

Has The Church Replaced Israel? (Part 1)

Romans 11:11-24

Thought for the Day: With her rejection of the Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—God has temporarily set aside the nation of Israel and is now carrying out His program of reconciliation on the earth through the Church.

Sadly, over the past 2,000 years, it is the Church that has been largely responsible for the persecution of the Jewish people. For example, it is a shock to learn that Adolf Hitler found support for the Jewish Holocaust in the teachings of Martin Luther, the Father of the Protestant Reformation. In his book, *Mein Kampf*, he referred to Luther as a “great warrior, a true statesman, and a great reformer” (*Vol. 1, Chpt. VIII*). “In 1924 at a Christian gathering in Berlin, Hitler spoke to thousands and received a standing ovation when he made the following proclamation: ‘I believe that today I am acting in accordance with the will of Almighty God as I announce the most important work that Christians could undertake—and that is to be against the Jews and get rid of them once and for all.’” (*Phyllis Petty, Christian Hatred and Persecution of the Jews*). He then went on to talk about the influence that Martin Luther had on his life. “Martin Luther has been the greatest encouragement of my life. Luther was a great man. He was a giant. With one blow he heralded the coming of the new dawn and the new age. He saw clearly that the Jews need to be destroyed, and we’re only beginning to see that we need to carry this work on.” At the Nuremberg trials after World War II, the Nazi leader, Julius Streicher, defended himself by saying, ‘I have never said anything that Martin Luther did not say.’” (*Ibid, quoted by Dr. David R. Reagan in The Evil of Replacement Theology.*)

“The terrible truth that Christians do not like to face, and which many are unaware of, is that the Holocaust was the product of 1,900 years of virulent Christian anti-Semitism.” (*ibid*)

This is only one of numerous examples of the Church’s support of the persecution of the Jews throughout the centuries. But how can this be? How is this possible? It is because of the failure on the part of Christians, pastors and people, leaders and laymen, to “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Today, Replacement Theology, the teaching that the Church has permanently replaced Israel as God’s chosen people, is the dominant view held by “the majority of professing Christians” (*ibid*). And once again, we see satanically inspired anti-Semitism growing worldwide, with many Christian leaders and churches in the forefront.

In these last days of the Church Age, we must be very, very careful that we are not deceived and led astray by the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 20:2-3). We must be very certain that our beliefs and behaviors, our character and conduct, are guided and controlled by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

It is true that Israel rejected and crucified her Messiah (Acts 2:22-33, 36). But the Church was birthed among the people of Israel; salvation came to the world through the Jews. Throughout the book of Acts, however, the Church increasingly became a Gentile Church. So the Apostle Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, was undoubtedly asked many times, “Since Israel rejected Jesus as the Messiah, has God rejected Israel? Has He replaced Israel with the Church?”

In Romans 11:1 and 11, Paul clearly addresses and refutes both of these assertions: Vs. 1 – “Did God reject his people? By no means!” Vs. 11 – “Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!”

Romans 11:11-12

- Vs. 11 – Paul acknowledges that Israel stumbled by rejecting her Messiah.
 - But “did they fall beyond recovery?” Is there no hope for Israel? “God forbid!”
- Vss. 11-12 – Paul explains how Israel’s rejection of her Messiah fits into the redemptive program of God: “Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.”
 - It was always God’s intention for Israel to carry the message of salvation to the Gentile nations. But with very few exceptions, the Jews kept the Good News to themselves and the Gentiles perished in spiritual darkness.
 - Israel had not only rejected her Messiah, she had also rejected her God-given Mission to be a channel of God’s blessing to the nations.
 - Through Israel’s rejection of Jesus Christ, God made a way for the Gentiles to be saved.
 - God is seeking to use the Church to make Israel envious so that she will return to the Lord and experience His salvation. (Hatred and persecution don’t work too well!)
 - Today, Israel is in transgression against the Lord and therefore experiencing spiritual loss, but the day is coming when she will return to the Lord and experience fullness!
 - This will happen at the conclusion of the seven-year Tribulation and beginning of the Millennium, Christ’s literal 1,000 year reign on the earth, when God fulfills His promises to national Israel.
 - During the Millennium, the Gentiles will experience even greater spiritual riches because of Israel’s return to the Lord.

Romans 11:13-24

- Vs. 13 – Paul is addressing the Gentiles in the Church.
- Vs. 14 – God is using the Church to arouse envy among the Jews.
- Vs. 15 – God is using the rejection of Israel to bring about the reconciliation of the world to Himself.
 - Verse 1 – “reject” means “to completely abandon or permanently forsake.”
 - Verse 15 – “rejection” means “to temporarily set aside.”
- Vss. 16-24: The analogy of the olive tree; the relationship between the root and branches.
 - The root of the tree is Abraham, who was saved by faith (Rom. 4 & 9), the physical father of Israel, but the spiritual father of all who put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - The natural branches that are broken off are the physical descendants of Abraham, the Jews, the nation of Israel.
 - The wild branches that are grafted in are the believing Gentiles who place their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Vss. 18, 20 – “Do not boast... do not be arrogant, but be afraid.”
 - The unbelief of Israel was manifested in the failure to share the truth and the way of salvation with the Gentiles.
 - We must never lose sight of the fact that God wants to use the Church to reach the world with the Gospel of salvation!
- We fulfill the Mission (glorifying God and advancing His kingdom) by obeying the Mandate (make disciples of all the nations)!