendments. The very first one addresses the issue of religion in the State.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

I don’t know if it is because I am so in awe of the American Constitution or simply proud to be a Virginian, but I teared up with emotion simply reading about this history and recognizing that it has lasted for 250 years.

Most people know that the actual phrase “the separation of Church and State” is not in the Constitution, but that was exactly what both Jefferson and Madison intended. Roger Williams, mentioned above, who fled the theocracy that the

¹⁰⁷ McGrath, 255.

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Puritans were building in Massachusetts to establish Rhode Island, came up with the phrase in 1644 when he said that there must be a “wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world.”¹⁰⁸

Remember, Jesus himself seems to affirm these two separate kingdoms when he says to render unto Caesar that which has Caesar’s image on it. But we give to God that which belongs to him—our devotion. We live in an earthly kingdom, but we pray for the breaking forth of the kingdom of God every day (Matt. 6:10). Eventually, the kingdom of this world will be taken over by the kingdom of God (Rev. 11:15).

But God is the one who gives authority to earthly rulers. “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.” (Rom. 13:1) And, as a reminder, referring to the sociopath, Nero, Peter tells believers to “Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, *honor the emperor*.”

That is why I do not want America to either govern religion or be governed by religion. Our moral laws are based on the Ten Commandments, but like Roger Williams said, not the

¹⁰⁸ John S. Baker, “Wall of Separation,” The First Amendment Encyclopedia, accessed June 14, 2022, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/886/wall-of-separation>

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first four—those are matters of conscience. It was in 1802 that Jefferson wrote those words to the Danbury Baptist Association about building a wall of separation between Church and State. The Baptists were not concerned about an atheist government or an immoral government but a religious government if a majority of congressmen came from one particular tradition. They were worried that they would then mandate their denominational views over the rest of the nation. “A religious majority, they suggested, might easily win the magistrate over to their cause, with damaging consequences for religious minorities.”¹⁰⁹

Some say that Jefferson went beyond what was written in the Constitution. For me, he captured the essence of what was written.

Although the words “separation of church and state” do not appear in the First Amendment, the establishment clause was intended to separate Church from State. When the First Amendment was adopted in 1791, the establishment clause applied only to the federal government, prohibiting the federal government from any involvement in religion. By 1833, all states had disestablished religion from government, providing protections for religious liberty in state constitutions.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ McGrath, 256.

¹¹⁰ “The First amendment says Nothing about Separation of Church and State...”

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WHAT ABOUT JEWS AND OTHERS?

According to Dr. Ronald Kahn, “The First Amendment establishment and free exercise clauses represented an implicit promise to Jews, and members of other minority faiths, that the New World offered them the opportunity to exercise their faith freely and without being regarded as second-class citizens.”¹¹¹

Yet the first amendment to the Constitution prevented prejudice against Catholicism from becoming government policy at the national level. Despite its overwhelmingly Protestant legacy, the United States of America determined that it would not legislate nationally against Catholicism in any form.

One reason we know that the Founders intended freedom was the establishment of other religions such as Christian Science, Mormonism, and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Now, before you *poo-poo* such things, remember that there is nothing as powerful as the gospel. No sooner were these religions established than the power of God was poured out on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, causing a revival that reverberates to this day. The Pentecostal movement, which possibly could not have ever flourished in the old country because of the State’s control of religion, grew from 0 to 600,000,000 in just 120

¹¹¹ Ronald Khan, “Judaism,” *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, accessed June 14, 2022, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1368/judaism>.

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years! It has spread from America to Europe, to Asia, and all over Africa and South America.

It is my firm conviction that government is not needed in the expansion of the kingdom of God. Government is needed for law and order. But the Great Commission does not need Caesar's help, just a commitment not to interfere. And even if the government does interfere, "the gates of hell" cannot stop the kingdom of God.

SECTION III

ISRAEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER EIGHT

PROBLEM PASSAGES

Now that we have sufficiently established that there are two kingdoms operating at the same time and we maintain that God can be faithful to the Jewish people and to the Ecclesia, let's turn our attention to some passages in the New Covenant which those in the replacement, fulfillment, transference camp use to say God is no longer committed to the everlasting covenants He made with ethnic Israel.

SEED OR SEEDS?

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Messiah. (Gal. 3:16)

When Paul speaks about the promise being to a seed (*singular*) in Galatians, he was merely being creative in his usage of words. We often forget that the writers of the New Testament were skilled at their craft. As westerners, we tend to think that everything must be literal. We are a very *fact-oriented* culture. But, in ancient literature, there was license for

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hyperbole and even exaggeration. Did Jesus really want us to cut our hands off or gouge out our eyes? Did he want us to hate our parents? Were there exactly 5,000 people eating the fish and the loaves? Of course not. These were all literary devices to get the point across. It was not deception, as the reader understood the intent of the writer.

Paul could not possibly be saying that the *one and only* fulfillment of the promises to Abraham's seed is in Yeshua.

1. Paul knows that in Hebrew, the word seed, *zarah*, is just like English. It has one form for both plural and singular—a collective singular—just like offspring. To be crass, Rabbi Paul is not stupid. Imagine somebody arguing that because someone said they saw a dozen deer or a dozen fish, they actually meant one fish or one deer because they did not say fishes or deers. Even a first grader could explain to this person that these nouns take the same form in plural and English.
2. The seed promised to Abraham is often said to be as the sand of the seashore or the stars of the sky (Gen. 22:17). There is no way that sand or stars could be interpreted in the singular.
3. Such an interpretation would contradict the plain meaning of literally dozens of passages in the Hebrew Bible. It turns God into a very fickle, unfaithful Father.

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If He can turn his back on the Jewish people after making such powerful covenants and promises, how much more the Church?

Still, many believers have wrestled over the apostle's meaning here. Let's not forget Peter's advice regarding Paul's writing—which is just as much scripture as Paul's letters.

[Paul] writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:16)

Regarding this passage, John Miller writes,

These words imply an existent, influential collection of Paul's letters that is circulating in the churches and is being seriously misconstrued along with "the rest of the scriptures." This is precisely what those who created the Christian Bible believed was happening in the wake of the Marcionite movement (which denied that the God of the Old Testament was the God of the New). Thus, these words bear explicit and compelling witness to the felt concerns of those who fashioned this Bible in the fight against heresies.¹¹²

¹¹² John Miller, *How the Bible Came to Be* (New York: Paulist, 2004), 64.

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Paul's words were being used apart from the other books of the Bible to create heresies. I would argue that trying to interpret one verse in Galatians, which is admittedly difficult, without the whole of the Bible is dangerous—and that is precisely what fulfillment/replacement theology does.

Paul, who is not stupid, is merely using a *Midrashic hermeneutic*, where one looks for the underlying significance of a Bible text to communicate something hidden in the plain reading.¹¹³ He is simply saying that *the greatest fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham was in the one man, Yeshua*. People in the first century would have understood this.

For instance, Matthew interprets Hosea 11:1 differently than how the prophet perceived it: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.” Though clearly, it is referring to Israel, there is a hidden meaning as well, referring to the Messiah, “my son,” coming with his parents out of Egypt after Herod the Great died. (Matt. 2:15) “The biblical text has an obvious or plain sense,” in this case, Israel coming out of Egypt, “but its deeper meaning was there to be discovered,”¹¹⁴ Yeshua, returning to Israel. This is a midrash

¹¹³ Joseph uses the same technique when he interprets Pharaoh's dream. He says the fact that Pharaoh had a dream twice means that it is definitely going to happen. It is fixed.

¹¹⁴ Leonard Greenspoon, “The Septuagint,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 707.

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(Jewish interpretive device). Though the greater fulfillment is in Yeshua, it does not cancel the former fulfillment.

Another way of looking at it is that Paul is saying that God strategically used the Hebrew word *zarah*, or *seed*, which, as noted, is the same in its singular and plural forms. In so doing, he was able to refer both to a covenant people that would be a blessing to the nations and to his Messiah, who would singularly bring salvation to the nations. He is not saying that this is the only fulfillment, any more than he actually wanted Galatians to emasculate themselves (5:12)! The fact that Paul often exaggerated to make a point was an accepted literary device in his day and is in ours as well. We simply wrongly assume that the Bible cannot employ such devices. (Don't tell Jesus, who told people to hate their family members and cut off body parts!)

If we conclude that Paul just canceled every use of the word seed as a singular collective and we must now view the word seed in all cases as singular (If you take the fulfillment theology view of this verse, that must be your conclusion. Seed must be "seeds" to be plural!), then we should surely take note that Paul uses seed as a collective singular just 13 verses later! "If you belong to Messiah, then *you* are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29)

It would be ludicrous to suggest that Paul was unaware of the collective sense of *sperma*, or he was hoping

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that his readers would not detect his “logical flaw.” In this very passage—indeed, at its climax—he affirms, “If you are of Christ, then you [plural!] are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise” (3:29). The collective meaning of the term is fundamental for Paul’s argument, and thus we can hardly read 3:16 as though he were wishing to exclude such a meaning.¹¹⁵

We must understand that the promise of the land was not only made to Abraham but reaffirmed to his seed(s), Isaac and Jacob. (Gen. 26:3, 35:12). So clearly, Paul was not canceling the promises of God. And if the promise was *only to Yeshua*, how did the Jewish people ever possess the Land in the first place? How did David conquer more land? How did the Maccabees regain independence in the middle of the second century BC? How did the Jewish people remain an identifiable people group for 2,000 years in exile, only to return and “possess the land.”

The context here is not land but the body of Messiah. Paul is saying that as far as the Galatians are concerned, who were being compelled to be circumcised, ala the Abrahamic covenant, such acts are a waste of their time. They are not part of that covenant. But they are part of the other seed promises to Abraham that are fulfilled in Yeshua.

¹¹⁵ Moises Silva, “Galatians,” in *A Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 807.

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- “...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:3)
- “You will be the father of many nations.” (Gen. 17:4)
- “...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 22:18)

These speak of the body of Messiah worldwide, of the Gentiles coming into the kingdom from every nation. Paul is merely using a literary device to emphasize this. But he clearly is not rejecting the land promises, as he confirms them elsewhere (Rom. 3:1-4, 9:4, 15:8) in the same book!

Could it be that Paul is saying what Matthew does with prophecy? Matthew makes it clear that the greatest fulfillment of Hosea 11:1 is in Yeshua, and yet, we know there was a fulfillment in Israel coming out of Egypt. However, Matthew doesn't even mention the former fulfillment because it is obvious. Paul does not point out the obvious, as the entire Old Covenant tells the story of God's covenant with Israel, not to mention the beginning chapters of the New Testament. He's revealing a “mystery ... which was not made known to people in other generations, that “the gentiles are heirs together with Israel” (Eph. 3:5-6).

It is like Joseph: He prophetically lives out Yeshua's life:

1. betrayed by his brothers,
2. suffers unjustly,

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3. becomes the leader of the world next to Pharaoh (i.e., the Father), and
4. in the end reveals himself to his brothers,
5. who finally receive him for who he is.

Isaac is the lamb that is to be slaughtered by his father. Abraham *prophesies* that God will provide *a lamb*, but it is a “*ram caught in the thickets*” (Gen. 22:13). The lamb about whom Abraham spoke, unbeknownst to Abraham, was Yeshua and came about 1,600 years later. John recognizes this, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” But while these events pointed to Yeshua’s life in the future, they do not diminish or cancel out the significance of the lives of Isaac and Joseph.

In the same way, the fact that Yeshua was the fulfillment of the *seed* that would come, and that Israel, in possessing the land and being a light for the nations, was pointing to Messiah, it doesn’t discount the covenant God made with them. The twelve tribes are still significant in the book of Revelation. John prophesies about a time long after Paul writes to the Galatians, “Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: *144,000 from all the tribes of Israel*” (Rev. 7:4). In the end, Israel will fulfill her role as a light for Yeshua to the nations. And Paul knows this; he prophesied it (see Romans 11:23-29)!

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Having said that, I would say that Galatians 3:16 is the most difficult of the difficult verses. It certainly gives theologians something to think about. But an interpretation that simply discounts hundreds of other verses is not acceptable. Peter did say that Paul is hard to understand.

“THE TORAH IS OBSOLETE!”

Hebrew 8:13 states:

By calling this covenant ‘new,’ he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. (Heb. 8:13)

What does this mean? Many claim this is very clear: God is done with Moses. *Mo is obsolete.*

(Why did Yeshua appear with Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration? Not only was Yeshua glorified before them, but “two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in *glorious splendor*” (Lk 9:30). Now, if Jesus was about to throw Moses and his old yucky covenant under the proverbial bus, why do we have this beautiful picture of the *Word of God* speaking to the two men who represent *the Torah and the prophets*? In baseball, when a pitcher loses control of the game, the manager comes out and takes the ball from him. It’s not a nice time for the pitcher, and often, it is a bit humiliating. That is not what is happening here. Yeshua is speaking with them; they are glorified...He is honoring them, not taking the ball! Yeshua is

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once again showing the eternal importance of the Torah and the Prophets—the Hebrew scriptures. Nevertheless, they do pale in comparison to the Son. This is why Peter is rebuked by the Father for comparing mere men to the eternal divine Son.)

Let's get back to our passage. First, we are speaking not of the Abrahamic Covenant (the first Land promises) but of the Law of Moses. Secondly, the writer refers to that which is 'obsolete' as something 'outdated' that 'will soon disappear.' Are the Ten Commandments outdated? Have they disappeared? Nope. So much of civil law today finds its rooting in the Ten Commandments.

Andrew Jackson, hero of the Battle of New Orleans and 7th president of the United States: 'That book (the Bible), sir, is the rock on which our Republic rests.'¹¹⁶

The moral values and instruction found in the Bible are the basis for much of all western civil constitutions and laws.

Before the New Testament was written, Paul said, referring to the old covenant, "All Scripture is *God-breathed* and is *valuable* for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living" (2 Tim. 3:16). So, if the Old Covenant still has relevance today, what was *obsolete* and *disappearing*? Are we now going to conclude that something which was God-breathed and invaluable is suddenly obsolete?

¹¹⁶ R. V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom* (London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 519.

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Of course not. But something was obsolete and was going to soon disappear. We have to discover to what was the writer of Hebrews referring, if not the Torah.

1. Hebrews 8 centers around Jeremiah 31. That is the promise of the New Covenant to Judah in Israel. Indeed, he says that God will make a New Covenant because they broke the Old Covenant, but the hallmark of that new covenant is not that the words of the Old Covenant are thrown out but consistent with Jesus teaching on the Holy Spirit in John 14-16, the Torah is now written on our hearts. “I will put my Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33). This same language is used in the promise of an end-times Jewish revival in Ezekiel.

For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God. (Eze 36:24-28).

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2. Most scholars agree that the book of Hebrews was written around 64 CE. If that is true, then this is just six years before the destruction of the Temple and, thus, the sacrificial system. In context, chapter eight is clearly making the case that the ministry of Messiah as high priest and mediator is superior to the ministry of human cohanim, the Temple priests. It is a comparison between the heavenly tabernacle and the earthly temple, which “will soon disappear.” It is not a repudiation of all that is written before Messiah, again, God-breathed words!

In 70 CE, the Temple was destroyed, and sacrifices ceased. Why? Because “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). God did not do away with the Torah, but only the sacrificial system, as Yeshua’s ministry supersedes it. Messianic Scholar Stuart Dauerman agrees,

Is there no law that is done away with the coming of Messiah? Most certainly, there is! [Dr. Charles P.] Anderson affirms that Hebrews 7:11-12 refers *only to a change in legislation as it regards the [Temple ritual], sacrifice and priesthood*, not to a wholesale jettisoning of the Law of Moses....in other words, the change of the law spoken of in Hebrews 7:12 refers only to priestly law due to a change in priesthood.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Stuart Dauermann, *The Rabbi as a Surrogate Priest* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009), 109.

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We read in Acts 21, more than twenty years after the Jewish Yeshua movement began, that Jewish believers are honoring the Torah, and Luke presents this as something very positive—not being *stuck in the Torah*. On hearing it, they praised God; but they also said to him, “You see, brother, how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Judeans, *and they are all zealots for the Torah*. (Acts 21:20)

3. We must conclude here that the writer of Hebrews is not contradicting Yeshua, who said:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore, *anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven*, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:17-20)

And if you’re wondering how your righteousness could ever surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law,

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that is the whole point of the book of Hebrews. It is only through the righteousness of Yeshua. He was the ultimate *one-time for all sin* sacrifice.

Read the book of Hebrews. Theologically, it is a comparison of the priesthood of Yeshua to the Temple priesthood and sacrifices. Yeshua does not replace the Torah of Moses, but through his sacrifice, He makes the sacrificial system and the Temple cult (sacrificial system) obsolete. The *new* in the New Covenant is not a new Torah or law, but, as the prophet stated, “I will put my Torah in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33). In the same passage that Hebrews quotes from the “New Covenant” prophecy, God says, “For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” The Temple could not do that. The priesthood of Yeshua does. It is the Temple cult that is obsolete, not the Torah.

Is this really that difficult? This interpretation, which should be obvious, ensures that we don’t have scripture contradicting itself; it is consistent with other books of the Bible.

WHO IS A TRUE JEW?

One of the passages that is often quoted to suggest that Paul is distancing himself from Judaism and circumcision is the latter verses of Romans 2.

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you

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had not been circumcised. So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God. (Rom. 2:25-29)

The general idea they propose is that circumcision is *only* profitable if you keep the entire law. Since none of us have been able to perfectly keep the law, clearly, circumcision is a waste. That is absolutely *not* what Paul is saying here.

In the verses that precede these, Paul speaks about certain Jewish people who, despite having an appearance of religiosity, live in an ungodly way. This pushes Gentiles, to whom they were called to be a light, away from God. He quotes Isaiah 52:5 in Romans 2:24 to say that through their actions, "God's name is blasphemed amongst the nations." (It's the same point that Peter was making about Christians when he said that we should behave in such a way that the pagans would glorify God—remember?) He is addressing Jewish racial superiority.

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He is saying it is tragic that some Jews, who have the outward mark, live godless lives.

For instance, the custom of not eating with Gentiles certainly didn't help the cause of being a light to the Gentiles. This was not forbidden in Torah but was a development of the Pharisees in hopes of limiting contact with *unclean people*. Since they could not know for sure if a Gentile had done something to make them unclean, they decided just to cut off all contact. God addresses this attitude as being against Torah in Peter's vision: "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:14). While Peter initially struggles to understand the meaning (v. 17), he soon sees clearly: "But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean." No matter how noble their motive was, the result of this policy was to push Gentiles away from the ways of Yahweh instead of drawing the nations to them.

However, not all Jewish people who lived before the death and resurrection of Jesus were considered unrighteous. Certainly, there is the state of unrighteousness whereby all have sinned. But there are also all those who seek to do the will of God through a pure conscience, even if they fall short. God does not condemn these people and the Bible, in fact, praises them.

We find many godly people in the new covenant. Zechariah and Elizabeth are referred to as "righteous in the sight of God," and they "observ[ed] all the Lord's commands and decrees

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blamelessly” (Luke 1:6). To Miriam (Mary), Gabriel says, “You who are highly favored! The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). Matthew presents Joseph as “faithful to the Torah” (Matt. 1:19). Were not Anna and Simeon godly? And Abraham, in the Hebrew Bible, with whom God made a covenant of circumcision, was considered righteous because of his faith. Not to mention Moses, Queen Esther, David, and the prophet Daniel. This is not to say that they do not need forgiveness in Yeshua, but that despite being sinners by nature, they were seeking to honor God. Being righteous can have two meanings in the Bible. The first is being 100% pure in thought, action, and nature. Only Yeshua meets this standard. The second is seeking to do with the will of God, despite imperfections. Context reveals the correct meaning.

The Romans 2 passage is not referring to people like Zechariah and Elizabeth. Paul is speaking of religious hypocrites, many of whom Yeshua encountered, and the willfully ungodly.

Again, because we live in a society that expresses most things literally, we assume that Paul does the same. So, when he says a real Jew is not someone who is circumcised outwardly but inwardly as well, he is not saying that a Jewish unbeliever is no longer Jewish or that the real Jews are Christians. So, what is he saying?

Imagine if I go to Maine and eat a pineapple. And because the pineapple is *from Maine*, it’s just not very good. So, I say to everyone around me, “You people need to go to Hawaii. This

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isn't a pineapple! You've never tasted a real pineapple until you've been to Hawaii." No one is going to take me literally, thinking that I am saying that what I am eating is not an actual pineapple. It is a pineapple. It just doesn't taste nearly as good as a pineapple from Hawaii.

Paul is saying that the highest form of being a Jew is not physical circumcision alone. Rather, it is a heart committed to God. He is not throwing the entire nation of Israel under the bus, not to mention the very foundation of our faith, the Abrahamic covenant! He's definitely not saying that everything God did with Abraham in Genesis 15 and 17 had absolutely no meaning. He's very clear in Romans 9 and certainly in 11, where he says twice that God has not rejected Israel. The whole of chapter 11 is dedicated to her future comeback.

Let's be clear. If we took him literally here, he says, "A person is not a Jew who is one *only* outwardly, nor is circumcision *merely* outward and physical." *Only* and *merely*, make it clear that He is not speaking about Gentiles replacing Jews as God's covenant people, but is challenging Jews who are all already circumcised, that God is looking for more than an outward symbol—He is looking for relationship.

Now part of the problem here is that we have a chapter divider between Romans 2 and 3. So the reader closes his Bible at the end of chapter 2. The next day he wakes up and begins reading chapter 3, forgetting that Paul never stopped

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writing. Because in the very next verses, he makes it clear that circumcision is of great value.

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.

What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness? ⁴ Not at all! Let God be true, and every human being a liar. (Rom. 3:1–4).

When Paul asked this question, "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew?," anyone reading this for the first time, having just read those verses in chapter 2, would expect Paul to say, "None. There is no advantage in being Jewish or being circumcised." But he does not say that, does he? Instead, he says there is much value.

In fact, he says that God will be faithful to his covenant of circumcision and his promises to Israel even when Israel, or the majority of Jewish people, are in unbelief. God created a mechanism through the covenant of circumcision to be able to bless Israel even when they were unfaithful to the law of Moses. The rabbis say that the law of Moses has 613 commands, but the covenant of circumcision has just one, and that only applies to half the population.

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Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.” (Gen. 17:9-10)

But again, there are two spheres of authority in the universe. Physical circumcision takes place on the lower sphere or visible kingdom. But circumcision of the heart is through a relationship with Yeshua, and that is a spiritual transaction that takes place in the invisible kingdom. At the return of the Messiah, these two kingdoms or spheres are going to collide and become one.

One of the things that replacement and fulfillment theologians miss is Paul’s final words in Romans 11. He’s been speaking of this great mystery between the Ecclesia and the Jewish people. He calls it a mystery because the first Gentile believers would have great difficulty understanding it. Indeed, the Gentile believers of Rome had fallen into the same trap as the Jewish people, looking down on the other group and feeling superior.

Scholars agree that Paul’s primary motivation in writing Romans was the mistreatment of Jewish believers who had returned from exile after the expulsion of Claudius in 49 C.E. Several years later, when Nero became emperor, he allowed all the Jews to come back. With no Jews in Rome during those

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5-7 years, the Church had become 100 percent Gentile, and, somehow, they had developed feelings of judgment against the Jews. From Romans 1, Paul seeks to set this straight.

After he explains to the Romans why it is so important that they don't judge the Jewish people because God has a great end-time plan for them, Paul cannot control himself as he sees the wisdom of God's plan. Because of Jewish rejection, Gentiles have come into the kingdom, and God will then use these Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (v. 11), inviting them back into the fold. Their return will cause greater riches for the nations, meaning worldwide revival (v. 12, 15). Paul simply begins to worship!

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?" For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

NEITHER JEW NOR GENTILE?

Let's take a quick look at Galatians 3:28:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Messiah Jesus.

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Those who embrace replacement theology use this verse to say there is no longer any such thing as Jews or Gentiles. There are so many problems with that simple interpretation. First, you have to deal with the fact that Paul refers to Israel in the present tense all throughout his writings. He doesn't say *former Israel*. Second, he includes himself in that group many times, including in Romans 11 when he says, present tense, "I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham" (Rom. 11:1), just as he makes his argument that God is not finished with the people of Israel.¹¹⁸ Third, there are still men and women. And yet Paul says there are no men and women in the Messiah?

This really isn't a difficult verse. Paul is speaking of the kingdom of God, the spiritual kingdom, where Yeshua sits at the right hand of God. He's speaking of how God views people in the Ecclesia. There is no longer a hierarchy. Those of the tribe of Levi are no better than those of the tribe of Asher. In Messiah, men are no longer better off than women. Jews are not favored above Gentiles.

Imagine basic training in the Marines. In this new group, there are whites, blacks, and Hispanics. Their race/color is a very real thing—real enough that people over the centuries have been killed because of it. The leadership does some exercises to

¹¹⁸ See also "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees." (Acts 23:6) In Romans 9 he refers to Israel as his own people, as he expresses his anguish over their lostness. In Philippians 3, while he is clear that his pedigree in Judaism is nothing compared to knowing the Messiah, he is very clear that he is still a Jew.

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get the new soldiers to put aside race and build brotherhood. The sergeant says, “Here, there are no whites, blacks, or Hispanics—*just Marines*. When you are out there in battle, you will not care what color the man is next to you, just the flag on his uniform.” José is not going to go home and tell his family he is no longer Hispanic. The sergeant is not denying their different races but minimizing them in light of their identity on the battlefield as American Marines.

That is what Paul is saying. In Messiah, we don’t focus on race or gender. Those things have no value in bringing you closer to God. But men and women are still different (despite what culture says). No biological male has ever managed to get pregnant! This is the true meaning of the Joel 2 prophecy of God pouring out his Spirit on all flesh. Theologians have wrongly, in my opinion, understood this. The “all flesh” designation means that despite gender, age, position, or ethnicity, God will empower any human who comes to him with a humble heart.

God is still working in the kingdom of man. And, on that plane, there are still men and women and Jews and Gentiles. When those two realms collide at the coming of the Lord, it does appear that we will retain our ethnic identity in the millennial age (Zech. 14:16, Is. 2:2-4). The Hebrew Bible is full of prophecies about the nations of the world interacting with Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom. Even John was able to distinguish the ethnicity of those physically dead but in heaven: “Before me was a great multitude that no one could

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count, from every nation, tribe, people and language.” (Rev. 7:11) As we shall see soon, Jesus inherits *the nations*, not a gigantic generic blob.

However, no one will enjoy an advantage based on ethnicity. God abhors all supremacy movements, whether white, Jewish, or black. We are all made in the image of God.

CHAPTER NINE

IS THE SECOND COMING AN ALLEGORY?

If we are going to conclude that all the promises of God to Israel have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus, then we have to get rid of all the verses in the Hebrew Bible that show the Messiah returning to natural Israel. Many of these prophecies conclude with the people of Israel turning to God en masse. The most descriptive of these passages is in Zechariah 14, and it parallels Revelation 19; one view from heaven, the other from the earth. I once asked a friend who has a Ph.D. in theology how the amillennialist, such as the aforementioned N. T. Wright, would see Zechariah 14. This passage depicts Yahweh coming to Israel's rescue and then setting up his kingdom over all the earth. He said they would see it as "fulfilled in Christ."

That was utterly confusing to me. How can Zechariah's incredible picture of the Messiah coming to the Mount of Olives (and John seeing him come down on a white horse in Revelation 19:11ff) be fulfilled already? It took me a while to understand that they see such a passage as allegorical and that it was fulfilled in the first coming of the Messiah: Jesus

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came, and He conquered sin, death, and hell—and that is what the prophets were speaking of when they preached a future kingdom. The picture of God rescuing Israel, in Zechariah 14, is a symbolic picture of Jesus rescuing all the peoples of the earth and becoming King. After Jesus' ascension, Israel's role was fulfilled, and the definition of the "people of God" changed from ethnic Israel to spiritual Israel.

Is there anything about *spiritual Israel* turning murderously against ethnic Israel? Because that is the fruit of replacement theology! Thousands of Jews have been put to death directly and indirectly by spiritual Israel (those who believed the Church was the new Israel). They bought into the idea that God had rejected Israel, and they should too! "The Jews, those disgusting people; the murderers of the Messiah." I would say that replacement theology is one of the most demonic and destructive misinterpretations of the scriptures that exists. Dan Juster writes, "Replacement theology is a necessary (but not alone sufficient) cause of antisemitism. If it did not exist, the house of antisemitism could not have been built."

Christianity did not create the Holocaust—indeed, Nazism was anti-Christian—but it made it possible. Without Christian antisemitism, the Holocaust would have been inconceivable... Hitler and the Nazis found in medieval Catholic anti-Jewish legislation a model for their own, and they read and reprinted Martin Luther's virulently anti-Semitic writings. It

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is instructive that Holocaust was unleashed by the only major country in Europe having equal number of both Catholics and Protestants. Both traditions were saturated with Jew-hatred.¹¹⁹

Believing Israel's role was fulfilled *in full* after the resurrection is to deny history—in light of the historical events of 1948 (the nation of Israel is reborn and then miraculously survives a war to wipe them out) and 1967 (Israel again wins an impossible war intended to annihilate them). Wesley's quadrilateral principle for doing theology uses *reason* along with scripture, tradition, and experience to develop theology. I submit it is not *reasonable* to ignore Israel's restoration.

TRUMP AND ISRAEL

To give an example from modern times, hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions, of people expected the 2020 United States elections to be overturned before January 20th. They were convinced that God had spoken through the mouth of hundreds of prophets that Trump would win. When he did not, they said they had evidence that the election was rigged. Many said the Supreme Court would soon throw out election results or simply give the victory to Trump. Others said the House of Representatives would take care of it. Finally, they said Mike Pence could turn around the election on January 6th—if only he had the courage.

¹¹⁹ Brown, 21

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I watched dumbfounded as people I respected claimed, *even after January 6th* and with absolute certainty, that Trump, not Biden, would be inaugurated on January 20th, 2020. There's no precedent in U.S. history for a certified election to be overturned. But then they began to say he would be reinstated in March. Then many said it would be August. And I just watched a video on August 21, 2021, still prophesying that Trump would be reinstated in God's time. Please hang in there with me for a minute because I have a point.

Now, if suddenly, in the coming months, through some unprecedented set of circumstances, Trump is reinstated as president, it would be utterly foolish for me to continue believing that the prophecies were wrong. Why? The evidence is in the unprecedented events taking place before my eyes—Trump has been reinstated! How could I continue to deny the prophecies about Trump in light of a Trump reinstatement?

As unlikely as a Trump reinstatement is, the Jewish people remaining an identifiable people group for 2,000 years in exile, only to come home and be “reinstated” as a nation in her own land, is far more unfathomable. The difference is this: the Bible doesn't speak of U.S. presidents, but there are hundreds of prophecies about Israel's comeback! To deny that the modern state of Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy is theological and intellectual malpractice—because Israel is indeed a nation again!

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In other words, maybe I would have believed reformed theologian Kenneth L. Gentry had he written his comments before 1948: “[Israel’s] special place of prominence in God’s plan has been removed... Her geo-political distinctiveness has ended; she will not be exalted above or distinguished from the other nations.”¹²⁰ But in light of the fact that Israel has been restored and is prospering...*come on, Kenneth!*

Also, let’s not forget the incredible ingathering of all the Russian-speaking Jews prophesied 2,500 years ago by Jeremiah.

“However, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,’ but it will be said, ‘As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their ancestors.” (Jer. 16:14-15)

One might say it speaks of Babylon, but the passage says, “*all the countries* where he had banished them.” Furthermore, both fulfillment and replacement theologians have no problem with Matthew using the prophecy about the virgin birth (Is. 7:14), something that was fulfilled in Isaiah’s day (see Is. 8:3), or the even more obscure Hosea 11:1 reference, “Out of Egypt,

¹²⁰ Kenneth L. Gentry, *The Book of Revelation Made Easy* (Powder Springs: American Vision Press, 2008), 89.

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I have called my son.” This was clearly referring to Israel but, as stated earlier, has a hidden fulfillment in Yeshua. No one assumed these prophecies to be Messianic when they were given, and both had a previous fulfillment before Yeshua.

If they can expect that without accusing the former tax collector of proof-texting, how can they ignore the fact that a greater fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy has happened in our lifetime? I don’t think anybody would think that the return of the exiles from Babylon even remotely rivaled the Exodus, not in number nor in majesty. They came back broken and defeated. Nehemiah’s brother gives him a horrible report of the returning exiles that broke his heart (Neh. 1:2-4). It was hardly glorious. But the overnight crumbling of one of the great empires, the Soviet Union, does resemble Pharaoh’s capitulation, opening up the door for more than a million Jews to return to the restored land of their ancestors, Israel. It absolutely has a *let-my-people-go* feel to it, as Jews were forbidden to leave the Soviet Union and its infamous Iron Curtain! Refusnik, Anatoly (now Natan) Sharansky, spent nine years in Soviet prisons only to finally be released to make Aliyah (move to Israel) and become a politician and ultimately the head of the Jewish Agency in Israel. If anybody argues that Russia is just one country, I would remind them that the former Soviet Union was 15 countries, plus all the other Soviet bloc countries such as Hungary, Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. I have friends *in*

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Israel today from most, if not all, of those countries! I am living in the reality and fulfillment of that prophecy.

But not just that, what other country can claim descendants in so many other countries, people all over the globe who trace their ancestry back to the Land of Israel?

From 1948 to 1964 alone, Jews returned to the Land from Sweden, Belgium, Britain, Holland, Germany, Poland, France, Switzerland, Spain, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Yemen, Aden, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Russia—to name just the closest nations! This is the hand of God.¹²¹

What makes the fulfillment of Israel's restoration even more powerful, prophetic, and a proof of God's existence is the number of efforts over the centuries by Romans at first, and then Christians, or *so-called Christians*, to erase the Jew—and still Israel survived!

- In the first and second centuries, well over one million Jews were killed in the first and second revolts against Rome.
- The Jews were expelled from ancient Israel by Emperor Hadrian, and Jewish expression was outlawed.

¹²¹ Brown, 203.

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- Soon Jews were labeled as the “assassins of Christ.”¹²² Passover was outlawed in the Church as a means of remembering the resurrection.
- Jews were coerced to join the Church, but because they could not be trusted to be genuine, they had to read lengthy public confessions, comparing Judaism to witchcraft and promising never to refuse to eat pork.
- Synagogues were burned, as well as Jewish holy books such as the Mishna and the Talmud.
- If synagogues were not burned, they were often confiscated, such as in 415 CE in Antioch.
- The Theodosian Code in 438 CE forbade Jews from holding public office, sentenced to death any Jew who converted a Christian (sounds like Al Qaeda!), outlawed the construction of more synagogues, and called Jews *abominable* and Judaism a *wicked sect*.
- Eventually, laws were passed that forbade marriage from a Christian to a Jew or a Christian to be treated by a Jewish doctor.
- The Crusaders came to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims but then determined the guilt of the Jews

¹²² John Chrysostom, *Homilies Against the Jews*.

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against them was far worse and murdered 10,000 Jews (just in the First Crusade).

- Then came centuries of blood libels. They appeared all over Europe. “The Jews of Blois, France are accused of crucifying a Christian child during Passover and throwing the corpse into the Loire. Over 30 Jewish men and women are burned at the stake.”¹²³
- In 1391, 4,000 Jews were rounded up and murdered by Christians, riled up by Ferrant Martinez, who warned “against Jewish wealth and ‘false doctrines,’ would permanently transform the situation of Spanish Jewry.”¹²⁴
- Don’t think Hitler was so creative in inventing the yellow star. “The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) further codified the segregation of Jews, requiring them to wear distinctive dress—a conical hat in the Germanic lands and a ‘Jew badge’ in the Latin countries—that made them simultaneously more visible and vulnerable to attack.”¹²⁵

¹²³ “Timeline,” *Midwest Center for Holocaust Education*, accessed June 3, 2022, <https://mchekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AntisemitismTimeline.pdf>

¹²⁴ Wistrich, 212.

¹²⁵ Wistrich, 201.

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- Jews were accused in Norwich, England, in 1144 of kidnapping a Christian boy for ritual murder just before Easter. “Ritual crucifixion of a Christian was (according to Theobald) expected to expedite the coming of the Jewish Messiah.”¹²⁶ In 1255, Jews were accused of killing “Little Saint Hugh of England.” In 1474, the blood libel was revived to accuse Jews in Trent of killing young Simon, just two years old. Of course, Jews were arrested, and confessions were elicited through intense coercion and torture.
- Jews were constantly compared to the devil and pictured with devil-like features. “The billy goat, the devil’s favorite animal and a symbol of satanic lechery for the Middle Ages, was particularly associated with the Jew. The notorious image of the Judensau suckling her Jewish offspring in the presence of the devil was another familiar “caricature of the Middle Ages.”¹²⁷
- And theologians from Chrysostom to Luther called the synagogue a brothel, Jews evil, and worthy of death. Their synagogues should be burned and their prayer books outlawed.

Sadly, I could go on and on and on, but it is too heavy. I just wanted you to see how the stage had been set—one only

¹²⁶ Wistrich, 202.

¹²⁷ Wistrich, 208-209.

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needed to light the match; the timber had been prepared, dry, and ready—for the Holocaust. But this is not even my point!

My point is that we are still here! *Am Yisrael Chai* (the people of Israel live)! It is an absolute miracle in light of the efforts to extinguish Jews as a people. No land for 2,000 years, lied about, hunted like dogs, mass expulsions from countries, genocides like the Crusades and the Holocaust...and yet, we are still here! Who could have overseen our survival except for God? Satan has resisted no prophecy with more murderous energy than the restoration of Israel as a nation. And, yet, God did it! For any theologian to deny that it is real, that the nation-state today is a fulfillment of prophecy, is intellectual suicide and willful blindness. You might as well say that the moon landing never happened, the earth is flat, and the New York Jets are a good football team (for those overseas—Cristiano Ronaldo is an average football player)!

N. T. Wright has a heart for Israel. He says that after the horrors of the Holocaust, of course, the Jewish people deserved a nation, and why not in their ancestral homeland? But he stops way short of saying *God wanted them to have a homeland*. It almost seems as if, despite God being finished with the Jewish people, *good human beings* who have been notoriously antisemitic for millennia suddenly had a change of heart and allowed Israel to have her own nation. Sadly, I don't give human beings that much credit. Or maybe he is saying that God pities

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the Jewish people and, despite rejecting them as his chosen people, decided to give the poor souls a country.

Well, he's much kinder to the Jewish people than others who deny Israel's future role or her present right to exist. In fact, *he is kinder than God, whom he claims has abandoned them as a covenant people*. It just makes God out to be strange and cruel. He brings Israel into existence, makes incredible promises to her about her future, and fulfills many of those promises: slaves coming out of Egypt, taking the land of Israel, the Davidic dynasty, the return from the Babylonian exile, the second Temple being built, and, most importantly, the birthing of the Messiah. But then suddenly, after the Messiah fulfills his role as the suffering servant and rises from the dead, ascending to heaven...all the other promises that don't appear to be yet literally fulfilled (like Jewish revival and the restoration of Israel) are actually allegorical and were already fulfilled in Jesus.

This might make good sense to some theologians, but if you're Jewish, it is utterly confusing and might even drive people away from God. The angel who claimed to bring the shepherds "good news" (Luke 2:10) for the people of Israel is actually proclaiming *bad news*: "Everything the prophets have written about your restoration is false...and after the baby grows and fulfills his role, God will be finished with you. But you can still join the Baptist church if you want." Is that good

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news? No. But that is the essence of both replacement and fulfillment theology.

Fortunately, it's not biblical. At least Burge argues for a continuing promise to the Jews of re-engrafting but not a national destiny beyond that. Juster adds, "Douglas Harrink accuses Wright of accusing God of doing a bait and switch. All the passages that would produce hope and expectation, you now discover they did not mean what they seemed to say at all. You thought you were promised a car and put down the money, but in the end, it is not even a bicycle."

Juster continues:

In one of his books, the famous New Testament Bishop Dr. N. T. Wright summarizes the thinking of replacement theology. Wright says that if we read the Old Testament straightforwardly, we would conclude the continued election of the Jewish people, their return to their ancient Land, and all of the other promises about them that would be literally fulfilled. However, Wright argues, due to the interpretations in the New Testament, we have warrant to radically reinterpret these texts about Israel and apply them as being fulfilled in a higher, better way for the Israel of God, the Church. Wright is unaware that his interpretation of the New Testament texts fit his pre-conceived grid. His interpretations of fulfillment in the New Testament

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are not at all the clear implications of those texts but simply new applications to those saved from among the Gentiles, without in any way undercutting the original given meaning.

The original given meaning provides parameters or guard rails to keep interpretation on track. No interpretation that undercuts the straightforward meaning of the original text in context can be right, or the whole authority of the Hebrew Bible is radically undercut. Wright does not have grounds in the New Testament for radically reinterpreting the Old. Instead, Romans 9-11 provides the interpretative key to prove that such re-interpretation is wrong, that we are to read the Hebrew texts and their promises as part of the continued gifts, calling, promises, and election of the Jewish people.¹²⁸

Assuming that these prophecies of the coming kingdom are literal (just as Peter assumed in Acts 3:19-21), any self-respecting pre-millennialist would assume that we are getting very close to His coming. Just look at Israel. Messianic theologian Stuart Dauermann wrote that “five contextual factors

¹²⁸ Dan Juster, email to the author.

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[identify] five signs that these are eschatological times.”¹²⁹

1. Israel is a nation again.
2. Jerusalem is her capital.
3. The massive immigration from the “land of the north” (Jer. 16:14-15).
4. Jewish people coming to faith in Messiah Yeshua.
5. Jewish believers maintaining a Jewish identity.

Dauermann notes that living a Jewish life would not even be a concern for a new Jewish believer in the 1960s, just half a century ago, and certainly not in the days of the Constantine, the Crusades, or the Inquisition! The fact that this has become an issue of significance once again is itself significant.

There was no hint in the Gospels that Jesus expected Jewish believers to stop identifying with the Jewish religion and ethnicity or that God had forever rejected them in favor of the “new Israel.” We cannot accept the church as *new Israel* because the New Covenant was promised to old Israel (Jer.

¹²⁹ Stuart Dauermann, “What Is the Gospel We Should Be Commending to All Israel in These Times of Transition?” *Kesher Journal*, May 21, 2019, <https://www.kesherjournal.com/article/what-is-the-gospel-we-should-be-commending-to-all-israel-in-these-times-of-transition/>.

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31:31). This idea “appears nowhere in the New Testament.”¹³⁰ There is no hint in the book of Acts that the Jewish apostles lived as Gentiles. They dealt with the racial superiority issue in Acts 10 and 15. And Paul does rebuke Peter for not being willing to have table fellowship with Gentiles in Galatians 2.¹³¹ But, as noted earlier, when Paul is accused of not living according to Moses and the Jewish traditions, the apostles speak with one voice that there is no truth to the rumors (Acts 21:21ff).

Furthermore, the prophecies that speak of his first coming were quite literal: born of a virgin (Is. 7:14) and in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). He is the Son of David (Is. 11:1). He will be a light to the nations (Is. 42:6-7). He will take on our sins (Is. 53:4-6). He will die with sinners and be buried with the rich (Is. 53:9). He would be innocent (Is. 53:9b). He would not resist (Is. 53:7). He would be rejected (Is. 53:3), and He would rise from the dead (Is. 53:11-12).

All of these prophecies were very literal and fulfilled by Jesus during his first coming. So why would we suddenly take the remaining promises that speak of his coming messianic

¹³⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Westmont: IVP Academic, 2002), 145.

¹³¹ To be clear this is not a kosher/non-kosher issue. There is no evidence that the apostles ever ate non-kosher food. The issue here is not over what they ate, but who they ate it with. The Pharisees forbid Jewish people from having table fellowship with Gentiles, for fear of becoming unclean. When Peter has his visions of the unclean foods, his conclusion is not to go downstairs and eat pork chops but, rather, he wonders about the *meaning* of this vision (Acts 10:17).

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kingdom and the restoration of Israel and assume they are allegorical? The answer is clear, there's a demonic plot against the people of Israel, and Satan has found a willing ally in many theologians. Going all the way back to the 2nd century, the Church fathers sometimes railed against the Jewish people with quite vicious language. Its crescendo came in the 4th century with John Chrysostom, who said it was every Christian's duty to hate the Jews.¹³² (Many theologians look to Chrysostom with great reverence.)

There is no hint in the New Testament that Paul sees these future promises to Israel as allegorical. In fact, he says that God's calling on Israel is still valid, even in unbelief (Rom. 11:29, 3:1-3).

...the Old Testament prophets abound with kingdom age expectation. In Isa. 2:2, the prophet sees a day

¹³² John Chrysostom wrote these words in a series of sermons against the Jews: "The Jews sacrifice their children to Satan ... They are worse than wild beasts. The synagogue is a brothel, a den of scoundrels, the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults, a criminal assembly of Jews, a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ, a house of ill fame, a dwelling of iniquity, a gulf and abyss of perdition..." "The synagogue is a curse. Obstinate in her error, she refuses to see or hear; she has deliberately perverted her judgment; she has extinguished within herself the light of the Holy Spirit..." "[The Jews] have fallen into a condition lower than the vilest animals. Debauchery and drunkenness have brought them to the level of the lusty goat and the pig. They know only one thing: to satisfy their stomachs, to get drunk, to kill and beat each other up like stage villains and coachmen..." "I hate the Jews because they violate the Law. I hate the Synagogue because it hates the Law and the Prophets. *It is the duty of all Christians to hate the Jews.*"

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coming when the mountain of the Lord's house will be established, and all the nations shall flow into it. In Isa. 11:6, the domesticity of all animals is revealed when the wolf dwells with the lamb, the leopard lies down with the young goat, the calf and a young lion feed together, and all are led by a child. In Isa. 19:23–25, a day is anticipated when there will be a highway running all the way from Egypt to Assyria and, therefore, directly through the land of Israel. That will be a day when God will say, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.” In Isa. 35:1–2, Isaiah the prophet anticipates a time when the desert shall blossom like a rose. In Isa. 62, he prophesies a time when Israel once again will be married to God. That latter theme is the focus of the entire book of Hosea. Multitudes of other such prophecies are found in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.¹³³

You have to understand that for Jewish people, the good news is not about dying and going to heaven but the fulfillment of the words of the prophets about a Messianic age. This is precisely why the apostles asked Yeshua about “restoring the kingdom to Israel.” In Acts 1, this was the great hope that the

¹³³ Paige Patterson, *Revelation* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2012), 355.

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prophets had embedded inside the Jewish people (see the next chapter). To suggest that this great hope is suddenly divinely upended is to impugn the character of God! Can God lie? Can He break his covenant? No. (Jer. 31:35-37)

The gospel is the fulfillment of prophetic expectation, the means of eschatological blessing for the Jew first and also for the Gentile in vindication of God's promises to each, in accord with the patterns, precedents, and covenants of Scripture.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Quoting Stuart Dauermann, David Rudolph, "'To the Jew First' Paul's Vision for the Priority of Israel in the Life of the Church," *Kesher Journal*, August 6, 2020, <https://www.kesherjournal.com/article/to-the-jew-first-pauls-vision-for-the-priority-of-israel-in-the-life-of-the-church/>.

CHAPTER TEN

NEW TESTAMENT REAFFIRMATION, NOT REPLACEMENT

In recent years, some replacement or fulfillment theologians have come to see that the New Testament does promise national revival to the Jewish people. A. Boyd Luter writes:

But something happened that scrambled the categories: a new “middle way” emerged. This new group, on the one hand, fairly consistently employs a natural/literal hermeneutic and sees a future for Israel as the Old Covenant people of God, notably in regard to Paul’s prophecy about “all Israel” being saved at the end of the age (Romans 11:25-26). *On the other hand, they reject the idea that Israel’s future has anything to do with a “Promised Land.”*¹³⁵

He quotes two prominent theologians. Notice the words in italics.

¹³⁵ A. Boyd Luter, “The Continuation of Israel’s Land Promise in the New Testament: A Fresh Approach,” *The Journal of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary*, 1, no. 2 (Spring 2014), <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1009&context=jlbtbs>.

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... [T]he most likely explanation of ‘all Israel’ is that it means the nation of Israel as a whole, though not necessarily including every individual member... It is also to be noted here that there is no trace of encouragement for any hopes entertained by Paul’s Jewish contemporaries for the re-establishment of a national state in independence and political power, nor—incidentally—anything which could feasibly be interpreted as a scriptural endorsement of the modern nation-state of Israel. — C.E.B. Cranfield

... *[T]he Old Testament promises about the land are nowhere repeated in the New Testament, except possibly in Luke 21:24. The prophecy of Romans 11 is a prophecy that many Jews will turn to Christ, but the land is not mentioned, nor is Israel mentioned as a political entity.* —John Stott

Both of these men made their comments in 1974 and 1983, respectively. What did they make of the fact that Israel had indeed not only become a political reality but appeared to enjoy divine protection in her War of Independence (outnumbered five nations to one, with no one willing to sell her weapons) and three subsequent wars—not the least of which was the Six-Day War, where, in less than two days was able to defeat and repulse the Jordanian forces across the West Bank and retake Eastern Jerusalem? As of this writing, Russia has been unable to

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take Kyiv in one month—despite being a world power with far superior weaponry than Israel had in 1967. How does one not see God’s hand in Jerusalem’s restoration—just as the Biblical prophets foretold?

This new idea, though better than the cold, hard character of replacement theology, that revival is promised, but “*the Old Testament promises about the land are nowhere repeated in the New Testament*,” is simply not accurate. Evaluate for yourself the 13 points below that claim that the New Testament does, in fact, affirm the land promises. But even if the New Testament was silent on land promises—is that akin to nullifying them?

Let’s suppose that I tell my daughters that I’m going to buy them ice cream. Then I tell all the kids in the neighborhood that I’m going to buy them French fries. My generosity to the kids in the neighborhood does not nullify my former promise to my daughters. I would have to formally state that, for whatever reason, I have now decided *not* to buy my daughters ice cream—which, admittedly, would be devastating to them, even though they are now in their late 20s and early 30s!

Thankfully, the New Testament has a lot to say about Israel. It prophetically states an expectation that Israel will fulfill her destiny, that the nation will be restored, that the prophets’ words concerning her will be fulfilled, and that she will experience national revival. Let’s go through the passages one by one.

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1. Yeshua's last words

Take a look at Yeshua's last conversation with his disciples before the ascension:

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."
(Acts 1:6-7)

The disciples clearly think the prophecies from the Hebrew Bible are literal and still valid. Why wouldn't they be? They completely expect Israel to be restored and not just restored but to become the capital of the world.

There can be little doubt that the prophets themselves and certainly those who read their prophecies anticipated a literal fulfillment of those prophecies. This seems to be the intent of the question by the disciples addressed to Jesus after his resurrection, when they said, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus did not tell them the question was irrelevant but rather that it was not for them to know the times or the seasons (*chronos* and *kairos* respectively), which made up the timetable of God; rather they were to be witnesses

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until that time came.¹³⁶

When they asked Him about Israel's future, He did not say: "Guys, don't you know that all those prophecies were fulfilled in me? They were all allegorical, and I fulfilled them through my victory on the cross. Israel has done her job in getting me in place. There is no more future role for Israel."

If indeed you take the position of those who espouse fulfillment theology—that every promise to Israel has been fulfilled—Jesus sure had a great opportunity here to clarify this "great truth." Instead, He affirms the idea that the kingdom will be restored to Israel, leading to the Messianic Kingdom, known as the Millennium, by saying, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority." In other words, God has a time and date for this specific event(s) that He set by his own authority. He affirms that the restoration of Israel's kingdom will indeed take place—just not yet.

Dr. Michael Brown explains the importance of that one little word "until" ...

And let all believers who question Israel's right to the Land, *based on the New Testament*, take note of this: The only time the New Testament speaks of the Jewish people being exiled to the nations is the same passage that speaks of this only being the case "until"—at

¹³⁶ Patterson, 355.

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which point the exile would end, and Jerusalem would be restored. As written in Luke 21:24, “They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”¹³⁷

Not forever, but until.

What the apostles didn’t understand is that their responsibility for the time being (and for the next 2,000 years) was to preach the gospel to all nations, not to obsess over the restoration of Israel. Hence, Yeshua’s next words.

But you (the *but* is in contrast to expecting Israel’s full restoration immediately) will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

2. Peter affirms the Hebrew prophets

For sure, the apostles got the message. In Peter’s sermon after the healing of the paraplegic beggar, he speaks of this coming restoration and confirms that the prophecies of the prophets are to be taken quite literally.

¹³⁷ Brown, 166.

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Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Yeshua. Heaven must receive him until *the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.* (Acts 3:19-21)

What we see here is that Peter sees a future fulfillment of “everything” that God had “promised...through his holy prophets.” This one verse should put to rest the idea that all the promises from the Hebrew Bible were fulfilled in Yeshua’s death and resurrection. And he surely has in mind the Acts 1 question of Israel’s restoration. He is more or less repeating what Yeshua said in Acts 1—*It is going to happen but in the future.* What other promises could he be referring to? He is addressing the questions that everyone in Israel is asking: *We thought the Messiah would restore the kingdom of Israel. We didn’t expect Him to die. When will the words of the prophets be fulfilled?*

Even those in Israel, who did not yet know of Yeshua, had a great expectation of a coming Messianic kingdom and Messianic king. Peter affirms that this will happen. It also clearly shows that everything was not fulfilled, but there was an expectation of more to come.

3. Romans 11

As we covered earlier, Romans 11 predicts a progression of events that lead to a revival in Israel.

1. The gospel is preached.
2. While many Jewish people accept it, the majority reject it and especially the leadership.
3. The gospel then goes to the Gentiles.
4. The Gentiles are called to provoke Israel to jealousy (v. 11). This didn't happen, and, in fact, the opposite happened for 1,900 years. Things have changed recently.
5. Israel's acceptance leads to a "greater riches" revival in the nations (v. 12, 15), something greater than the first revival in Acts referred to in v. 12 as "riches."
6. The fullness of the nations leads to Israel's blindness being removed (v. 25).
7. And "all Israel Is saved" (v. 26).

Paul clearly has no understanding that Israel is no longer relevant. In chapter 9, he says he would trade his salvation if only his fellow Israelites would be saved.

I speak the truth in Messiah—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit—I have

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great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Messiah for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen. (Romans 9:1-5)

4. Yeshua's broken-hearted plea.

In Matthew 23, after Yeshua unleashes a scathing rebuke of the religious elites, He becomes tender. He expresses his desire to minister to Israel as a mother hen would her chicks. But alas, they were not willing. He does not say, "Therefore God has rejected you," but rather, "You will not see me again until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (v. 39).

What most do not know is that this phrase has great meaning. First, in a Jewish wedding, the cantor (liturgy leader in a synagogue) will use this phrase to call in the bridegroom. Yeshua is our bridegroom! Second, in modern culture, this phrase "Baruch haba" is a welcome. It is what I would say to you if you came to my house for Shabbat dinner, "Baruch haba... welcome, come in..." So, Yeshua is saying to the Orthodox Jews of Jerusalem (and maybe to all Israel), "You will only

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see me when you welcome me back as your bridegroom, your Messiah!” And they will, according to Zechariah 12:10, an end-time prophecy that says the Jewish people will understand that the one handed over to be crucified is the Messiah.

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, *the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him* as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn.... (Zechariah 12:10–12)

5. John’s play on words

John alludes to the Zechariah prophecy in his revelation. In John 1:7, he says that when Yeshua comes in the clouds, “every eye will see him, *even those who pierced him.*” He continues, “and the peoples on earth will mourn.” But in Greek, it doesn’t say *peoples on earth*” but “*tribes of the land.*” It is a very clever way to say, not only will the nations mourn, but the Jewish people, as Zechariah prophesied, will grieve, as they understand Yeshua is the returning king of Israel, and they had rejected Him.

In Hebrew, the phrase “the land” is how we say Israel. More often than not, if someone wants to know if I am in Israel

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(because I travel a lot), they will not ask, “are you in Israel?” but will ask, “are you *in the land*?” God slipped this double meaning into the passage.¹³⁸

Yes, the tribes of Israel will mourn when they see Messiah in the clouds. Fortunately, it is not too late. In the Zechariah prophecy, it goes on to say, “On that day,” the day that Israel mourns over rejecting Yeshua as Messiah and recognizes Him as such, “a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.” This will be the “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26) moment!

6. “*With*,” not “*In place of*”

The great mystery of the New Testament isn’t that God has decided not to be faithful to his promises to Israel but that the Gentiles, through the Jew Jesus, gain access to all the covenant benefits without becoming Jewish. Look how Paul makes his argument in Ephesians.

¹³⁸ “Beginning in the late thirteenth century, Jewish biblical interpretation was often divided into four categories, summarized through the acronym PaRDeS: peshat, the simple or contextual meaning; remez, literally ‘hint,’ an allegorical meaning; derash, a homiletical meaning; and sod, a secret mystical meaning.” Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Bible With and Without Jesus* (San Francisco, HarperOne, 2020), 29.

Seeing both an application to Israel and the nations in Rev. 1:7, would be the remez or hint method of interpretation, though I think I could even make a claim based on the Greek used, that it is the peshat, the plain meaning.

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Remember that at that time, you were separate from Messiah, *excluded from citizenship in Israel* and *foreigners to the covenants of the promise*, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Messiah Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Messiah. (Eph. 2:12-13)

The Gentiles don't *replace* Israel but join with Israel. He says, "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens *with* God's people and also members of his household" (Eph. 2:19). I believe God's "household" here is the "One New Man," the olive tree of Romans 11, and we know that God is able to regraft the Jewish people back into their own olive tree.¹³⁹

7. Paul's meeting in Rome

At the end of Paul's life, after he has written Romans and Galatians, he calls the Jewish leaders of Rome to meet with him. In seeking to explain himself—why he is in chains—he says, "For this reason, I have asked to see you and talk with

¹³⁹ Many scholars see the Gentile inclusion into Israel in the same way that the nations of British Commonwealth enjoy their connection to Great Britain, without losing their identity as Canadians or Australians or any of the other member states. Another good example is Paul. He was not ethnically Roman but had Roman citizenship. Gentiles remain connected to their ethnicity, while enjoying citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel. In fact, the NKJV translates Eph. 2:12 as "being aliens from the *commonwealth* of Israel," translating the Greek *politeias*, not as *citizenship*, but uses the surrounding context to come up with *commonwealth of Israel*.

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you. It is because of the *hope of Israel* that I am bound with this chain.” (Acts. 28:20)

Is the *hope of Israel* that Israel would be replaced by the Church? Of course not. Was it that all the promises they thought would be fulfilled were actually allegorically fulfilled in Yeshua on the cross or through the resurrection? Ridiculous! Paul is speaking to them as if they all agree on what *the hope of Israel* is. The hope of Israel is the Messiah of Israel. Yes, most of them could not comprehend a crucified king, a martyred Messiah, and went away offended. But Paul is clearly preaching the Messiah *of Israel* that will return and restore the kingdom to Israel.

8. The New Testament confirms the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Paul writes, “For I declare that Messiah has become a servant to the circumcised for the sake of God’s truth, in order to confirm *the promises given to the patriarchs*.” (Rom 15:8 TLV) What promises? Clearly, this includes the land promises. You cannot speak of the “promises given to the patriarchs” and exclude the Land of Israel.

9. Yeshua refers to “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”

In Matthew 22:32, Yeshua does this. How can He do that and not affirm the promises of the Land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? (see the last sentence of Point 8). Yahweh is not suddenly

the God of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, is He? The patriarchs are still the patriarchs (Rom. 11:28). And if they are, then there is nothing more central to their lives and legacies than the land of Israel, save the Messiah Himself. Taking the land is the primary focus of Exodus through Joshua. You cannot separate the patriarchs from the land promises. While all believers are children of Abraham, they are not children of Isaac and Jacob, to whom the land promises were confirmed.

10. Heirs of the covenant

Peter tells unbelieving Jews they are “heirs of the covenant” (Acts 3:25). How can they be heirs of something that was canceled by or fulfilled in Yeshua? Paul, in seeking to show the Romans that God will be faithful to Israel, affirms the covenants belong to Israel by referring to them in the present, not the past.

Theirs *is* the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs *are* the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! (Rom. 9:4-5)

Let me make a few more points in regard to this point.

1. Why even mention Yeshua’s Jewish ancestry if it is no longer important?
2. To be clear, these were clearly unbelieving Jews, as

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the context is Paul's deep longing for them to know that Yeshua is the Messiah. "Theirs (all Israel) is the covenants." He was not referring to the New Covenant but to Moses and Abraham. This means that while not providing salvation, they are still significant.

3. And to be super clear, this is not to say that Jewish people don't need Messiah for salvation. But they are certainly not going to come running to a Jesus that is preached by people who say that God hates them and has cursed them. That is not provoking them to jealousy (Rom. 11:11). It will be the kindness of Gentile believers that will draw them to faith.

11. Yeshua's very clear declaration in the Sermon on the Mount

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:17-20)

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If Yeshua did not come to destroy the Torah, which includes the promises of the Land of Israel to the Jewish people, then we must conclude that God will remain faithful to his promise. “The church has struggled for centuries to gain a clear understanding of the meaning of these words... ‘I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.’ But the text makes unequivocally clear what Jesus did *not* mean to say.”¹⁴⁰ You cannot walk away from this whole passage with the idea that because Jesus fulfilled the law, He has voided his promises to Israel. It seems as if Jesus goes out of His way to make that abundantly clear.¹⁴¹

12. “Until”

As mentioned by Cranfield, Luke 21:24 seems to indicate a Jewish Jerusalem at the end of the age. Yeshua says, “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Well, Jerusalem was trampled on by the Gentiles since her destruction in 70 CE. Yeshua’s words are “until the times of Gentiles are fulfilled.” This is very close to Paul’s words of national revival that will take place in Israel

¹⁴⁰ Isaac C. Rottenberg, “Fulfillment Theology and the Future of Christian-Jewish Relations” *Religion Online*, accessed June 4, 2022. <https://www.religion-online.org/article/fulfillment-theology-and-the-future-of-christian-jewish-relations>

¹⁴¹ If you want to know what Jesus meant by fulfilling the law, just keep reading the sermon on the mount. He takes some of the major aspects of the laws such as not committing adultery or murder, and He interprets them in a much deeper way, applying them to the thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb. 4:12-13). By doing this, He “fills full” the Commandments of God. Of course, He also fulfills the Messianic prophecies. And thirdly, He fulfills the law by living according to it, becoming the first to do so.

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at the fullness of the Gentiles. That leads me to believe that there is an overlap. That is to say, I don't believe that the times of the Gentiles or fullness end in a day, but maybe over a period of decades. And, since Jerusalem is back in Jewish hands, I do believe we are in that season. And let's be clear, if there is no Jerusalem, this passage cannot be fulfilled.

The very use of the word Gentile (*ethnos*) shows that the translators were contrasting this group with Jews. Or else, they would use the word nations as in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all *nations*, and then the end will come." *Ethnos* is translated as Gentiles in nearly every English translation in Luke 21:24 and Romans 11:25.

13. The Two Witnesses

Most scholars agree that the two witnesses are Jewish. They are called olive trees and menorahs—both are images associated with Israel. There is a striking similarity to Zechariah's vision of two olive trees (4:3).

Merrill summarizes several additional points of connection between Zech. 4 and Rev. 11. Both passages emphasize the temple, as well as describing its measurements and rebuilding (Zech. 2:1–5; 4:9–10; Rev. 11:1–2). Also, both texts picture the two olive trees witnessing before the whole earth (Zech. 4:9–10; Rev. 11:4). John comments on Zech. 4 in that the

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olive trees witness to the Lord's righteousness and his mighty acts of salvation for his people.¹⁴²

The two Jewish witnesses prophesy in Jerusalem “where also their Lord was crucified” (Rev. 11:8b). Jewish men prophesying in Jerusalem seem to say that God would restore Israel, as He has done.

Yes, there is a clear expectation in the New Testament that God will fulfill his promises to the people of Israel.

¹⁴² George L. Klein, *Zechariah, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 167.

SECTION IV

THE SECOND COMING

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GOD INSTALLS HIS KING IN ZION!

Once you understand that God is working on two different spheres—natural and spiritual—it makes sense. And once we see the true literal fulfillment of Zechariah 14, we will see these two kingdoms merge. Is that not what John means in Revelation when he says now all the nations belong to God? This takes place at the sounding of the final trumpet, the seventh, just after the two witnesses rise from the dead.

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven that said:

The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 11:15)

Let's be honest. The kingdoms of this world *do not yet belong to our God*. Surely, He has all authority, and He is sovereign. But He has ceded authority over the kingdoms of this world for the time being to national leaders and the god of the world, Satan. But soon, Satan will be conquered. What

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will the kings of the earth do then (see Psalm 2, below)? For now, we are part of both worlds. That's why Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 tells us that we must submit to the state, that the state is God's servant to oversee the affairs of men in the realm of our earthly citizenship.

However, what happens at the coming of the Lord is that the kingdoms of this world become the property of a new emperor. If you study the great empires of antiquity, you will see that they ruled over many other kingdoms. Often, they would even leave the kings in place as long as the defeated kings would submit to the empire/emperor. In this same way, Yeshua comes with a new empire, not one of tyranny and domination, such as we've seen in the ancient Greek and Roman empires, but with justice and righteousness.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. (Is. 11:2-5)

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Under Jesus's 1,000-year reign (Rev. 20:6), the very nature of the animal kingdom will change as his influence comes upon it.

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Is. 11:6-9)

The fourth Temple will be built (after the third is destroyed before He comes or at his coming). Water will flow from the Temple in Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, making its poisonous waters fresh. Fishermen will even fish there (Ez. 47). Hallelujah!

That can't happen until Yeshua is the ultimate governor. Right now, the kingdoms of this world are not part of the kingdom of God, even if sanctioned by God. If you need evidence, just go turn on the news and see what's happening around the world—Europe is on fire, Russia is attacking Ukraine, inflation is up, there is a massive drought in the western U.S. states, there is a huge division between political parties, and we are dealing with not only COVID but now polio and monkeypox. No one

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trusts the media, but millions do buy into QANON and other farfetched conspiracy theories. That is not the fruit of God's government (as I wrote in *Birth Pangs*, they may be signs of the end [Matt. 24:1-14]), but soon the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. (Ps. 145:13)

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. (Dan. 2:44)

One of my favorite prophecies that speaks directly to the moment that the kingdoms and nations of this earth are taken over by the eternal Messiah, the son of David, Yeshua, is in Daniel 7. This is the moment when the heavenly realm invades the earthly realm, when the heavenly government and the governments of this world *merge into one* under the authority of God Almighty.

In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples

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of every language worshiped him. *His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* (Daniel 7:13-14)

RAGE ALL YOU WANT!

This is the theme of Psalm 2, where the Messiah is made King of Jerusalem, and He inherits the nations. The world leaders rage against Him, and the Father rebukes them.

He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.” I will proclaim the LORD’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. (Ps. 2:5-8)

Mission movements love to use this last verse to inspire prayer for the nations and encourage outreach. That’s good! But in context, it is about when Yeshua begins His millennial reign. It speaks of a king, who is “my son,” called Mashiah (Messiah) in verse 2. It can only be Yeshua. He takes up His throne on Mount Zion, which is synonymous with the Temple/ Mt. Moriah/Jerusalem. And God gives Him the nations. This is the moment when the Abrahamic covenant and the New Covenant collide at the outset of the millennial kingdom, when just before or after (or before *and* after), there is an influx of

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Jewish people into the kingdom (Zech. 12:10, Rev. 1:7). This is after the nations have attacked Israel (Zech. 14:1-2), and the Lord comes down from heaven (Rev. 19:11) and defends her (Zech. 14:3-4).

If you read this Psalm in its entirety, God is angry at the nations. His wrath is being displayed. It speaks of the *uselessness* of the international antichrist attack, “I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it (Zech. 14:2a). “[Demonic spirits] go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty... Then they gathered the kings together to the place that, which in Hebrew, is Mount Megiddo” (Rev. 16:14, 16) to march on Jerusalem, which is actually an attack on the coming King. There is no actual “battle of Armageddon.” This is merely the staging ground. The battle is over Jerusalem. The Valley of Megiddo is a massive plain beneath the Carmel Mountain ridge. The nations cannot get to Jerusalem because the two witnesses have held them at bay for three and half years—they breathe fire! But once they are removed, the attack commences. But this assault is *futile*.

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying... (Ps. 2:1-2)

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While it clearly depicts the outset of the millennial Kingdom and the Second Coming, it should not be seen as God just checking off his End-Time to-do list. His emotions are deeply affected here. Yahweh is angry at the kings of this world. He is now transferring authority. This is a coronation in the highest regard! The kingdom of this world are becoming the kingdom of the Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15). And where will He rule from? God's holy hill, Mount Zion, Jerusalem.

The ending of the Psalm is God giving the kings of the earth an opportunity to submit to the invading emperor, Yeshua:

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Ps. 2:10-12)

The imagery is very similar to when a great empire such as Rome or Greece would take over a smaller nation. The kings would often have the opportunity to fall in line with the occupying ruler. This is how Herod served the Romans. We see this with King Zedekiah being urged by Jeremiah to submit to

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Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁴³

The book of Deuteronomy is written like an ancient Hittite covenant. “It spelled out the terms of the relationship between the Hittite state and the vassals ... which gave allegiance to the empire. The king would offer to protect the people in exchange for their support and tribute.”¹⁴⁴

The Hittite kingdom was much like the Greeks and the Romans. They conquered, and the king of the defeated state could either submit or rebel. The book of Deuteronomy has all the major components of a Hittite suzerain treaty. God is the sovereign, and Israel is his vassal state.

The covenant Yahweh established with Israel at Mount Sinai exhibits striking parallels with Hittite suzerain/vassal treaties, which had six basic features: 1) a preamble that identifies the suzerain; 2) a historical prologue that recounts the previous relationship between the parties; 3) covenant stipulations to which the vassal must agree; 4) provisions for periodic

¹⁴³ Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “This is what the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared, and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live. But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians, and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from them.’” (Jer. 38:17-18)

¹⁴⁴ Dyrness, 114.

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reading and safekeeping of the covenant; 5) witnesses to the covenant; and 6) blessings and curses should the vassal either keep or fail to keep the covenant. The Sinaitic (Mosaic) covenant contains all six of these characteristics.¹⁴⁵

So, while it is like the Babylonians or the Persians, the Romans or the Greeks, the First French Empire under Napoleon, or the Bolshevik Revolution, it is also quite different. This time it is not Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great; it is not Genghis Khan or Peter the Great, but rather the sovereign of the universe, *Yeshua the Messiah*, who occupies the nations of the earth and demands their submission. The ultimatum to “kiss the son” (v. 12) is a sign of servitude (Is. 49:23).

¹⁴⁵ Russ Meek, “The Suzerain Vassal Treaty (Covenant) in the Old Testament,” *Russ Meek*, October 14, 2020, <https://russmeek.com/2020/10/the-suzerain-vassal-treaty-covenant-in-the-old-testament>.

CHAPTER TWELVE

RUNNING OUT TO MEET OUR LIBERATOR!

If I could rewrite my book Birth Pangs, I would add this to the two chapters on the rapture. In addition to all the reasons I laid out in that book as to why I do not believe in a rapture *before the tribulation* (download *Birth Pangs* free at roncan.net/bpfree), I would add this powerful picture from 1 Thessalonians 4, combined with 1 Corinthians 15's trumpet and the nature of the covenant in Deuteronomy, and us receiving new, glorified, incorruptible bodies. It is one of a new emperor taking over territory. This is going to blow you away. As you will see in the paragraph below, this can't take place with a seven-year pause.

As mentioned above, the nature of the covenant that Moses lays out for the new generation of Israelites in Deuteronomy is modeled after the Hittite Kingdom. The *Decalogue*, that is, the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5), is fashioned after the ancient suzerain treaty that the Hittites used when taking over a smaller country. Let me repeat the quote from the last chapter from

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William Dyrness regarding the nature of the treaty. “[A suzerain treaty] spelled out the terms of the relationship between the Hittite state and the *vassals* (that is, the servant nation) ... which gave allegiance to the empire. The king would offer to protect the people in exchange for their support and tribute.”¹⁴⁶ As noted in chapter 11, the book of Deuteronomy greatly resembles a suzerain treaty, whereby God is the King offering support and protection to the vassal state, which is Israel.

The Scholar G. E. Mendenhall “notes six elements that were nearly always found in the Hittite treaty texts.”¹⁴⁷ Go back and look at the book of Deuteronomy; it is all there.

- Preamble, introducing the sovereign: “These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel...” Duet. 1:1
- Historical prologue outlining previous relations of the parties. We see this in the beginning chapters of Deuteronomy.
- Stipulations: this explains the obligations of the servant state, including how much they would have to pay for protection. We see this in the Ten Commandments and other requirements in the Torah.

¹⁴⁶ Dyrness, 114

¹⁴⁷ Dyrness, 114.

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- Document clause, providing for the deposition of a copy of the covenant in the vassal's sanctuary and its periodic reading: The Ark.
- Witnesses, a long list of gods invoked to witness the covenant: God doesn't rely on worthless gods but says, "This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deut. 4:26).
- Curses and blessings: All laid out before that last verse.

In ancient cultures, when an emperor would take over a smaller domain, the citizens from the previous regime, not wanting to be slaughtered by or become slaves of the new emperor, would go out to meet him (or his general) as if to say, "*We submit to you. We pledge our allegiance to your monarchy.*"

In some cases, this would be a sign of extreme weakness—self-preservation, surely, a lack of loyalty or patriotism. But in this case, believers suffer through oppression in this world—creation groans and for 2000 years have been longing for liberation.

I consider that our present sufferings (under this corrupt earthly government) are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (when Yeshua overthrows the kingdoms of this world and assumes

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authority) ...creation itself will be *liberated from its bondage* to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God... Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. (Rom. 8:18, 21, 23)

We don't see Jesus as an outside invader but a liberator—the rightful king coming back to claim that which his vassal, Adam, forfeited to the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4)—coming to set us free from the bondage and corruption of this realm and from the decay of these earthly bodies that are subject to sickness and death. In the parable of the tenants (Matt. 21:33ff), God the Father is the landowner, Yeshua is presented as the rightful heir, and the tenants' temporary overseers. In context, it speaks of how the religious establishment within Judaism rejected Yeshua, and their authority was transferred to the Jewish apostles. But it is also an excellent picture of the kings of the earth who have been given temporary authority over their domains, but one day the Son will be sent back, and their authority will be given to the body of believers to rule and reign with Messiah. “[W]ith your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev. 9-10). No, we are not traitors to “Caesar”; we already defected from the

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god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) when our eyes were opened, and we confessed, “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9), and not Caesar!

You have to understand when Paul told the Romans that the door to salvation was through confessing Jesus as Lord; this was an act of treachery against Caesar. Every year, subjects of the empire had to burn incense to Caesar and confess, “Caesar is Lord.” No, this is not some anemic entrance to the kingdom by mumbling some words. For many, it was a death sentence. The main question to the citizens of the earth is, “to which kingdom do you belong?”

We who follow Jesus chose the “red pill” long ago (to borrow an anecdote from Morpheus in *The Matrix*). Like Neo and Morpheus (of *The Matrix*), we suffer in this present age with the knowledge of the truth while waiting with “*eager expectation*.” From Romans 8:19, “eager expectation” is one Greek word, and it means to stretch out your neck as if longing to catch a glimpse. Once in Tel Aviv, there was an official *Tour de France-like* bike race. Elana and I, along with thousands of others, waited until the bikes came, strategically placing ourselves in the best position to catch a glimpse. The streets were eerily empty. It was silent. When would they come? Would they come? We were beginning to doubt. And then suddenly, *whoosh!* They came with a fury, speeding by us. Now multiply that expectation by a million, and that is how we are to long for Yeshua. We join along with all creation, “for the children of God to be revealed.”

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Could it be that this is what the rapture (*harpazo*, caught up...in the clouds) of the Ecclesia is? Yeshua comes down as a conquering King, and we meet Him on his way, leaving this oppressive kingdom on earth, to immediately return with Him, as the Captain of the Army of the Lord of Hosts enters his new domain as sovereign of the universe. Just as I Corinthians 15 says, at the sound of this great trumpet, we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. We will throw off our corruptible earth suits for an immortal, glorified body. Just look at the imagery!

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command (this is military language), with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God (this is the announcement of the new King), and the dead in Messiah will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (and then we do a U-turn and return with him). And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

Keep in mind that it does not say we will be in heaven forever but that we will be with the Lord forever. The hope of the New Covenant is not that we die and go to heaven. It all points to the prophecies of the ancient Hebrew prophets—*Tikkun Haolam*/World Redemption—that spoke of a new age coming to planet Earth, the 1,000-year millennial reign of Emperor Yeshua. It is at this point that kingdoms collide, and we see Revelation 11:15 fulfilled! The kingdoms of the earth

RUNNING OUT TO MEET OUR LIBERATOR!

are merged with the Kingdom of God, and Yeshua will reign from Jerusalem.

This is *why* we must keep our focus, and this is *where* our focus must be. Be encouraged, dear ones. Joy indescribable is on the way, but we must keep our eyes on the coming King. “If we allow the difficulties of life to absorb our attention, they will effectively blot out the glory that awaits us. Our focus needs to be on things above (Col 3:2), spiritual concerns of eternal significance (cf. 2 Cor 4:18).”¹⁴⁸

If you are not excited about the coming of the Messiah, you need to be! If you allow the cares of the world to rob you of the joy of living with an eager expectation of the coming Kingdom, you are forfeiting one of the great benefits of New Covenant kingdom life.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “no” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” (Titus 2:11-14)

¹⁴⁸ R. H. Mounce, *Romans* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 184.

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When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:28)

Friends, this excites me! I long for the appearing of our great and glorious King, Yeshua the Messiah. I long to throw off this jar of clay and to receive a heavenly body with no aches or pains, no coronavirus, no sickness or death. Soon these two realms will merge, bringing this age to critical mass, resulting in the millennial kingdom. My passion is not to go to heaven but to see Yeshua bring his heavenly reign to earth.

If we could live with this in mind, we would be more effective witnesses to the lost. We would not get consumed with conspiracy theories. We would keep our eyes focused on the Messiah, the soon arriving King.

EPILOGUE

The Orthodox Jewish theologian Michael Wyschogrod, who fled Nazi Germany with his family in 1938 (just months before Kristallnacht), talks about the “carnal election of Israel”¹⁴⁹ in his book *Abraham’s Promise*. By that, he makes a connection between the *incarnation of Jesus and the Jewish people*.

“[T]he Christian teaching of the incarnation of God in Jesus is the intensification of the teaching of the indwelling of God in Israel by concentrating that indwelling in one Jew rather than leaving it diffused in the people of Jesus as a whole.”¹⁵⁰

Interesting, coming from an Orthodox Jew! To be clear, Wyschogrod is not saying that the Jewish people are divine in the way that we see Yeshua as the divine Son. He is saying that God has embodied himself in Israel in a way that a lover would be the object of his love. And Wyschogrod is right. God said to Israel, “For I, the Lord, dwell *among* the Israelites.” (Num. 35:34) The word for *among* is *b’toch*, and it means *inside*.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Wyschogrod, *Abraham’s Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 99.

¹⁵⁰ Wyschogrod, 178

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There is a different Hebrew word closer to *among* (*b'kerev*). The idea here is *God dwells in His people*.

And God had a plan for wooing Israel to Himself. It was in order to reveal Himself to the whole world (Is. 49:6), first through the witness of the Jewish people, then through Yeshua, and now through the Ecclesia of Jewish and Gentile followers of the Messiah. But God is still living through the Jewish people, even in unbelief (Rom. 3:1-4), because of the Abrahamic covenant, within the kingdom of earth or man. God still uses Israel as a 'witness nation' (not in the antisemitic way that Augustine taught), revealing His reality and His faithfulness to His covenant.

He lives through the Ecclesia in the Kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not somewhere else. Heaven is not *up*, so to speak. Heaven—the Kingdom of God—is in the spirit. It is all around you.

Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because *the kingdom of God is in your midst*." (Luke 17:20-21)

"In your midst," just like God said to the Israelites in the quote above, "for I, the Lord, dwell *among* the Israelites." But there are two separate realms: flesh and spirit.

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I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (1 Cor 15:50)

You will remember that we talked about how the Nazis revered Luther as a German. They quoted Luther, “I was born for my beloved Germans; it is them I want to serve.”¹⁵¹ They turned German blood into a *race cult*. But you see, while ethnicity is important regarding *calling* (after all, God created the nations), blood credentials cannot get one into the kingdom of God. *There is only one blood type in the kingdom, and it belongs to Jesus.*

This goes for my Jewish people too. We don’t get a pass because of Abraham. It is only through the blood of Yeshua, the Lamb without spot or wrinkle (1 Pet. 1:19), that one can participate in the kingdom of heaven. His blood transcended from this kingdom into the heavenly one when He was killed *because of its purity*. And it was not pure because of His earthly ancestry; it was pure because *He was pure*.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and *joy in the Holy Spirit*, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. (Rom. 14:17–18)

¹⁵¹ Stroud, 34.

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Eating and drinking are connected to this earthly kingdom. Without it, earthly bodies die. But righteousness, peace, and joy are in the kingdom of God. Yeshua told Nicodemus that it would take an actual new birth in the spirit to participate in the kingdom of God.

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:3, 5-6)

Flesh and spirit belong to two different kingdoms. And they will only coexist in the millennial kingdom, as there will be survivors from the Second Coming.

Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. (Zech. 14:16)

Follow me here. In Abraham were two peoples, two kingdoms, two spheres. One was physical, and one was spiritual. One was *one* nation, the other, the elect from *many* nations. The bridge between these two kingdoms was Yeshua.

The gospel has prospered in the nations, while Israel rejected the gospel. But as we see these two kingdoms coming

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closer and closer together, we are heading toward critical mass. That is why more and more Jewish people are coming to faith. It is time. The blinders are removed from Israel at the fullness of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25). As the gospel gets closer and closer to reaching all nations, we draw closer and closer to this critical mass—*The Parousia*, The Second Coming.

When these two kingdoms *collide*, we will see the blinders fully removed. As kingdom one, “the kingdom [singular] of this earth” (Rev. 11:15), collides into kingdom two, the Kingdom of God, there will be clarity about who this Messiah is. At that time:

“I will pour out on the house of David and on those living in Jerusalem a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will *look to me*, whom they pierced.” They will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son; they will be in bitterness on his behalf like the bitterness for a firstborn son. (Zech. 12:10 CJB)

John sees the same thing in Rev. 1:7.

“Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all *tribes of the land* earth will mourn because of Him” (Rev. 1:7). So shall it be! Amen.

As we wait for this critical mass, the job of the Ecclesia is to pray for Israel’s salvation. Israel is back in the land, Jerusalem is

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her capital, and her inhabitants have returned from all over the world. Now we are just waiting for the fullness of the nations and the blinders on Israel's eyes to be fully opened as these two kingdoms collide and Emperor Yeshua takes over.

Maranatha.