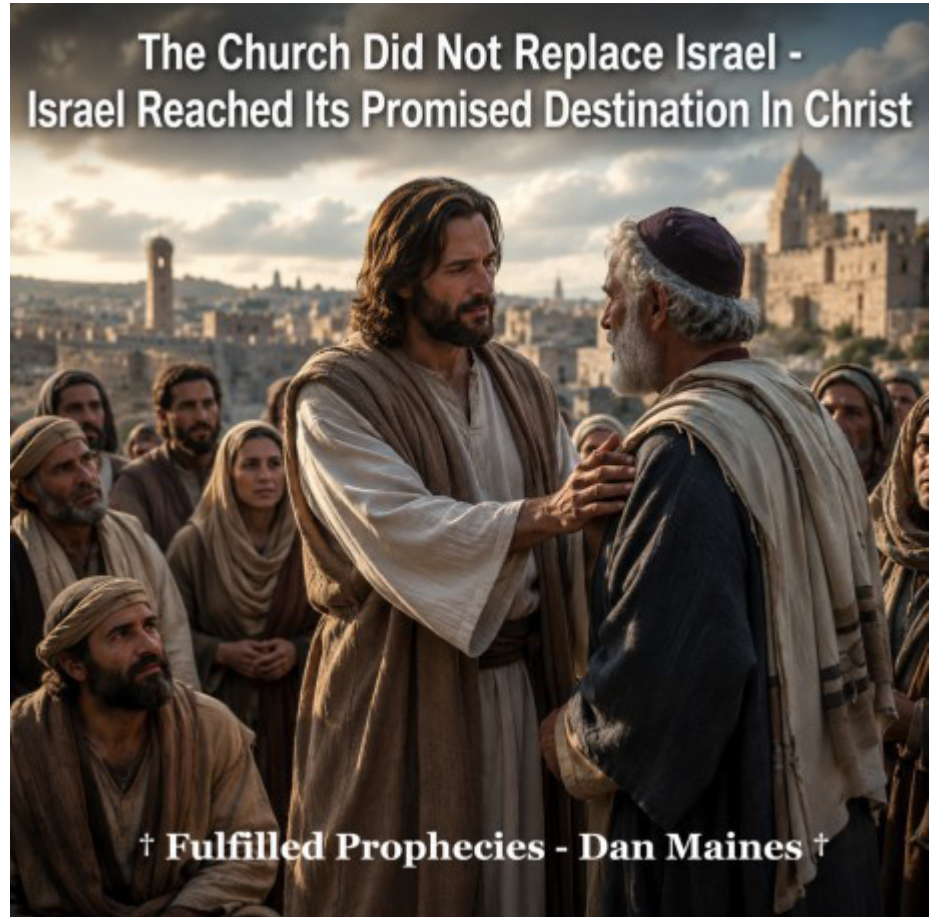


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Covenant - The Church Did Not Replace Israel - Israel Reached Its Promised Destination In Christ



By Dan Maines

The Church Did Not Replace Israel - Israel Reached Its Promised Destination In Christ

Introduction

† The Church didn't replace Israel. That language starts the discussion in the wrong place. The New Testament presents something far greater, God's covenant promises to Israel reached their intended goal in Jesus Christ.

† God didn't abandon His promises to Abraham, cancel Israel, and invent an unrelated people called the Church. He fulfilled His promises through Abraham's promised Seed, Jesus Christ,

and gathered the faithful remnant of Israel together with believing Gentiles into one covenant people. (Galatians 3:16, 26-29)

† This is why Paul could speak about Abraham's seed, the remnant according to grace, Gentiles grafted into the olive tree, one new man, and one body. These aren't five different peoples of God. They're five descriptions of the same redemptive reality centered in Christ. (Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:5, 17-24; Ephesians 2:14-16)

† Replacement theology says the Church replaced Israel. Fulfillment says God's promises to Israel arrived at their promised destination in Christ. The difference is enormous.

† The question isn't, What happened to Israel? The question is, Where were Israel's promises always going? The New Testament answer is Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Galatians 3:16

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as one would in referring to many, but rather as in referring to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

† Paul identifies the destination of the Abrahamic promise with absolute clarity, the promised Seed is Christ. God's covenant promise didn't fail, it reached the One toward whom it had always been moving. (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 22:18)

† This means biblical fulfillment can't be understood merely by tracing physical ancestry. The promise reaches its fulfillment in Christ, and relationship to Christ determines participation in the promised inheritance. (Romans 4:13-16)

† Jesus isn't a temporary interruption in Israel's prophetic story. He's the goal of that story. God's promises weren't redirected away from Israel, they were fulfilled through Israel's Messiah. (Luke 24:44-47)

Romans 9:6-8

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all

children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants shall be named." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

† Paul directly answers the accusation that God's promises had failed. His answer isn't that God replaced Israel. His answer is that physical descent alone never defined the children of promise. (Romans 2:28-29)

† There was Israel according to physical descent, and within that nation there was the faithful covenant remnant. God's word hadn't failed because His promise was being fulfilled exactly according to His purpose. (Romans 9:27)

† This distinction becomes essential when discussing fulfillment. The unbelief of many Israelites didn't destroy God's promises because the faithful remnant received Israel's Messiah and entered the fulfillment those promises anticipated. (Romans 11:1-7)

Romans 11:5-7

In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, since otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

† Notice Paul's words, at this present time. He was describing a first-century remnant of Israel that believed in Christ while the rest were hardened. (Romans 11:1-4)

† The first Christians weren't foreigners who stole Israel's promises. Jesus, the apostles, and the earliest believers were Israelites. They were the believing remnant through whom God's covenant purposes continued into their fulfillment. (Acts 2:41-47)

† This destroys the simplistic accusation of replacement theology. The faithful remnant of Israel wasn't replaced by Gentiles. Gentiles were brought alongside that believing

remnant through faith in Israel's Messiah. (Romans 11:17)

Romans 11:17-18

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you.

† Paul doesn't describe God cutting down one tree called Israel and planting another tree called the Church. There is one olive tree. Some unbelieving branches were broken off, believing Gentiles were grafted in, and the believing Jewish branches remained. (Romans 11:19-24)

† Gentiles didn't replace the tree. They were grafted into it. They became fellow participants in the covenant blessings that came through Abraham and reached fulfillment in Christ. (Romans 4:11-17)

† This is why Gentile believers had no reason to boast against Jewish people. They didn't create the covenant story, they were graciously brought into the fulfillment of it through faith. (Romans 11:20)

† One olive tree means continuity of God's redemptive purpose, not replacement of one unrelated people by another.

Galatians 3:26-29

For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

† Paul couldn't make the conclusion clearer. Those who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise.

† He doesn't say Gentile believers replaced Abraham's seed. He says that in Christ they became participants in Abraham's promised inheritance together with believing Jews. (Galatians

3:7-9)

† The defining issue is union with Christ. If the promised Seed is Christ, then everyone who belongs to Christ shares in the inheritance found in Him. (Galatians 3:16)

† Jew and Gentile didn't remain two separate covenant peoples with two separate redemptive destinies. In Christ they became one.

Ephesians 2:12-16

remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the people of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who previously were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the hostility, which is the Law composed of commandments expressed in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two one new person, in this way establishing peace; and that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the hostility.

† Paul says Gentiles had been strangers to the covenants of promise. Christ didn't establish a second covenant destination for them. He brought those who were far away near. (Ephesians 2:11-13)

† The result wasn't two covenant peoples standing beside each other. Christ made both one. Jewish and Gentile believers became one new man and one body.

† This isn't replacement, it's reconciliation and fulfillment. Christ didn't replace believing Israel with Gentiles. He united believing Jews and believing Gentiles in Himself. (Ephesians 3:5-6)

† The dividing wall was removed because God's purpose was never permanent separation. His purpose was one reconciled people under one Messiah. (Ephesians 2:18)

Ephesians 3:5-6

which in other generations was not made known to mankind, as

it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

† Fellow-heirs doesn't mean replacement heirs. Fellow-members doesn't mean replacement members. Fellow-partakers doesn't mean people who stole another people's promises.

† Gentiles were brought into the promise in Christ through the gospel. That's Paul's explanation of the mystery. (Ephesians 3:3-9)

† The promise wasn't transferred from Israel to an unrelated Gentile institution. The faithful remnant of Israel and believing Gentiles shared together in what God accomplished in Christ.

† The center of the promise isn't ethnicity, geography, or an earthly political state. The center is Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For as many as the promises of God are, in Him they are yes; therefore through Him also is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

† God's promises find their Yes in Christ. They don't find their ultimate fulfillment in a modern political nation, another earthly temple, another priesthood, or another covenant age.

† This is one of the most important principles for understanding biblical fulfillment. We don't honor God's promises by moving their fulfillment away from Christ. We honor them by recognizing that God accomplished what He promised through Christ. (Luke 24:25-27)

† Fulfillment doesn't mean failure. Fulfillment means God kept His word.

Hebrews 12:22-24

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the

righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† The writer doesn't tell believers that Zion remained a distant earthly destination awaiting another age. He tells them, you have come to Mount Zion.

† The promised destination is described as the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the assembly of the firstborn, and Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant. (Galatians 4:26)

† Israel's story moved from promise to fulfillment, from shadow to reality, from the earthly pattern to the heavenly substance found in Christ. (Hebrews 8:1-6)

† The Church didn't steal Israel's destination. In Christ, God's faithful people arrived at the covenant destination toward which Israel's entire story had been moving.

Historical References

† Justin Martyr, writing in the second century, argued extensively that the promises made through the prophets reached their fulfillment through Christ and those united to Him. His writings demonstrate that Christ-centered fulfillment wasn't invented by modern fulfilled eschatology.

† Irenaeus emphasized the unity of God's redemptive work and viewed Christ as the One who brought God's purposes throughout Scripture to their intended completion.

† Augustine later emphasized that God's people must ultimately be understood through God's redemptive purpose rather than physical ancestry alone, although his broader eschatology differed significantly from the fulfilled perspective presented here.

† These historical writers shouldn't determine doctrine for us. Scripture does. They simply demonstrate that Christians throughout history wrestled with the relationship between Israel, Christ, the promises, and the people of God.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't need to choose between honoring Israel's biblical

promises and believing those promises were fulfilled. Fulfillment is how God honored them.

† Our confidence isn't based on ethnicity, national identity, earthly geography, or an earthly temple. Our confidence is in Jesus Christ, the promised Seed in whom God's promises find their Yes. (Galatians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 1:20)

† We don't stand outside Israel's covenant story as people who stole somebody else's inheritance. Through Christ we've been brought into the fulfilled blessing promised through Abraham. (Galatians 3:26-29)

† There aren't two bodies of Christ, two olive trees, two New Covenants, or two ways of receiving the inheritance. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, and one God and Father of all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

† This also leaves no room for boasting. Jewish believers weren't saved because of ancestry, and Gentile believers weren't included because they were superior. Everyone stands by God's grace through faith in Christ. (Romans 11:20)

† The Church didn't replace Israel. Israel's faithful remnant followed Israel's Messiah into the promised New Covenant reality, and believing Gentiles were grafted in with them.

† One promised Seed. One faithful remnant. One olive tree. One new man. One body. One inheritance. One Messiah.

† The destination was always Christ.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Did the Church replace Israel?

A: No. Scripture presents the faithful remnant of Israel believing in Christ while believing Gentiles were grafted in among them. Paul describes one olive tree, not one tree replacing another. (Romans 11:5, 17-24)

Q: Then who is Abraham's seed?

A: Christ is the promised Seed, and those who belong to Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:16, 26-29)

Q: Did God's promises to Israel fail?

A: No. Paul explicitly says God's word hadn't failed. He distinguished physical descent from the children of promise and showed that God's purpose continued through the faithful remnant. (Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:5)

Q: What happened to believing Gentiles?

A: They were grafted into the existing olive tree and became fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ through the gospel. (Romans 11:17; Ephesians 3:6)

Q: Are Jews and Gentiles two separate covenant peoples today?

A: No. Christ made both one, created one new man, and reconciled both to God in one body through the cross. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

Q: Where did Israel's promises finally reach their fulfillment?

A: In Jesus Christ. God's promises find their Yes in Him, and those who belong to Christ inherit the promise. (2 Corinthians 1:20; Galatians 3:29)

Q: Why isn't this replacement theology?

A: Because nothing was replaced. The faithful remnant of Israel received its Messiah, Gentiles were grafted in, and together they became one body in Christ. That's fulfillment, not replacement. (Romans 11:5, 17; Ephesians 2:15-16)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Galatians 3:16; Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:5-7; Romans 11:17-18; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:12-16; Ephesians 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 1:20; Hebrews 12:22-24

† Historical writers: Justin Martyr; Irenaeus; Augustine

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