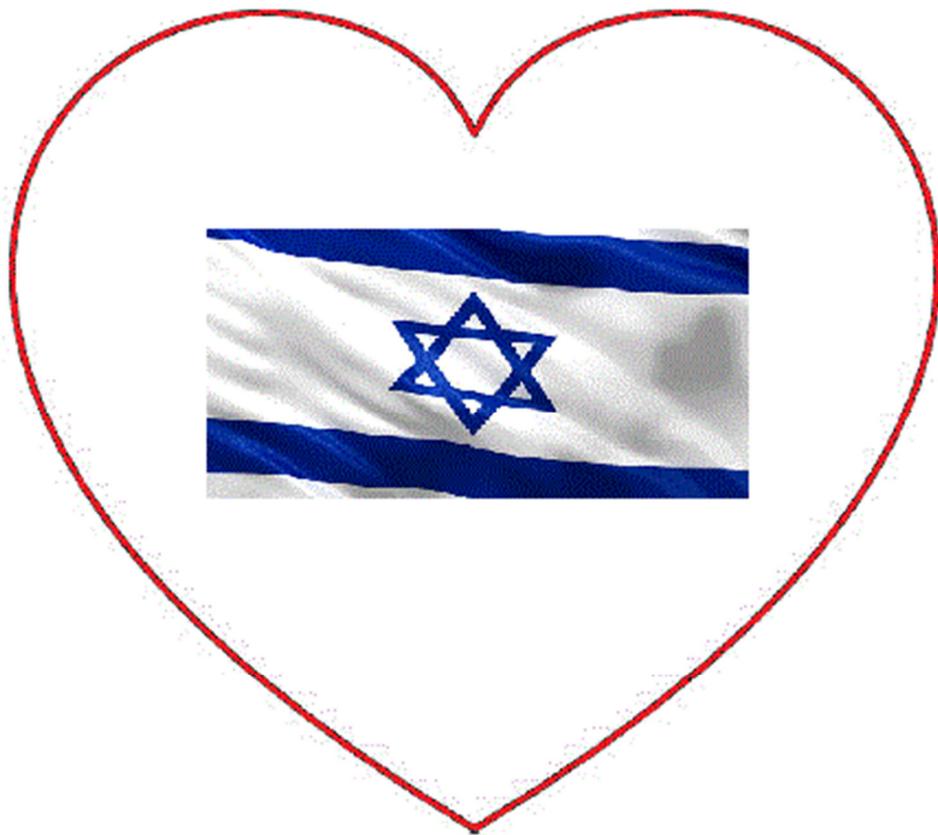


A Christian Zionist's Perspective on God's Heart for Israel



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God's Heart for Israel

Introduction

There are two prevalent views in theology regarding Israel (the People and the Land):

1. God has finished with Israel and replaced, or superseded, her with the Church as His people on earth for the accomplishment of His purposes in Creation and Redemption. Some who take this view, disliking the term 'Replacement', prefer to say that the believing remnant of Israel has been absorbed into the Church (Fulfilment theology) becoming part of one people of God covering Old and New Covenants, and in that way God will save 'All Israel' (Rom. 11:25) and fulfill His promises to Abraham. (For brevity, we'll refer to this understanding as Supersessionism.)
2. God fully intends to literally fulfil His promises to Abraham and his descendants, in line with the Abrahamic Covenant and the land promises embedded in the Mosaic Covenant, raising up a King from the Davidic dynasty to rule over Israel in Israel, restored after the diaspora of 19 centuries since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. (Again for brevity, we'll refer to this position as Christian Zionism.)

These viewpoints are diametrically opposed and have generated a lot of heated debate over the years! Dwight Pryor spoke to the nature of the debate in a Lecture given at Salters' Hall, London on 7th February 2007¹. In it, he said:

"[both sides] can marshal Scriptures to support their point of view. Can we say something fresh about this issue or must we each dig into our trenches and throw stones back and forth?"

He went on to talk about the different meta-narratives of Scripture held by both sides, and the sources which influenced the thinking behind each narrative - what is the "Big Story". For much of the Church, it is the story of Redemption - that the whole purpose of God in Creation was the redemption of mankind, and once Israel has 'produced' the Redeemer, she has no further purpose (and that the completion of the Church is the end of the drama of the ages). He suggests that there is a larger meta-narrative - that of God as Creator and Consummator, and that Israel has a key part to play in the unfolding of that drama:

"God has said, 'When I achieve My purposes in the earth, it will involve the people of Israel, the Jewish descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.'²

As Dwight Pryor indicated, both the above viewpoints are held by men of God who know the Scriptures! So we need humility as we approach this subject. The danger

¹ A Different God Dwight Pryor available from CFI Communications - available here as of October 2017: <http://www.cfi.org.uk/a-different-god.html>.

² *ibid* pp.14-15

for anyone is that of our view being clouded by prior understandings – our view of the “Big Picture” of Scripture acts like a filter through which we view the Scriptures. We need to understand what our ‘big picture’ view is (we are often unaware of it) and to search the Scriptures for ourselves in order to be fully convinced in our own minds!

We discussed at the Foundations North West conference in February 2017 how the Church’s understanding of the Gospel is too limited, because it doesn’t really understand Israel or the Jews, or its relationship to them. Like Narcissus, it tends to be focused on itself, and sees salvation purely in terms of personal salvation and getting to Heaven.

But, there is a bigger story unfolding – God’s story, not the church’s, not even Israel’s, but God’s! Our redemption, and Israel’s redemption, is *part of* the consummation of all things, *not the objective* of it. The Bible shows us that God intends to consummate what He started in Genesis. See, for example, Col. 1:20 where Paul states that God is pleased “through him [Jesus] to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (emphasis mine). And he goes on in v.21 to say that our reconciliation flows out of that.

So how is God going to deal with Israel? Because from even a cursory glance at the Old Testament prophets, it seems the nation (and the Land) has a significant part to play in God’s story, and the events yet future. Or is the first viewpoint above (God is finished with Israel) all there is to say about Israel?

This writer takes the view that God hasn’t finished with Israel, but rather than go over the well-rehearsed arguments for both points of view, this study seeks to find, in the Scriptures, indications of God’s heart for Israel.

The working title of this study was “God’s Theology of Israel?” but I wanted to move away from the debate being purely theological (in the restricted theoretical sense of the word) and seek to get to the heart of the issue – God’s heart for Israel as revealed in the Scriptures. Now that is a big claim to make and I don’t claim to have a monopoly on revelation!

Therefore these notes are offered in the hope that it will stimulate further study and discussion (but not more arguments!) and enable each of us, writer included, to be aware of the lenses through which we view Scripture and the impact that they have on our understanding.

Please note too, that this was a talk given in a particular context, so it doesn’t necessarily have as full explanations as some might want. For that deficiency, I request indulgence and ask that the reader be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures for themselves to “see whether these things be so”.

So that I am up-front about any lenses I may be bringing to the table, the next section is a statement of the approach I take to Scripture, and to this topic in particular.

How do we approach this?

I would like to suggest some keys for our study. I'm coming from the Grammatical/Historical interpretative school (rather than the Bible needing some scheme of allegorical interpretation, in which you would have to be trained); on the basis that "if the Bible doesn't mean what it says, who is to say what it does mean?"

1. Israel means Israel

The people and the land. The word Israel occurs some 2509 times in the English King James' version and invariably means Israel not the church or any other body (apart from one disputed reference which is discussed in David Pawson's book, "Israel in the New testament" pp.180-181).

2. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable

Rom.11:29 – God means what He says, and says what He means. Having chosen ethnic Israel, He hasn't 'unchosen' them.

3. God has a purpose for ethnic Israel which is not yet fulfilled

Rooted in the Old Testament Covenants – at Sinai they were defined as a special people, a kingdom of priests, the recipients of the Law, as Paul says in Romans 9:4-5

... 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, for ever praised! Amen.

Now we know they got it wrong; they shouldn't have kept the kingdom themselves – Isaiah says they were to be light to the nations. They were to be an example to the world of what the Kingdom of God looks like on earth – but that was not to be a demonstration of how **they** behave but of how **He** behaves.

4. Abraham and his descendants were blessed to be a blessing

[Gen. 12:3](#) I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'

From history, this seems to go far beyond the view that this is completely and solely fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah (as the quote above from Romans 9:4-5 indicates), although that is by far the greatest blessing! They have been entrusted by God to give us the Scriptures – **both** testaments! As a people group, they have produced a far greater number of Nobel Prize winners, scientists, philosophers, business men/financiers, writers, entertainers, etc., than their share of world population would seem to justify (about 100 times more!).³

³ See "There's something special about these folk" Steve Maltz Outcast Nation pp. 300 ff

We'll also look at Romans 11 later, where we will see that the restoration of Israel will bring immense blessing to the Gentiles and reconciliation of the world.

5. Supercessionism merges everything into the Church

Supercessionism denies a distinctive place for Israel. Gal.3:28 is often quoted by Supercessionists:

“In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

So, they say, the Jew/Gentile distinction is done away with in Christ and Israel has no further purpose in God's plan. We must ask ourselves, are the slave/free or male/female distinctions done away with in Christ? NO! The New Testament contains specific teaching for men and women, and for servants and masters. These relationships are not done away with – this verse is about our standing before God in salvation, where these distinctions do not matter. But it doesn't mean that our distinctive **callings** and **relationships** are abolished – they are actually enhanced in Christ!

6. The Divisiveness is removed in Christ, but not the Distinctiveness

Dwight Pryor suggests⁴ that Jew and Gentile being reconciled together in the “One New Man” means the **divisiveness** is removed - but not the **distinctiveness** (which is still maintained right on into Rev. 21 – see vv.12,24). As Paul says to the Ephesian church:

[Eph. 3:14-18 \(Phillips\)](#) “For Christ is our living peace. He has made a unity of the conflicting elements of Jew and Gentile by breaking down the **barrier which lay between us**. By His sacrifice He removed the hostility of the Law, with all its commandments and rules, and made in Himself out of the two, Jew and Gentile, one new man, thus producing peace. For He reconciled both to God by the sacrifice of one body on the cross, and by this act made utterly irrelevant **the antagonism between them**. Then He came and told both you who were far from God and us who were near that **the war was over**. And it is through Him that both of us now can approach the Father in the one Spirit.” (emphasis mine)

In Romans 11:17-18, the wild branches of the Gentiles are said to be grafted in to the rootstock of the olive tree (there are a number of views as to what that is, which we won't go into here, but just to note that the natural branches – that is Israel – grow from the root, *and so do the grafted in branches*, which suggests to me the root is the Abrahamic covenant – see Rom. 4:16-17; Gal. 3:14). Gentiles are grafted in contrary to nature – you never graft an inferior branch into a superior stock as you'll only get inferior fruit!

⁴ “A Different God” p.16

But that is exactly what God does with the Gentiles. Some years ago, I had an apple tree with three different varieties of apples grafted into it. Each branch grew true to its type – they never cross fertilized/hybridized. Nowhere are Gentiles told to become Jews or even to behave Jewishly – quite the reverse (see for example, Acts 15 and the book of Galatians).

The Gentile wild olive branches still produce wild olives, while nourished from the cultivated root – such is the grace of God that He will accept the wild olives that the Gentile branches produce! And God is able to graft the natural branches in again, and is doing so now (the remnant of grace Rom.11:5), and will do so in a much greater way, when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in ...

... and so all Israel will be saved

Who is Paul talking about in Romans 11:25? **Israelites** – to whom belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants...and the promises (Rom. 9:4-5). So what are these covenant promises?

- Abrahamic Covenant – God has **a holy purpose**. The land belongs to God and is leased to Israel

[Gen. 17:7-8](#) I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God

Lev. 25:23 The land must never be sold on a permanent basis, for the land belongs to me. You are only foreigners and tenant farmers working for me.(NLT)

- Sinai Covenant – God wants **a holy people**

[Exodus 19:5-6](#) “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

- Land Covenant – God wants a holy people living in **a holy land**

[Lev:18;26-28](#) But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the foreigners residing among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you

Enjoyment of the Land was based on obedience. Eventually the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and finally the Romans would take them into captivity, but restoration to the Land was promised over and over again (See, for example: Isa. 11, Jer.29; Ezek. 36).

The ultimate fulfilment of those promises cannot possibly be the return from Babylon – only forty five thousand returned then, and the return is promised from many more countries than they were exiled to in OT (Isa. 11 lists some of them).

They're back there now but can they remain there *as they are now* – secular, disobedient, repeating all the Canaanite sins? Surely if there's no repentance, the Land will spew them out again! And the promises would then have a fulfilment in a future day.

But I believe we are in that future day, and we are looking for the day when the Lord pours out the spirit of supplication on them (Zech. 12:10) and pours clean water on them (Ezek 36:24-26) and they say, "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39)!

- Davidic Covenant – God has decreed **a holy king in a holy land**
[2 Sam. 7:16](#) "Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever."
[Jer. 23:5](#) "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up for David **a righteous Branch**, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right **in the land.**"
- New Covenant – and God's ultimate purpose is **a holy kingdom**
A key characteristic of the New Covenant is holiness (without which, no man will see the Lord Heb.12:14). We will go on to see how God's purposes for Israel involve a literal Kingdom, but this is rooted in the New Covenant:

[Jer. 31:31, 33](#) 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord,
 'when I will make a new covenant
with the people of Israel
 and with the people of Judah.
'This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel
 after that time,' declares the Lord.
'I will put my law in their minds
 and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God,
 and they will be my people.'

[Isa 11:9](#) 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.

So what about Israel and the New Covenant? How do the Gentiles (Goyim) fit in?

“The New Covenant is made with the house of Judah and the house of Israel, already! What’s left for these Goyim to steal from us?!” as our Jewish friends might say (see Jer.31:31). So the question really is how do the Gentiles fit in?!

This is one of the questions Paul is answering in Romans 9-11. Six times over, he says that Israel has been blinded ch.10:2-3; ch.11:7, 11-12, 15, 23, 25 – judicially blinded – the veil is over their eyes **Why? So that the Gospel can go to the Gentiles and they come into the New Covenant! Hallelujah!! But their setting aside is only for a season – God is not finished with Israel! (see 11:11,25)**

Paul points out two elements in Israel – the Remnant and the Rest:

[Romans 11:5-7](#) So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened

So an elect remnant is being saved now through the preaching of the Gospel – Jews saved into the Church through the Gospel now – distinct from those who will be saved ... “the Rest” who are hardened but not forever!

[Romans 11:25-28](#) 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. As it is written:

The deliverer will come from Zion;
he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

And this is my covenant with them
when I take away their sins.’

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs

Finally all Israel will be saved, ‘in this way’ (better translation than ‘and so’) – in what way? God Himself removing the hardening when the full number of the Gentiles has come in – which will result in immeasurable blessing to the world:

[Romans 11:12, 15](#) But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Paul has no words to describe it! He can only conclude the chapter with a paean of praise to God as he works through the outworking of God’s purposes in grace. (We must note here however, that this is not a different method of salvation for Israel – they must believe on the Name of Jesus and His finished work on the Cross, as we’ll

see in the next section. But, just as God illuminates our hearts through His Holy Spirit bringing conviction and conversion, so the salvation for Israel is His work⁵).

Note that in Rom. 11:28 Paul says that are beloved for the patriarchs' sake **BUT** enemies for the gospel's sake. So being saved into the Church is not the method of 'all Israels' ultimate salvation as the Supersessionist would say, as now, in the Gospel day, they are enemies (as an ethnic group).

Their being saved now into the Church would not be a mystery; nor has the salvation of the remnant resulted in the immeasurable blessing spoken of by Paul in Romans 11. Individual Jews are saved now and called a remnant. But if the remnant is holy (meaning 'set apart for God'), so is the 'whole batch' (v.15) from which they are taken, because

[Romans 11:29](#) God's calling and His promises are irrevocable.

But that leaves us with some questions!

- **When** will they be saved?
- **Who** will be saved?
- **Where** will they be saved?
- **How** will they be saved?
- **Who** will save them?

Paul answers these questions in Rom. 11:25-27

When will they be saved? v.25 when God finishes His purposes for the Gentiles – the fullness of the Gentiles has come in – the word used here was used for when the complete crew had assembled for a ship, and then the ship could set sail!

Who will be saved? Will it be the Remnant? the Rest? all Jews alive at the time? What about Old Testament saints? v.26 'All Israel' is typically used regarding a representative group (e.g. 2 Sam 5:1 All Israel came to make David King at Hebron).

The Remnant (of grace) have been included in the church (11:1,7) so it's not them getting saved here. I believe it is all the individual descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob alive at the time, as a group representing all Israel, just prior to Jesus' return in Glory (the OT saints being raised immediately after His return).

NB It is the same people group who were rejected who are received back

[Hos. 1:10-11](#) **In the place where it was said to them**, "You are not my people", they will be called "children of the living God". The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together

[Hosea 2:23](#) I will plant her for myself in the land;
I will show my love to the one I called "Not my loved one".

⁵ See pp. 321ff "Outcast Nation" Steve Maltz

I will say to those called “Not my people”, You are my people”;
and they will say, “You are my God.”

[Jer. 31:8, 10](#) See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth... **“He who scattered Israel will gather them** and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.”

[Zech 10:6-10](#) Judah ... the tribes of Joseph... the Ephraimites ... their children...
Though **I scatter them** among the peoples,
yet in distant lands they will remember me.
They and their children will survive,
and they will return.
I will bring them back

Note that this last prophecy was made **after** the return from Babylon, so is pointing to another scattering and regathering yet future at that time, and involving places they were not scattered to under the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations. Other Scriptures make the same point, e.g. Isa. 11:11-13. The same people group who were scattered are to be regathered.

After my initial circulation of this booklet, I received the following very helpful comments from José de Silva, which helps us understand the issue of Israel’s election:

“One of the problems I believe people have with the subject of Israel and the Church is that they seem to understand the concept of the elect individual, but not that of the elect nation; Israel was elect a holy nation, i.e. set apart for God, Dt.7:6 & others, which is why the Scriptures speak of Israel and the Gentiles (= the nations), because no other nation was elect of God.

“It was to his elect nation, therefore, to his treasured possession, that the oracles of God were entrusted and to no other. Theirs too are the covenants and the promises, etc. and indeed the context of Ro. 9-11 is about the elect nation versus the non-elect nations, and not elect individuals.

“National election is no guarantee of individual salvation (contrary to Pharisaic teaching), which is why Moses tells the Israelites to circumcise their hearts, Dt.10:16, the sign of individual salvation (the sign of national election is circumcision of the flesh). What national election does guarantee is God’s purposes for that nation, that it will always survive as a distinct entity.”

Where will they be saved? At Zion! Does Zion refer to a literal or spiritual place? v.26 **“In the place where it was said”** where was that?- At literal Jerusalem/Zion – see Hos. 1:10 already quoted above

[Amos 9:14-15](#) and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.
They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
they will make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant Israel in their own land,
never again to be uprooted
from **the land I have given them,**
says the Lord your God.

[Jer. 31:16-17](#) 'They will return from the land of the enemy.
So there is hope for your descendants,'
declares the Lord.
'Your children will return to **their own land.**'

How will they be saved? v. 26-27 quoting Isa. 59:20 "turned away from ungodliness" – this is the work of the Messiah "When I take away their sin". I used to think it was when they see Jesus coming back, but He said that they wouldn't see Him again **until** they say "Blessed is He ..." No-one is saved through sight anywhere in the Scripture, only through faith – and that's only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit:

[Zech. 12:10](#) '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

[Zech. 13:1](#) 'On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.'

And it seems, from the context of those Scriptures, that their salvation is the trigger for Messiah's return!

Who will save them? v.26-27 God Himself "I will"; the Deliverer, the Messiah – The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, through Whom all the promises of God are 'Yes' and 'Amen' (2 Cor. 1:20)

[Rom 15:8](#) For I tell you that Christ has become a servant and a minister to the circumcision (Jews) on behalf of God's truth, to confirm and verify the promises made to the fathers. (NB the Jewish fathers!)

We might also ask though, "**Why** will they be saved?" This brings us right back to the purposes of God for the nation which we described earlier – and leads into the New Covenant, which finds its complete fulfilment in the Age of Messiah (a.k.a. the Millennium leading into the New Heavens and New Earth)

[Jeremiah 30:11](#) "For I am with you (Israel) says the Lord to save you; though I make a full end of all the nations (Gentile) where I've scattered you."

[Jeremiah 30:17](#) "For I will restore health to you (Israel) and heal you of your wounds, says the Lord, because they called you an outcast saying 'This is Zion, no one seeks her.'"

[Isaiah 60:14-15](#) "The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you and all those who despised you will fall prostrate at your feet...whereas you have been forsaken and hated...I will make you an eternal excellence." (NB in Ezek 36 this is said to be for **His** sake!)

[Zechariah 8: 23](#) "In those days ten men of every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'."

Five times in Rom 11 Paul states a threefold purpose for the past and future of Israel:⁶

	Israel past	Gentiles now	Israel future
v.11-12	Fall/diminishing	Salvation/riches	Fullness
v.15	Rejection	Reconciliation	Acceptance
v.17-23	Broken off	Grafted in	Grafted back
v.25-26	Hardening	Fullness brought in	All Israel saved
v.31-32	All in Unbelief Them 'all'	Mercy ←-----→	All receive Mercy Same 'all'

In each case, the first stage starts a process that must culminate in the salvation of all Israel (the answer to Paul's prayer in Romans 10:1). Israel here must mean non-remnant Israel as the remnant was, and is, being saved into the church. It's the same people that were rejected that are received back – in Romans 11:32 the **All** that are bound over in unbelief are the same **All** that receive mercy (but now with the addition of the Gentiles).

The grafting process helps us understand the temporary laying aside of Israel. An apple tree grower once told me that the scions for grafting are cut off in October and are laid aside for the whole winter, then grafted in to the rootstock in the Spring. It has been a long winter for the nation of Israel, but the Spring is coming, praise the Lord! ('how much more!' Romans 11:24)

⁶ I acknowledge Douglas Moo as the source of this, but cannot find where I got it from!

Development and impact of Supercessionist interpretation

A number of writers have explored this, and readers are referred to the reading list at the end for details. Especially interesting is the seminal work by R. Kendall Soulen mentioned earlier. He describes the development of Supercessionist thinking in the early church (which is also covered in Steve Maltz's books in a more accessible way⁷) so it is not covered here in any detail. We must however note that the Supercessionist approach is now assumed, and all theological discussion takes place within its parameters. It is not defined in any textbook on systematic theology but is part and parcel of the grammar of theology.

Soulen comments:

“According to this teaching, God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam, in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the Church, the new Israel. Israel rejected Messiah so God has rejected Israel and replaced her, or merged her, with the Church as the People of God.”

Dr Robert Reymond, in *Sword and Trowel*, issue 2 2006, quoted by Dwight Pryor⁸:
“All God’s land promises to Israel in the Old Testament are to be seen in terms of shadow, type and prophecy, in contrast to the reality, substance and fulfilment of which the New Testament speaks (*so far so good?*)... We Christians, as members of Christ’s Messianic Kingdom, are the real heirs to the land promises of Holy Scripture, but in their fulfilled character in the heavenly hereafter.” (*is this Platonic dualism?*) My comments in italics.

This is seemingly persuasive if you take a ‘broad brush’ approach to the Old Testament prophecies, but not when you get down to detail! One study Bible gives the following list of references from Isaiah regarding Israel’s future earthly kingdom – 17 characteristics, some 40 references just in point 1:

1. The Lord will restore the faithful remnant of Israel to the land to inhabit the kingdom at its beginning.

1:9, 25–27; 3:10; 4:3; 6:13; 8:10; 9:1; 10:20, 22, 25, 27; 11:11–12, 16; 14:1–2, 22, 26; 26:1–4; 27:12; 28:5; 35:9; 37:4, 31–32; 40:2–3; 41:9; 43:5–6; 46:3–4; 49:5, 8, 12, 22; 51:11; 54:7–10; 55:12; 57:13, 18; 60:4, 9; 61:1–4, 7; 65:8–10; 66:8–9, 19

2. As the Lord defeats Israel’s enemies, he will provide protection for his people.

4:5–6; 9:1, 4; 12:1–6; 13:4; 14:2; 21:9; 26:4–5; 27:1–4; 30:30–31; 32:2; 33:16, 22; 35:4; 49:8–9, 17–18; 52:6; 54:9–10; 55:10–11; 58:12; 60:10, 12, 18; 62:9; 66:16

3. In her kingdom, Israel will enjoy great prosperity of many kinds.

22:22–23; 26:15, 19; 27:2, 13; 29:18–20; 30:20; 32:3, 15–20; 33:6, 24; 35:3, 5–6, 8–10; 40:11; 42:6–7, 16; 43:5–6, 8, 10, 21; 44:5, 14; 46:13; 48:6; 49:10;

⁷ See “How the Church lost the Way” and “How the Church lost the Truth”. Refer to the reading list at the end.

⁸ “A Different God” p.2

52:9; 54:2–3; 55:1, 12; 58:9, 14; 60:5, 16, 21; 61:4, 6–10; 62:5; 65:13–15, 18, 24; 66:21–22

4. The city of Jerusalem will rise to world pre-eminence in the kingdom.

2:2–4; 18:7; 25:6; 40:5, 9; 49:19–21; 60:1–5, 13–15, 17; 62:3–4

5. Israel will be the centre of world attention in the kingdom.

23:18; 54:1–3; 55:5; 56:6–8; 60:5–9; 66:18–21

6. Israel’s mission in the kingdom will be to glorify the Lord.

60:21; 61:3

7. Gentiles in the kingdom will receive blessing through the channel of faithful Israel.

11:10; 19:18, 24–25; 42:6; 45:22–23; 49:6; 51:5; 56:3, 6–8; 60:3, 7–8; 61:5; 66:19

8. Worldwide peace will prevail in the kingdom under the rule of the Prince of Peace.

2:4; 9:5–6; 11:10; 19:23; 26:12; 32:18; 54:14; 57:19; 66:12

9. Moral and spiritual conditions in the kingdom will reach their highest plane since the fall of Adam.

27:6; 28:6, 17; 32:16; 42:7; 44:3; 45:8; 51:4; 61:11; 65:21–22

10. Governmental leadership in the kingdom will be superlative with the Messiah heading it up.

9:6–7; 11:2–3; 16:5; 24:23; 25:3; 32:1, 5; 33:22; 42:1, 4; 43:15; 52:13; 53:12; 55:3–5

11. Humans will enjoy long life in the kingdom. 65:20, 22

12. Knowledge of the Lord will be universal in the kingdom.

11:9; 19:21; 33:13; 40:5; 41:20; 45:6, 14; 49:26; 52:10, 13, 15; 54:13; 66:23

13. The world of nature will enjoy a great renewal in the kingdom.

12:3; 30:23–26; 32:15; 35:1–4, 6–7; 41:18–19; 43:19–20; 44:3, 23; 55:1–2, 13; 58:10–11

14. “Wild” animals will be tame in the kingdom.

11:6–9; 35:9; 65:25

15. Sorrow and mourning will not exist in the kingdom.

25:8; 60:20

16. An eternal kingdom, as a part of God’s new creation, will follow the millennial kingdom.

24:23; 51:6, 16; 54:11–12; 60:11, 19; 65:17

17. The King will judge overt sin in the kingdom. 66:24

And this is just Isaiah! There have been many attempts to allegorize this, but, as I quoted earlier, ‘if the Bible doesn’t mean what it says, who is to say what it does mean?’ Supercessionist theologians? The allegorical method of interpretation, in which you have to be trained! This takes us right back to Plato – sacred and secular, clergy and laity – and Gnosticism – hidden knowledge revealed to the initiated, which means you can’t understand the Bible without training (in Aristotelian logic!).⁹

For example Matthew Henry comments on Isaiah 11 wolves living alongside lambs – men of a wolf-like nature being converted and able to live with men of a lamb-like

⁹ See “How the Church lost the Way” and “How the Church lost the Truth”.

character. (Isn't the gospel meant to transform us, not just to enable us to rub along together?). While it may be true as an application, to make this the sole meaning of this prophecy is an unwarranted allegorisation of the plain statement of Scripture?

John Piper observes that, in the allegorical interpretation of Isaiah 65, the sinner dying in his sin at 100 years old and being counted a mere youth, is a picture of eternal life according to the allegorical interpretation of Isa 65 – a concept he struggles to accept (reasonably enough!)¹⁰

I will just observe that you wouldn't arrive at these allegorical meanings based on the plain reading of Scripture!

As an example of the Supersessionist hermeneutic in operation, I quote Sam Storms in [Kingdom Come: The Amillennial Alternative](#)¹¹:

"If someone should object, as no doubt they will, that these Old Testament passages when read in their original context pertain to God's prophesied purpose for Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I happily concur.

But again we cannot read, interpret, and apply such texts in isolation from the complete revelation in the New Testament concerning the identity of God's covenant people.

As we'll see ... all believing Jews are included in these predictions. No one is replaced by a believing Gentile. But all those who are by faith in Christ, the true seed of Abraham, are now themselves 'one new man' and thus co-heirs with believing Jews of the promises made to the fathers.

The Church is, *therefore*, the true Israel in and on behalf of whom all the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled. *Thus*, when we read about prophesied regatherings of Israel into their land, we are to see in them a type of the future gathering of believing men and women from all nations of the earth into the Christian community that we know as the church." (Emphasis mine – this is supposed to be a logical deduction from what he has previously said, but is it not rather an a-priori assumption?¹²)

He's led us to a replacement view of God's purposes, via a fulfilment theological path. Can we spot the inconsistencies in his logic? (Now there's a word that should raise a red flag for us!)

¹⁰ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-shoot-from-jesse-the-nations-and-israel> retrieved October 2017

¹¹ Published by Mentor in 2015

¹² This is not intended as a criticism of Sam Storms! This quote is given as an example of the Supersessionist hermeneutic in operation. His fundamental interpretative assumptions are recorded in the opening chapters of "Kingdom Come" that "Jesus Christ and his Church are the focal **and terminating** point of all prophecy." And that "the Old Testament finds its **consummate fulfillment** in the person of Christ **and his body, the Church**" (emphasis mine)

Let's look at the statement in detail:

“If someone should object, as no doubt they will, that these Old Testament passages when read in their original context pertain to God’s prophesied purpose for Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, I happily concur.

So far, so good ...

But again we cannot read, interpret, and apply such texts in isolation from the complete revelation in the New Testament concerning the identity of God’s covenant people.

Who are God’s Covenant People? **“the complete revelation in the New Testament concerning the identity of God’s covenant people”** is a lens that has been put on the Scripture through which the Old Testament is viewed. (See footnote 12 above)

As one expositor says:

Of course, there is everything right about letting the New Testament guide us in our understanding of the Old Testament, but there is everything wrong about imposing the New Testament on the Old¹³

The Supersessionist approach makes the 60+ references to Israel in the NT refer to the church in order to read the church back into the Old Testament as Israel. In fact, all the references to Israel in the NT refer either to the ethnic people of Israel (The Jews) or to the land (although some would debate the one verse in Gal. 6 mentioned earlier).

As we see in Ephesians 3, the Church was a mystery hidden in God during Old Testament times – not hidden in the Old Testament writings, and to impose the Church back onto the Old Testament forcefully can lead to all sorts of misunderstandings. One of the results of this is failing to distinguish God’s purposes for Israel as apart from the Church, which is the major feature of Supersessionism.

A system which looks for the Church in the Old Testament as ‘hidden’ truth is in danger of becoming Gnostic. On p.17 below we look at the illogicality of making it the only fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Yes, in the Day of Grace, believing Jews are part of the One New Man along with believing Gentiles, but nowhere does it say in the NT that God is finished for ever with unbelieving Jews (or finished with unbelieving Gentiles and the current earth for that matter – a corollary of the position that Supersessionists take! Quite the reverse, as our study of Romans 11 above showed).

¹³ Charles Ryrie “Dispensationalism” 1996 edition

“all believing Jews are included in these predictions ... all those who are by faith in Christ, the true seed of Abraham, are now themselves ‘one new man’”. So believing Jews are OK, but what about unbelieving Jews who are to be saved as per Rom. 11:25 after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in?

The remnant is being saved now as part of the One New Man. But ‘the rest’ are going to be saved, and, as we saw above, they are distinct from the remnant being saved into the church (the One New Man), as they are enemies of the Gospel, until God softens the hardening at the return of Christ (as the context of the OT quotations in Rom. 11:26 shows).

The question to be answered is how the salvation of the hardened, but now softened, Israelites helps to fulfil the purpose of their calling, discussed above under **‘Why will they be saved?’** From a Christian Zionist perspective, it is to this group that the promises made to the Fathers are specifically and literally fulfilled.

“the Promises made to the Fathers”

[Rom 15:8](#) For I tell you that Christ has become a servant and a minister to the circumcision (Jews) on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm and verify the promises made to the fathers.

Whose Fathers? Israel’s! Messiah was a servant to the circumcision – not the spiritual circumcision, but Israel (the very next verse contrasts Israel with Gentiles, so we know that in this verse he doesn’t mean the Church, but he means Jews as opposed to Gentiles).

Gentile blessing seems to be focused on spiritual blessings in Gal. 3:14:

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith **we might receive the promise of the Spirit.** (emphasis mine)

I’m quite happy to be included in all the Abrahamic covenant blessings (the root from which we are nourished), but not to the exclusion of ethnic Israel!

“the true Israel” – a non-biblical expression, a logical deduction (are the warnings in Col.2:4,8 relevant here?), **“in and on behalf of whom all the Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled”** – is this not unwarranted spiritualization and allegorisation of God’s specific promises?¹⁴

Are we to understand that the Bible must be read backwards as if the OT had no plain meaning and God had promised nothing of import until the apostolic era? We are supposed to believe that Abraham never expected his offspring to inherit a literal piece of real estate and Joseph gave instructions to have his bones buried in a seminary library!

¹⁴ See Steve Maltz’ books op. cit.

So to whom are the prophecies addressed?

It is my belief that the prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the regathering and redemption of Israel were addressed to the people of Israel and will be fulfilled to the people of Israel (Romans 11:29: The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable).

But Supercessionism takes all the Old Testament prophecies of blessing and applies them to the church (note it leaves the curses for Israel, even when they occur in the same context!), as though the people group hearing the prophecies was not the one being addressed, but they were applicable to some future, different, as yet unknown, people group – the church (which was *a mystery hidden in God in Old Testament times* - Eph. 3:4-10; Col. 1:26).

The following argument has been presented to ‘prove’ that Jesus’ words in Matt. 24 were addressed solely to the disciples hearing them and consequently, His Second Coming took place in AD70:

Every word is spoken to the disciples, and to them alone. To imagine that the ‘ye’ and ‘you’ in this address apply, not to the disciples to whom Christ was speaking, but to some unknown and yet nonexistent persons in a far distant age, is so preposterous a supposition as not to deserve serious notice. ¹⁵

So Jesus’ words must be constrained to apply **only** to those whom He was addressing – a position adopted by many in the Reformed/Supercessionist group, for example Dr. R. C. Sproul, referring to Russell’s book, comments: “It vindicates the apostolic hope and prediction of our Lord’s close-at hand coming in judgment.”¹⁶ (i.e. during their lifetime, with the destruction of the Temple in AD70, which Russell advocates as the complete fulfilment of Matthew 24).

And yet **Supercessionism takes the opposite view re OT prophecies!** The classic Reformed position on Israel (held, it is said, by 80% of the church in the UK – knowingly or not!) is that a huge part of the OT does apply to some unknown future age! (i.e. the Church, see quotes above from Dr Reymond and Sam Storms – all OT prophecies addressed to the church).

So the Christian Zionist could reply, regarding the Old Testament prophecies of blessing to Israel:

Every word is spoken to the Israelites, and to them alone. To imagine that the ‘ye’ and ‘you’ in these prophecies apply, not to the Israelites to whom the prophets were speaking, but to some unknown and yet non-existent group of persons in a far distant age, is so preposterous a supposition as not to deserve serious notice!

And yet, that is precisely the position adopted by Supercessionists, and is fundamental to both the post-millennial and a-millennial points of view.

¹⁵ J. Stuart Russell “The Parousia” pub. 1878 digital edition p.49 available from

https://www.preteristarchive.com/Books/1878_russell_parousia.html as of Oct 2017

¹⁶ See endorsement by Dr. R. C. Sproul at <http://www.preterist.org/about-us/what-is-preterist-view/>

Consequences of various theological positions regarding Israel

In conclusion, we'll take a quick look at some positions taken by Christians regarding Israel – just the points relevant to our theme - not a full discussion (for which see Alex Jacob's new book "The Case for Fulfilment Theology")

Theologies that embrace supercessionism tend to be triumphalist towards Israel

Covenant Theology

- Interprets all the covenants of OT as phases of a single over-arching covenant of grace which culminates in the New Covenant
- Defines Israel's sole purpose as to produce the Messiah ("**The** Seed" in Gal. 3). Now that's fulfilled, they have no further purpose
- Says that the distinction between Jew and Gentile not relevant and done away with in Christ anyway – only one people of God through the OT and NT
- Is a-millennial, no future Kingdom, Satan bound in the Bottomless Pit at the Cross (but, so I've been told by a friend who holds to Reformed theology, on a very long chain so he can still deceive people!). We're in a spiritual millennium now and we all inherit the land of Israel along with all the earth.

Kingdom Theology

- Emphasises "already but not yet" aspects of the Kingdom of God, and works to bring in the Kingdom now through prayer, spiritual warfare and trying to reform culture and society – a manifest Kingdom without a manifest King?

Tends to be Post-millennial – 'we will complete the job that Israel failed to do' as I've heard it put by one who holds this view (boast not yourself against the branches? Rom. 11:18). Then Jesus returns **after** the kingdom has been established and run for 1000 years by human effort (note that this presumes a manifest kingdom without a manifest King!), followed by the end of time.

Theologies that are sympathetic to Christian Zionism also have dangers

Two covenant/extreme Dispensationalist

- Sees Israel as ultimately saved under their own covenants:
 - Abrahamic – misses the point that they have to have the same faith as faithful Abraham – "He rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was glad"
 - Mosaic – misses the point that the OT law could not bring salvation, and, arguably, was not meant to – it was about a "saved but sinning people" being able to approach a Holy God
 - So no need to preach the Gospel to Jews – possibly the worst form of anti-Semitism! From people who profess to love the Jews.

Classic Dispensationalist

- Can see Israel simply as a prophetic sign – “the clock has started ticking”. Justifies the criticism of some Rabbis that Christians want to get the Jews back to Israel just so that “our Jesus” can come back.

In my own preparation for this study, I have had to repent to the Lord of that attitude, and pray for their blessing in their return to the land! And that the veil will be removed (2 Cor. 3:14) so that they may return to the Lord – that is the Biblical order for Israel’s final restoration – see Ezek. 36:24-28

Christian Zionists/Jewish Roots/Messianic Gentiles

- I have met some who have an air of superiority over other believers who do not see God’s purposes for Israel. Paul’s warning about boasting in Rom 11 applies here as well, but in reverse!
- Steve Maltz also gives a warning in “How the Church Lost the Way” ¹⁷:

“Gentile Christians who have studied the Jewish Roots of their faith have been mightily enriched ... But – and this is a BIG BUT – unless there is a genuine and demonstrable love of the Jewish People – it is a selfish exercise, carried out just for personal blessing. ... Sure, you can learn from the Jewish roots, but **don’t neglect the very people who literally shed their blood to ensure that these teachings have survived to reach you.**” (emphasis mine)

¹⁷ p.179

What is the Conclusion of the matter?

Never mind theological systems! Hopefully, we've seen something of God's Heart for Israel – what's yours?

One Jewish man, interviewed by Bill and Gloria Gaither, said: "God doesn't just *love* the Jews! He's crazy about us!"

So it would seem, from a plain reading of Scripture!

"When Israel was a child, I loved him ... I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, With bands of love, And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them."

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror. They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses," Says the LORD. (Hosea.11:1-11 excerpted)

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. (Jer. 31:3)

... concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Rom 11:28-29)

Paul touches God's heart for Israel when he said:

Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. (Rom.10:1)

The heart of Jesus for His people, Israel?

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.

I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Matt.23:37,39)

And they will!

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.' " (Zec 12:10; 13:1; 13:9)

Suggested Further Reading

The Bible of course! All the passages from Isaiah indicated above (pp.14-15), plus the following chapters for a start (a good reference Bible will lead you to others):

Genesis 12; 15; 17

Jeremiah 23; 29-33

Ezekiel 36-37

Hosea 1; 3; 11

Amos 9

Zechariah 8-14

Romans 9-11

Ephesians 2-3

Revelation 21

Books by Steve Maltz:

How the Church lost the Way

How the Church lost the Truth

Outcast Nation

All available from Saffron Planet Publishing <http://www.sppublishing.com/> or via www.saltshakers.com

The Eight Blessings Given to the People of Israel Rev. Alex Jacob, downloadable from <http://www.cmj.org.uk/resources/oprp.php>

The Case for Enlargement Theology Rev Alex Jacob, available from <http://www.cmj.org.uk/shop/product.php?s=the-case-for-enlargement-theology>

The God of Israel and Christian Theology R. Kendall Soulen (Fortress Press 1996) available on Amazon

A Different God Dwight Pryor available from CFI Communications – available here <http://www.cfi.org.uk/a-different-god.html> as of Oct 2017.

Israel in the New Testament David Pawson (Terra Nova Publications) available on Amazon

(Web addresses correct as of Oct. 2017)

Space for your own notes

God's Heart for Israel

In the talk I gave at the Foundations Annual Conference in April 2017 (which resulted in this booklet), I attempted to get beyond the normal confines of the Supersessionist/Christian Zionist debate. I wanted to help us search the Scriptures to see God's heart for Israel (as much as you can in 45 minutes!).

The extent to which that objective was achieved is for others to judge, but it hopefully contains thoughts, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which will give "food for thought" and point us back to the only source of revelation – the Scriptures. And in so doing, will enable us to see something of God's heart and stimulate our love, and prayer, for His ancient people.



A hen with 16 chicks under her wings! (Matt. 23:37)

"I for one plan to keep your booklet handy as an excellent resource and 'ready-reckoner' which has the happy merit of combining conciseness with a 'thorough knowledge' not only of the scriptures but of the competing theologies and the, often non-theological, reasoning that has produced so many distortions." David Andrew (Bible teacher and Editor of Sword magazine)

"Thank you for all the hard work you put into your booklet because at the end of the day it really is about receiving from the Lord a true heart of love for Israel. However, that can surely only be based on the truth of God's own heart of love for his people Israel." José de Silva (Bible teacher)