

**Supersessionism:**

*A Biblical and Theological Critique of Replacement Theology*

**D. Gene Williams Jr., PhD**

**Defend the Word Ministries**

**NorthPointe Church**

## ABSTRACT

This paper critically examines *replacement theology* (supersessionism), the doctrine that the Church has permanently replaced Israel as God's chosen people. Through a detailed analysis of key biblical texts and their original cultural contexts, the study argues that replacement theology is inconsistent with the scriptural narrative of God's covenant faithfulness. Old Testament passages, such as the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants, affirm Israel's unique and enduring role in God's redemptive plan. The New Testament, particularly the teachings of Jesus and the writings of Paul, emphasizes the inclusion of Gentiles in God's promises without nullifying Israel's covenantal status. Historical developments of replacement theology, from early Church Fathers to its misuse in justifying antisemitism, are explored to highlight the theological and ethical dangers of this interpretation. The paper critiques replacement theology and proposes alternative models, such as the grafting of Gentiles into Israel's promises and the fulfillment of these promises through Christ. By addressing the implications of these findings, this study calls for humility and fidelity to the biblical narrative, urging Christians to honor God's covenantal faithfulness while rejecting any ideology that promotes division or prejudice.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Replacement Theology, or Supersessionism, is the theological doctrine that asserts the Church has permanently replaced Israel as God's chosen people. Rooted in the belief that Israel's covenantal role ended with the establishment of the New Covenant, this view posits that the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament now belong solely to the Church. Advocates of Supersessionism interpret Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah as a decisive shift in God's redemptive plan. However, this position has been the subject of significant theological and historical debate, especially when considered in light of Scripture and its cultural context. For a more detailed discussion, see my study *Contextual Reading vs. Plain Reading of the Text*<sup>1</sup> and *Prima Scriptura*.<sup>2</sup>

The topic of Replacement Theology is of great importance to both biblical and theological studies. The implications of this doctrine extend beyond theology, shaping Christian attitudes toward Israel, salvation history, and the interpretation of key biblical covenants. Furthermore, the misuse of Supersessionism to justify antisemitism throughout history, including its role in providing theological cover for atrocities such as the Holocaust, demands a careful and thorough reexamination of its biblical validity. Understanding whether Supersessionism accurately reflects God's intentions as revealed

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<sup>1</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *Contextual Reading vs. Plain Reading of the Text*, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

<sup>2</sup> D. Gene Williams Jr., *Prima Scriptura*, accessed December 14, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

in Scripture is essential for ensuring theological integrity and avoiding ideologies that contradict God's faithfulness.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate Replacement Theology in light of Scripture and its cultural context. Through a close examination of key biblical texts and theological arguments, this study will seek to determine whether Supersessionism aligns with the biblical narrative or stands in opposition to it. Particular attention will be given to the Old Testament covenants, Jesus' teachings about Israel, and Paul's writings on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in God's redemptive plan.

The methodology of this study incorporates biblical exegesis, cultural contextualization, and historical analysis. Key biblical passages will be examined within their original cultural and historical settings, allowing the intended meaning to emerge as it would have been understood by the original recipients. Additionally, the historical development and consequences of Supersessionism will be critically assessed. This comprehensive approach will provide a nuanced perspective on the debate, seeking to clarify the relationship between Israel and the Church while highlighting the theological and ethical implications of this doctrine.

Having defined Supersessionism and its significance within theological studies, we now turn to its historical development. Understanding how Replacement Theology emerged and evolved provides essential context for its theological and practical implications.

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<sup>3</sup> Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 5–8.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

### Development of Supersessionism in Early Christianity

#### 1. Post-Temple Judaism and Christian Identity Formation

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. marked a pivotal moment for both Judaism and Christianity. For early Christians, this event reinforced the belief that Jesus had inaugurated a new covenant, rendering the Temple's role obsolete. As the Church distanced itself from its Jewish roots, it began to see itself as the fulfillment of Israel's promises, a perspective that shaped its identity and theology.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2. Key Church Fathers and Their Writings on Israel (e.g., Origen, Augustine)

Early Church Fathers such as Origen and Augustine played a critical role in developing Supersessionist thought. Origen spiritualized Israel's promises, viewing them as fulfilled in the Church, while Augustine argued that the Church was the "*New Israel*," inheriting the blessings of the covenants. These writings not only shaped Christian theology but also laid the foundation for the marginalization of Jewish identity within the Christian worldview.<sup>5</sup>

### Middle Ages and Antisemitism

#### 1. Martin Luther's Writings and Their Legacy

During the Reformation, Martin Luther initially sought to evangelize the Jewish people but later wrote vehemently against them when his efforts failed. His

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<sup>4</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 314–318.

<sup>5</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 4.22.

works, such as *On the Jews and Their Lies*, fueled antisemitism in Europe, contributing to a legacy of prejudice that was often justified theologically through Supersessionism.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. **Influence of Replacement Theology on European History**

Throughout the Middle Ages, Replacement Theology reinforced societal and political structures that marginalized Jews. Laws restricting Jewish rights, pogroms, and expulsions were often justified by the belief that the Church had replaced Israel as God's chosen people. This theological stance provided a veneer of divine sanction for centuries of oppression.<sup>7</sup>

## **Twentieth Century: Holocaust and Christian Complicity**

### 1. **Theological Justifications Used by Nazi Germany**

The rise of the Third Reich saw the manipulation of Christian theology, including Supersessionist ideas, to justify its antisemitic policies. Some Christian leaders supported or remained silent during the Holocaust, using Replacement Theology to claim that Jews were no longer under God's covenantal protection.<sup>8</sup>

### 2. **Post-Holocaust Reactions and Reevaluations**

After World War II, the atrocities of the Holocaust led many theologians and Christian denominations to reevaluate Supersessionism. Movements like the Second Vatican Council (1965) repudiated the idea that Jews were collectively

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 47 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 268–272.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 12–15.

<sup>8</sup> Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 56–60.

guilty of deicide and reaffirmed God’s ongoing covenant with Israel. This shift marked a significant step in addressing the harmful legacy of Replacement Theology.<sup>9</sup>

While the historical development of Replacement Theology reveals its trajectory and impact, a proper evaluation requires grounding in Scripture. The following section examines key biblical texts to assess whether Supersessionism aligns with the biblical narrative.

### **III. BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF KEY TEXTS**

#### **Old Testament Promises to Israel**

##### **1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3, Genesis 17:7–8)**

The Abrahamic Covenant forms the foundation of Israel’s identity as God’s chosen people. This unconditional promise guarantees land, descendants, and blessings for Abraham’s offspring and, through them, all nations. The eternal nature of the covenant is emphasized in Genesis 17:7, where God declares it will last “*throughout their generations.*” Any theological claim that the Church replaces Israel must grapple with the enduring nature of this promise.<sup>10</sup>

##### **2. The Mosaic Covenant and Israel’s Faithfulness (Exodus 19:5–6, Deuteronomy 7:6–8)**

The Mosaic Covenant establishes Israel as a “*kingdom of priests and a holy*

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<sup>9</sup> Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate* (1965), accessed December 25, 2024, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

<sup>10</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promised Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 52–56.

*nation.*” While this covenant includes conditional blessings based on obedience, it does not negate the unconditional elements of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Deuteronomy 7:6–8 highlights God’s election of Israel as a treasured possession, based on His love and faithfulness rather than their merit.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. **Prophetic Affirmations of Restoration (Isaiah 49:6, Amos 9:11–12)**

The prophets consistently affirm that despite Israel’s failures, God’s promises remain intact. Isaiah 49:6 portrays Israel as a light to the nations, extending salvation to the ends of the earth. Similarly, Amos 9:11–12 foresees the restoration of David’s fallen tent, with Gentiles included in the blessings through Israel, not in place of it.<sup>12</sup>

## **Jesus’ Teachings on Israel and the Kingdom of God**

### 1. **The Parable of the Tenants (Matthew 21:33–46)**

Jesus’ parable critiques the unfaithfulness of Israel’s leaders rather than the nation as a whole. When He states, “*the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits*” (v. 43), the focus is on the transfer of stewardship, not the rejection of Israel. The parable fits within the prophetic tradition of calling Israel to repentance while reaffirming their ultimate role in God’s plan.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 87–89.

<sup>12</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 333–335.

<sup>13</sup> Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1990), 252–255.



2. **Jesus' Mission to the "Lost Sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)**

Jesus' declaration that He was sent "*only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" underscores the priority of Israel in His earthly ministry. This statement aligns with the Old Testament emphasis on Israel as the initial recipient of God's promises, through whom salvation extends to the nations.<sup>14</sup>

3. **The Great Commission and Gentile Inclusion (Matthew 28:19–20)**

In the Great Commission, Jesus commands His followers to "*make disciples of all nations,*" signaling the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan. However, this inclusion expands Israel's mission rather than replacing it, fulfilling the Abrahamic promise that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's seed.<sup>15</sup>

### **Paul's Theology of Israel and the Church**

1. **Romans 9–11: God's Irrevocable Covenant with Israel**

Paul addresses the question of Israel's status in light of the Gospel. He affirms that "*the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*" (Romans 11:29) and predicts a future restoration of Israel. The "*remnant*" theology in Romans 9:27 and 11:5 indicates that God's promises to Israel remain, even if temporarily limited to a faithful subset.<sup>16</sup>

2. **The Olive Tree Analogy (Romans 11:17–24)**

Paul's analogy of the olive tree illustrates the inclusion of Gentiles as wild branches grafted into the cultivated tree of Israel. The root, representing God's

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<sup>14</sup> David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 391–393.

<sup>15</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 648–650.

<sup>16</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 689–693.

covenant with Israel, remains intact. Gentiles are warned against arrogance, emphasizing the continued centrality of Israel in God's plan.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. **Ephesians 2:11–22: Unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ**

Paul emphasizes the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, describing how the dividing wall of hostility has been broken down. However, this unity does not erase the distinctiveness of Israel but rather fulfills God's plan for all nations to be blessed through Abraham's offspring.<sup>18</sup>

### **Theological Implications of Key Texts: Inclusion or Replacement?**

The biblical evidence suggests that Gentile inclusion fulfills rather than replaces God's promises to Israel. Both Testaments affirm the ongoing role of Israel in salvation history, with the Church participating in these blessings through Christ. Supersessionism fails to account for the enduring nature of God's covenantal faithfulness, as revealed in Scripture.

Beyond textual analysis, understanding the cultural and historical context of Scripture is essential. The cultural milieu in which biblical covenants were established provides further insight into God's promises to Israel and their fulfillment in Christ.

## **IV. CULTURAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SCRIPTURE**

### **Understanding Covenant Language in the Ancient Near East**

#### **1. Permanence and Faithfulness in Covenant Promises**

In the Ancient Near East, covenants were legally binding agreements, often sealed

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<sup>17</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 204–207.

<sup>18</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 170–172.

with oaths, sacrifices, or rituals that signified their permanence. Biblical covenants, such as those made with Abraham and Moses, follow this cultural pattern but are unique in that they are initiated and guaranteed by God Himself. This cultural understanding reinforces the idea that God's promises to Israel are irrevocable, as they reflect His unchanging nature and faithfulness.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. **The Role of Israel in Ancient Worldview**

Israel's identity as God's chosen people would have been understood in the context of a world dominated by polytheistic nations. As a monotheistic nation, Israel's covenantal relationship with Yahweh was not only theological but also political, defining their distinctiveness among the nations. This exclusivity highlights why Gentile inclusion in the New Covenant would have been seen as an expansion rather than a replacement of Israel's role.<sup>20</sup>

## **First-Century Jewish and Early Christian Perspectives**

### 1. **Expectations of the Messiah and Israel's Restoration**

First-century Jews, shaped by the prophetic tradition, anticipated a Messiah who would restore Israel politically and spiritually. Texts like Isaiah 2:2–4 and Ezekiel 37 reinforced the belief that Israel's prominence among the nations was central to God's plan. Early Christians, many of whom were Jewish, initially saw Jesus as fulfilling these expectations without negating Israel's role, as evidenced by their continued observance of Jewish practices (e.g., Acts 2:46; 21:20).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1997), 28–33.

<sup>20</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 129–132.

<sup>21</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 338–342.

## 2. **How Gentiles Were Viewed in Early Christian Communities**

The inclusion of Gentiles in the early Church was initially met with resistance, as seen in the debates recorded in Acts 15. However, the Jerusalem Council affirmed that Gentiles could be part of the covenant community without becoming Jewish proselytes. This resolution reflected a growing understanding that Gentile inclusion fulfilled the Abrahamic promise of blessing all nations without nullifying Israel's identity.<sup>22</sup>

### **Implications of Historical Context on Modern Interpretations**

Understanding the historical and cultural context of Scripture challenges modern interpretations that support Replacement Theology. The original audience would not have seen Israel's election as revocable or replaceable. Instead, they would have understood the expansion of God's promises to Gentiles as a fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham, aligning with the cultural and theological expectations of their time. This perspective necessitates humility in interpreting texts that have often been misused to marginalize the Jewish people.<sup>23</sup>

With a clearer understanding of the biblical and cultural contexts of God's covenants, we are now positioned to critique Replacement Theology. This evaluation will address theological inconsistencies, historical misuses, and ethical implications of this doctrine

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<sup>22</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 2:713–717

<sup>23</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 50–54.

## V. CRITIQUE OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

### Theological Concerns: Faithfulness to God's Promises

#### 1. Irrevocability of God's Covenants

The biblical narrative consistently portrays God's covenants with Israel as enduring and irrevocable. Paul's assertion in Romans 11:29 that "*the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*" underscores this principle. Replacement Theology undermines God's faithfulness by suggesting He would abandon His covenant people, raising questions about His reliability in fulfilling promises.<sup>24</sup>

#### 2. Misinterpretation of Prophetic Fulfillment

Many proponents of Supersessionism reinterpret Old Testament prophecies about Israel's restoration as spiritual allegories fulfilled in the Church. This approach risks stripping the text of its original meaning and overlooks the plain sense of passages like Jeremiah 31:35–37, which affirm Israel's enduring role.<sup>25</sup>

### Historical Misuses of Replacement Theology

#### 1. Antisemitism and Its Consequences

Replacement Theology has historically provided theological justification for antisemitism, from the writings of early Church Fathers to the policies of medieval Europe. This distorted interpretation led to centuries of marginalization, persecution, and violence against Jewish communities, culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 689–692.

<sup>25</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promised Plan of God*, 64–67.

<sup>26</sup> Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*, 72–76.

## 2. **The Dangers of Misreading Scripture**

Misusing Replacement Theology to justify hatred or exclusion contradicts the New Testament ethic of love and reconciliation. Jesus and Paul both emphasized unity and inclusion without erasing Israel's identity. The misuse of this doctrine as a tool for division reveals the ethical dangers of misinterpreting Scripture.<sup>27</sup>

### **A Call for Humility: Paul's Warning Against Arrogance (Romans 11:18–21)**

Paul warns Gentile believers against arrogance, reminding them that they are grafted into Israel's olive tree. This metaphor emphasizes that the Church's blessings are rooted in Israel's covenant, not a replacement of it. Supersessionism ignores this warning, fostering a sense of superiority that Paul explicitly condemns.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Relationship Between Israel and the Church in God's Redemptive Plan**

#### 1. **A Unified Yet Distinct Role**

The biblical narrative presents Israel and the Church as distinct yet unified in God's redemptive plan. The Church's inclusion reflects God's intention to bless all nations through Abraham's seed, but this inclusion does not nullify Israel's unique covenantal role.<sup>29</sup>

#### 2. **Prophetic Vision of Restoration**

Passages like Zechariah 14 and Romans 11:26 anticipate a future restoration of Israel, where they are central to God's eschatological purposes. Replacement

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<sup>27</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), 183–185.

<sup>28</sup> F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, 204–205.

<sup>29</sup> Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 648–651.

Theology struggles to account for these prophetic visions, which affirm both the Church's inclusion and Israel's enduring role.<sup>30</sup>

While the critique of Replacement Theology highlights its flaws, it is equally important to offer constructive alternatives. The following section explores models that maintain the integrity of Scripture while embracing God's redemptive plan for both Israel and the Church.

## **VI. ALTERNATIVE MODELS TO REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY**

### **Continuity Model: The Church as Grafted Into Israel's Promises**

#### **1. The Olive Tree Analogy (Romans 11:17–24)**

The continuity model views the Church not as a replacement for Israel but as being grafted into the same olive tree that represents God's covenantal people. Paul's metaphor emphasizes that Gentiles share in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant through faith in Christ while retaining the centrality of Israel's roots. This model upholds the unity of God's people while preserving Israel's distinct role.<sup>31</sup>

#### **2. Faith as the Covenant Marker**

Under the continuity model, faith replaces ethnic lineage as the defining characteristic of covenant membership, allowing both Jews and Gentiles to share

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<sup>30</sup> John H. Walton, *Old Testament Theology for Christians: From Ancient Context to Enduring Belief* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 310–313.

<sup>31</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 691–694.

in God's promises. This interpretation aligns with Paul's teaching in Galatians 3:29, where those who belong to Christ are considered Abraham's offspring.<sup>32</sup>

### **Dual Covenant Model: Distinct Roles for Israel and the Church**

#### **1. Israel's Ongoing Role in God's Plan**

The dual covenant model posits that Israel retains a unique covenantal role distinct from that of the Church. Proponents argue that God's promises to Israel, particularly regarding the land and national restoration, remain in effect, as seen in passages like Ezekiel 37 and Zechariah 14.<sup>33</sup>

#### **2. The Church's Role as a Separate Entity**

In this view, the Church's mission to bring the Gospel to all nations complements Israel's unique calling. The two groups are seen as parallel participants in God's redemptive plan, each with distinct but interrelated roles.<sup>34</sup>

### **Fulfillment Theology: Gentile Inclusion as Part of Israel's Expansion**

#### **1. The Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant**

Fulfillment theology sees Gentile inclusion not as a replacement of Israel but as an expansion of God's promises through Christ. This model emphasizes that Jesus, as the true Israel, fulfills the covenant, allowing all nations to be blessed through Him. This perspective aligns with the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20) and Paul's teachings in Romans 4:16–17.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 279–281.

<sup>33</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 33–35.

<sup>34</sup> Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 650–652.

<sup>35</sup> N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 147–150.



## 2. **Eschatological Vision of Unity**

Fulfillment theology anticipates a future where Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ while maintaining their distinct identities. Revelation 21:12–14 reflects this vision, with the names of Israel’s tribes and the apostles inscribed together on the New Jerusalem’s gates and foundations, symbolizing the culmination of God’s redemptive plan.<sup>36</sup>

The proposed alternative models demonstrate the richness and continuity of God’s plan for Israel and the Church. These insights, along with the broader critique of Supersessionism, lead us to conclude with practical and theological reflections on this ongoing debate

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

### **Summary of Findings: Biblical Evidence Against Replacement Theology**

The examination of Scripture and its cultural context demonstrates that Replacement Theology is inconsistent with the biblical narrative. Both the Old and New Testaments affirm the enduring nature of God’s covenant with Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant, rooted in God’s faithfulness, remains irrevocable, as emphasized in passages like Romans 11:29. While the Church’s inclusion in the blessings of the covenant reflects God’s plan for the nations, it does not replace Israel but fulfills the broader vision of unity under Christ.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 203–206.

<sup>37</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promised Plan of God*, 67–70.

## **The Ongoing Role of Israel in God's Plan**

Scripture consistently portrays Israel as retaining a unique role in God's redemptive plan. Prophetic texts such as Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 37 anticipate a future restoration of Israel, affirming their central place in eschatological events. Paul's writings in Romans 9–11 further reinforce this, highlighting the mystery of Gentile inclusion alongside Israel's ultimate redemption. This enduring role reflects God's covenantal faithfulness and His plan to bring blessings to all nations through Israel.<sup>38</sup>

## **Practical Applications for Christians Today: Rejecting Antisemitism and Embracing Humility**

The historical misuse of Replacement Theology to justify antisemitism serves as a stark warning for Christians. Believers must reject any theology that undermines God's promises or fosters division and prejudice. Paul's admonition in Romans 11:18–21 reminds Gentile believers to approach their inclusion with humility, acknowledging their dependence on Israel's covenantal roots. By embracing a theology rooted in love, unity, and God's faithfulness, Christians can witness to His redemptive plan for all humanity.<sup>39</sup>

## **Final Thought: Standing with God's Covenant Faithfulness**

This study reaffirms the enduring nature of God's promises to Israel and their fulfillment through Christ. Standing with God's covenantal faithfulness is both a theological necessity and a testimony to His unchanging character. God's redemptive

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<sup>38</sup> N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 338–342.

<sup>39</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 694–698.

plan, rich in continuity, fulfillment, and faithfulness, unites Jews and Gentiles while preserving Israel's unique role.<sup>40</sup>

This perspective also shapes our eschatological hope, as we anticipate the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and the Church in the New Creation, where unity and diversity coexist under Christ's reign. May this vision inspire the Church to reflect God's faithfulness, celebrate His mercy, and proclaim His sovereignty over all creation.

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<sup>40</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Romans*, 190–192.

## APPENDIX A: COMPARING KEY BIBLICAL PASSAGES ON ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

This appendix provides a concise comparison of how Supersessionism and alternative models interpret key biblical passages. It highlights the theological differences and the implications for understanding the relationship between Israel and the Church.

Biblical Passage	Key Themes	Interpretation in Supersessionism	Interpretation in Alternative Models
<b>Genesis 12:1-3</b>	God's promise to Abraham: land, descendants, and blessing.	Fulfilled spiritually in the Church.	Ongoing literal and spiritual fulfillment through Israel and the Church.
<b>Genesis 17:7-8</b>	Everlasting covenant with Abraham's offspring.	Reinterpreted as applying only to the Church.	The covenant remains intact with ethnic Israel and includes Gentiles through Christ.
<b>Exodus 19:5-6</b>	Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.	Transferred to the Church.	Maintains Israel's role while expanding the priesthood to include the Church.
<b>Isaiah 49:6</b>	Israel as a light to the nations.	Fully fulfilled in the Church.	Fulfilled through Christ, with Israel's mission continuing in the eschaton.
<b>Amos 9:11-12</b>	Restoration of David's tent and inclusion of Gentiles.	Interpreted solely as the Church replacing Israel.	Gentile inclusion occurs within Israel's restoration, not as a replacement.
<b>Matthew 21:43</b>	The kingdom given to a people producing its fruits.	Evidence of Israel's rejection and replacement by the Church.	Critique of unfaithful leaders, not a rejection of Israel as a whole.
<b>Romans 11:17-24</b>	Olive tree analogy of Gentiles grafted into Israel.	Gentiles replace Israel as the covenant people.	Gentiles are grafted in but do not replace Israel; the root remains intact.
<b>Romans 11:26</b>	<i>"All Israel will be saved."</i>	Refers to spiritual Israel (the Church).	Refers to ethnic Israel's future salvation in God's redemptive plan.
<b>Ephesians 2:11-22</b>	Unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.	Emphasis on unity erases Israel's distinct role.	Unity highlights shared blessings without nullifying Israel's unique identity.
<b>Revelation 21:12-14</b>	New Jerusalem with names of tribes and apostles.	Viewed symbolically as the Church alone.	Represents the unity of Israel and the Church in the eschatological fulfillment.

## APPENDIX B: TIMELINE OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY’S DEVELOPMENT

This appendix provides a chronological overview of key events and developments that shaped the rise and evolution of Replacement Theology. It also highlights critical moments of opposition to Supersessionism, offering a broader historical perspective on the debate.

Time Period	Event/Development	Impact on Supersessionism
<b>1st Century A.D.</b>	Destruction of the Second Temple (70 A.D.)	Early Christians interpreted the event as God’s judgment on Israel, distancing themselves from Judaism.
<b>2nd–3rd Centuries</b>	Writings of Early Church Fathers (e.g., Justin Martyr, Origen)	Established theological arguments for the Church as the “ <i>true Israel</i> .”
<b>4th Century</b>	Constantine and the Christianization of the Roman Empire	Strengthened the identity of the Church as distinct from and superior to Judaism.
<b>5th Century</b>	Augustine’s <i>The City of God</i>	Articulated Supersessionist views, framing the Church as the New Israel.
<b>Middle Ages</b>	Laws Restricting Jewish Rights	Supersessionism provided theological justification for widespread antisemitic policies.
<b>16th Century</b>	Martin Luther’s <i>On the Jews and Their Lies</i>	Reinforced antisemitism by framing Jews as enemies of the Gospel and divine covenant.
<b>19th Century</b>	Emergence of Zionism	Challenged Supersessionism by advocating for Jewish restoration to the land of Israel.
<b>20th Century (1930s–40s)</b>	Holocaust and Nazi Theology	Supersessionist ideas were exploited to justify antisemitic policies under Nazi Germany.
<b>1965</b>	Second Vatican Council ( <i>Nostra Aetate</i> )	Rejected collective Jewish guilt for Jesus’ death and affirmed God’s ongoing covenant with Israel.
<b>Late 20th Century</b>	Rise of Dispensationalism and Evangelical Zionism	Opposed Supersessionism by emphasizing Israel’s distinct role in eschatology.
<b>21st Century</b>	Continued Theological Debate	Supersessionism remains contested, with growing support for alternative models such as fulfillment and continuity theology.

## APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary defines key terms relevant to the discussion of Supersessionism, providing readers with concise explanations to better understand the arguments and models presented in the paper.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Relevance to Supersessionism</b>
<b>Supersessionism</b>	The theological doctrine that the Church has permanently replaced Israel as God’s chosen people.	Central concept of the paper; critiqued for its implications regarding God’s covenantal faithfulness.
<b>Replacement Theology</b>	Another term for Supersessionism, emphasizing the idea of the Church replacing Israel.	Synonymous with Supersessionism, often used in critiques of the doctrine.
<b>Covenant</b>	A binding agreement between God and His people, often marked by specific promises and obligations.	Key to understanding God’s promises to Israel and the Church.
<b>Abrahamic Covenant</b>	The covenant between God and Abraham, promising land, descendants, and blessings for all nations.	Foundational to Israel’s role in God’s redemptive plan and the inclusion of Gentiles.
<b>Mosaic Covenant</b>	The covenant given to Israel through Moses, emphasizing the Law and Israel’s role as a holy nation.	Often cited in debates about Israel’s conditional and unconditional relationship with God.
<b>New Covenant</b>	The covenant established through Jesus Christ, offering salvation to all who believe.	Central to the debate over whether the New Covenant replaces or fulfills the Old Testament covenants.
<b>Gentile Inclusion</b>	The extension of God’s promises to non-Jews through faith in Christ.	A critical aspect of alternative models to Supersessionism, emphasizing inclusion without replacement.
<b>Remnant Theology</b>	The idea that a faithful minority within Israel remains true to God, ensuring the continuity of His promises.	Often used to reconcile Israel’s rejection of Jesus with God’s ongoing covenantal faithfulness.
<b>Fulfillment Theology</b>	The view that the Church fulfills the promises made to Israel, often without nullifying Israel’s role.	Provides an alternative to Supersessionism by emphasizing Christ as the fulfillment of God’s plan.
<b>Eschatology</b>	The study of end times and God’s ultimate plan for creation.	Central to understanding the future roles of Israel and the Church in God’s redemptive plan.
<b>Olive Tree Analogy</b>	Paul’s metaphor in Romans 11 to describe the inclusion of Gentiles into Israel’s covenant blessings.	Used to argue for continuity rather than replacement of Israel.

## APPENDIX D: RELEVANT ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN COVENANT PRACTICES AND THEIR BIBLICAL PARALLELS

This appendix highlights the covenantal framework common in the Ancient Near East and demonstrates how these practices illuminate the biblical covenants. It underscores the enduring nature of God’s promises and the centrality of covenant in understanding Israel’s role in salvation history.

Ancient Near Eastern Practice	Description	Biblical Parallels
<b>Suzerain-Vassal Treaty</b>	A covenant between a powerful king (suzerain) and a lesser ruler (vassal), where loyalty was required in exchange for protection.	The Mosaic Covenant reflects this structure, with God as the suzerain and Israel as the vassal (Exodus 19:5–6).
<b>Royal Grant Covenant</b>	An unconditional covenant where a suzerain grants land or privileges to a loyal servant.	The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3) mirrors this type, as God unconditionally promises land and blessings to Abraham.
<b>Covenant Ceremonies</b>	Rituals involving sacrifices, blood, and symbolic acts to confirm covenant agreements.	The cutting of animals in Genesis 15 symbolizes the seriousness of God’s covenant with Abraham.
<b>Blessings and Curses</b>	Covenants often included blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.	Deuteronomy 28 contains detailed blessings and curses tied to Israel’s covenantal faithfulness.
<b>Perpetuity Clauses</b>	Some covenants explicitly stated they were to last indefinitely, binding future generations.	God’s covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:16) and the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17:7) emphasize eternal promises.
<b>Written Records and Public Recitation</b>	Treaties were inscribed on tablets or monuments and read publicly to ensure accountability.	The Ten Commandments were written on tablets (Exodus 31:18), and the Law was read publicly (Deuteronomy 31:9–13).
<b>Covenant Witnesses</b>	Deities or natural elements (e.g., mountains, rivers) were invoked as witnesses to the covenant.	Heaven and earth are called as witnesses in Deuteronomy 30:19, affirming Israel’s covenant with God.
<b>Renewal Ceremonies</b>	Covenants were periodically renewed to reaffirm loyalty and commitment.	Joshua’s covenant renewal at Shechem (Joshua 24) mirrors this practice.
<b>Hierarchy of Covenant Terms</b>	Primary obligations were often summarized in key stipulations or principles.	The Ten Commandments serve as a summary of the broader Mosaic Law.
<b>Covenant Mediators</b>	Mediators often facilitated the establishment of covenants between parties.	Moses acted as the mediator between God and Israel (Exodus 20:19; Galatians 3:19).

## APPENDIX E: DETAILED EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 11:17-29

This appendix provides a detailed verse-by-verse exegesis of Romans 11:17–29, underscoring the passage’s relevance to the critique of Replacement Theology. It emphasizes the continuity of God’s covenantal promises to Israel and the inclusion of Gentiles as part of His redemptive plan

<p><b>Romans 11:17</b></p>	<p><i>“But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root...”</i></p>	<p>Paul introduces the olive tree metaphor, representing God’s covenantal people rooted in Israel’s promises. Gentiles are grafted into this tree, signifying inclusion without replacing the original branches.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:18</b></p>	<p><i>“Do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.”</i></p>	<p>Paul warns Gentile believers against pride. The root (Israel’s covenants and promises) sustains them, emphasizing dependence on God’s faithfulness to Israel.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:19–20</b></p>	<p><i>“Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith.”</i></p>	<p>Paul acknowledges Israel’s unbelief as the reason for their removal, but he emphasizes that Gentile inclusion is based on faith, not superiority, maintaining the need for humility among Gentiles.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:21</b></p>	<p><i>“For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.”</i></p>	<p>This verse highlights the conditional nature of participation in God’s covenant community, based on faith rather than presumption.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:23</b></p>	<p><i>“And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.”</i></p>	<p>Paul affirms the possibility of Israel’s restoration. Their removal is not permanent, underscoring God’s desire to redeem His covenant people.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:25</b></p>	<p><i>“...a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”</i></p>	<p>Paul describes Israel’s current state as a temporary hardening, with a future restoration tied to God’s eschatological plan. This challenges Supersessionism by emphasizing the temporary nature of Israel’s unbelief.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:26</b></p>	<p><i>“And in this way all Israel will be saved...”</i></p>	<p>This verse predicts Israel’s ultimate salvation, interpreted as ethnic Israel turning to Christ in the end times. It reaffirms God’s faithfulness to His promises.</p>
<p><b>Romans 11:29</b></p>	<p><i>“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”</i></p>	<p>Paul concludes with a definitive statement on God’s faithfulness. His covenant with Israel cannot be annulled, further undermining the theological foundation of Replacement Theology.</p>



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