



*In 2014 the National Society of French Railways (NCFR) discovered after building 2,000 new trains at a cost of \$20.5 billion (5 billion euros) that the trains were too wide for 1,300 stations. The problem: the original measurement of a train platform provided by the Regional rail operator for the train construction was taken from a platform built more than fifty years ago when trains were smaller. A spokesman for the NSFC reported, "When you separate the rail operator from the train company this is what happens."*

**An inaccurate starting point can lead to disastrous consequences.**

## Replacement Theology

From the early foundation of the Church, an imperceptible shift away from Jewish roots gradually produced over the centuries disastrous consequences for the Jews, Israel and the Church. It has been described by some as the great cancer in Christian theology; others declare it as the great deception. More recently there are calls for a second reformation to correct this teaching that has infected the Church for over eighteen hundred years.

What is Replacement Theology? Does it align with scripture? How was the seed planted and how did it grow? What is the impact on world history and what does it say to us today? Perhaps most importantly, how must we, as Biblically sound Christians, respond?

**Replacement theology**, also known as supersessionism, teaches that since the Jews rejected Jesus, the plans, purposes and blessings of God have been nullified and transferred from Israel (the land and people) to the Church. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is seen as absolute proof of God's sure rejection of Israel (land and people) and the forfeiting of their call as the elect, the chosen, of God. Furthermore, all prophecies in Scripture that once spoke of blessing and the restoration of Israel to their ancient homeland, as well as the call of the Jewish people in the ultimate plan of God, have been allegorically<sup>1</sup> reinterpreted as promises for the Church. The Church is now seen as the new Israel.

## Does Replacement Theology Align With Scripture?

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<sup>1</sup> [www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary](http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary) defines allegory as a popular form of literature in which a story points to a hidden or symbolic parallel meaning.

In Genesis 12:1-3, and again in 17:7,8, God made an unconditional, irrevocable covenant with Abraham, his descendants and the land. God made clear that the obligation to fulfil the requirements of that covenant were solely His responsibility, not the Jews. They, and the land, were God's sovereign choice. The Old Testament records the cyclical Jewish history of blessing followed by disobedience and rebellion. Yet, even in the midst of this, God neither rejected His people, nor nullified His promises. Jeremiah 31:35-37 affirms this truth:

*35 Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): 36 "If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever." 37 Thus says the Lord: "If heaven above can be measured, And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel For all that they have done, says the Lord.*

The prophet Jeremiah wrote to the Jews exiled in Babylon of God's continued promise for their future. Jeremiah 29:11 states, "*For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil; to give you a future and hope.*" Prophet after prophet spoke of the restoration of everything that God promised. "What was promised through the prophets? That Israel would be regathered from all nations (see Jer. 16:14-16); that her eyes would be opened (see Isa. 35:5; Acts 26:18); that she would come to know the Lord (see Ezek. 37:12,13); that she would still be a light to the nations (see Isa. 60:1-3); that Jew and Gentile would dwell together in peace in the Messiah (see Isa. 66:19-21).<sup>2</sup>" The reaffirmation of God's intentions for Israel continued throughout the New Testament.

### **Israel's Rejection Not Final**

Paul posed an important question to the Gentile believers in his letter to the Romans. Has God cast away His people, Israel? He declared emphatically, "Certainly not!" The unbelief of the Jews in the Messiah and their being described as enemies of the Gospel (Rom. 11:28) did not negate their election. Romans 11:28b-29: "*concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*" Even in their unbelief, God was working His purposes. It would be the door of opportunity for the Gentiles. Romans 11:11-14:

*11 say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! 13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of*

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<sup>2</sup> Don Finto, *Your People Shall Be My People*, (Ventura, CA. Regal Books, 2001) p. 74

*them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?*

The corporate spiritual blindness in part has happened to the Jews “until fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” (Rom. 11:25)

### **Paul’s Admonition**

Paul, to keep Gentiles from pride and arrogance, reminded them that they were from a wild olive tree grafted into Israel. As the engrafted ones they were to remember that they were partakers of the root and fed from fatness of that olive tree, Israel. The wild branch could not sustain life alone; new life came forth from the conjoined root.

“The wild branches, formerly untended and unwieldy, would beautifully flourish because of the nourishing sap received from the roots. What’s more with both wild and cultivated branches intermingled, the whole tree yielded prized and plentiful fruit that was impossible to grow any other way. When Gentile branches grafted into a Jewish rooted tree function as God intends, the fruit is spectacular. The two must become one for their mutual survival. God’s grafting agent, humility, makes the miracle possible.”<sup>3</sup> The grafting of the wild branch to the olive tree root would not only bring life to both, it would give birth to God’s original intention when He first laid out His plan of redemption in the Garden.

So, not only does Scripture *not* support Replacement Theology, and the spiritual arrogance that supports it, but both the Old and New Testament look to Jesus to facilitate what has never been seen. Now, Jew and Gentile coming together in covenant relationship sharing together the blessings, favor and calling of God through the work of Christ and the cross.

But too soon believing Gentiles would not embrace Paul’s admonition. Prof. Marvin R. Wilson, a leading scholar on Christian-Jewish relations, summarizes how the earliest seeds of Replacement Theology were planted: “Paul’s warning to Gentile believers about pride (see Rom. 11:17-24) went unheeded. What presumption! At first, the Gentiles were but a rejected wild olive branch allowed by God’s mercy to be grafted into the believing family of Abraham. But in the second, third and fourth centuries a new spirit of arrogance and supersessionism had arisen. Paul never anticipated that things would develop this far. He insisted that God did not reject his people, God’s gifts and call are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29; cf. v. 1). Yet Gentiles claimed to have replaced Israel... Though some of the spiritualizing interpretation begins in certain passages of the New Testament, it becomes fully developed in the writings of the Church Fathers.”<sup>4</sup>

What transpired to take the early Church, tightly identified and woven into its Hebraic roots lead by Jewish brethren, to a Church disengaging and eventually denying the very roots that gave birth and sustained it? When and where did it all begin?

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<sup>3</sup> Sandra Teplinsky, *Why Still Care About Israel*, (Bloomington, Minnesota 55438, Chosen Books 2013) p. 123

<sup>4</sup> Marvin. R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, (Grand Rapids, MI 49503, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1989) p. 88-89

**See Part II**

**The Fertile Soil for Replacement**

How were the seeds of Replacement Theology planted and how did they grow?