

The Hoax of Denying Replacement Theology

In an April 4 article titled "The Hoax of Replacement Theology," Gary DeMar claims that "The modern-day Israel-Church distinction is contrary to everything we find in the Bible," by which he means that the nation of Israel, outside of Jesus, can be seen as "the people of God."

He also claims that "The Replacement Theology Hoax is theological desperation." These are extreme, unfortunate and unbiblical statements. They also mock the suffering of the Jewish people through the centuries who have experienced the ire of replacement theology firsthand.

Ironically, Demar cites the very book in which I outline the disastrous effects of replacement theology, "Our Hands Are Stained with Blood: The Tragic Story of the Church and the Jewish People," stating, "Dr. Michael Brown ... also brings up the Replacement Theology hoax."

Dr. DeMar, this is no hoax. It has existed for almost 1,900 years, and it is on the rise again.

As for those who are not familiar with the term "replacement theology," or, more technically, "supersessionism," this refers to the idea that the church has replaced (or superseded) Israel in God's plan of salvation, as a result of which, the promises God once gave to national Israel now apply to the church.

What, then, is DeMar's perspective?

He states, "Something called 'the church' was not something new in the New Testament. 'The church' could not replace Israel because at first the New Testament church was exclusively Jewish." (He correctly cites me in support of this

last statement regarding the exclusively Jewish nature of the earliest church.)

His point is that the Greek word *ekklesia* fundamentally means “congregation,” but, since the time of the King James Version, it has almost always been rendered “church” in our English Bibles.

On this point, he is correct. He also notes that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, *ekklesia* is used with reference to the people of Israel, but in the New Testament, it refers to all followers of Jesus. How, then, could the *ekklesia* replace the *ekklesia*?

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He fails to realize that: 1) When used in the Septuagint, *ekklesia* referred to the people of Israel as a whole, including both Yahweh worshiping Israelites and idol-worshiping Israelites. In contrast, in the New Testament, *ekklesia* is primarily used to refer to all believers, both Jew and Gentile, and not primarily to Israel as a whole. So, there has been a shift in meaning. There *is* something new.

2) Paul warned the Gentile members of the *ekklesia*, pictured as wild olive branches grafted into a cultivated olive tree, not to boast against the original branches that had been broken off (meaning the Jewish people who rejected the Messiah). He wrote, “do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either” (Rom. 11:18–21, NIV).

3) The error of replacement theology was for Gentile

Christians, who over the centuries completely dominated the *ekklesia*, to claim that they had displaced the Jewish people in God's plan, becoming the new Israel themselves.

That is the prideful heresy of which Paul warned, one that has echoed through the corridors of church history, leading to the deaths of many Jewish people.

Its roots are found as early as the second century with Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 100-165), who said, "For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham ... are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ."

So the church is the new and true Israel. And what happened to the old Israel?

Augustine (354-430), commenting on Matthew 8:12, wrote, "they would be sent away, while the Christians would be called from the east and the west to the heavenly banquet to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whose bread is righteousness and whose cup is wisdom."

As summarized in a well-documented online article on :

The basic premise of the early fathers was that God had permanently cut the nation of Israel off as his people as a result of her disobedience and idolatry in the Old Testament and her rejection and crucifixion of Jesus in the New. The faithful of the church age [meaning, almost exclusively, Gentile Christians] became the 'new Israel' of God. They, along with the patriarchs and saints of previous ages, would inherit the promises given to national Israel, and these promises would be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.

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Martin Luther reaffirmed God's rejection of the Jewish people, as a people, writing in 1543, "Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God."

So, individual Jews can be saved, but as far as the Jewish nation as a whole, God is finished with them.

And what happens to all the eternal promises made to the children of Israel, promises that are distinct from His promises to the people of the nations who will turn to Him? Those promises are now spiritually applied to the church.

Remarkably, DeMar himself holds to the very replacement theology whose existence he calls a "hoax," teaching that the nation of Israel today has nothing to do with the biblical promises of national regathering.

He even claimed in our 2015 debate that, when the Lord said through His prophets that He would scatter Israel in judgment and regather Israel in mercy (for example, Jer. 31:10), the scattering was physical but the regathering spiritual. What a mockery of the plain sense of the Scriptures.

So, while I join him in rejecting the teaching of a pre-tribulation rapture and the sensationalism that often accompanies this belief, I also reject, categorically, his calling replacement theology a hoax. Unfortunately, for his eschatology to work, he must deny hundreds of unambiguous promises to Israel, which Paul explicitly affirmed in the New Testament (see, especially, Rom. 11:28-29).

His denial, then, is the hoax. Replacement theology is real and must be rejected.

Thankfully, the God who scattered Israel is the God who has preserved Israel, who is regathering His ancient (although still alienated) people back to the land and who will one day turn their hearts to Yeshua-Jesus (Rom. 11:25-27). God does

not endorse replacement theology!

As for DeMar's argument, not only does he draw wrong conclusions from his linguistic argument, but he ignores the fact that, for almost two millennia, Gentile Christians have made the claim that they are the new, spiritual Israel and that God is finished with physical Israel as a whole.

To repeat: This is no hoax.

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