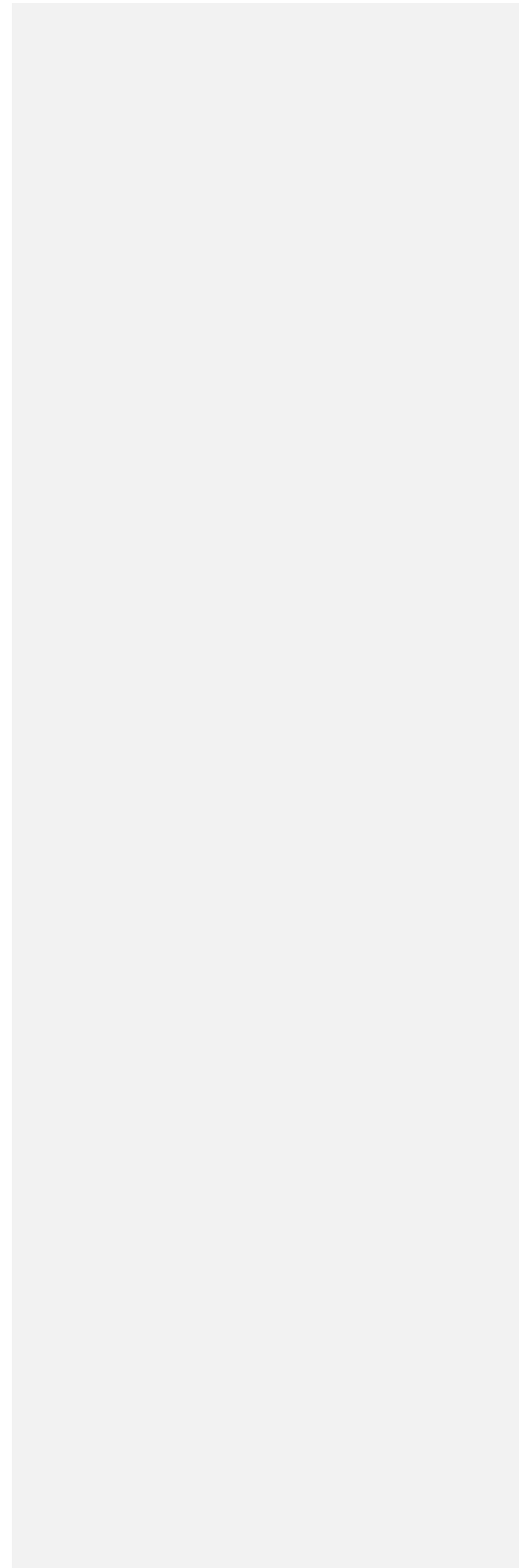


***Two Christian Views
Concerning Israel and the Jews***

An Amicable Response to Dr. Michael L. Brown

By Steve Gregg



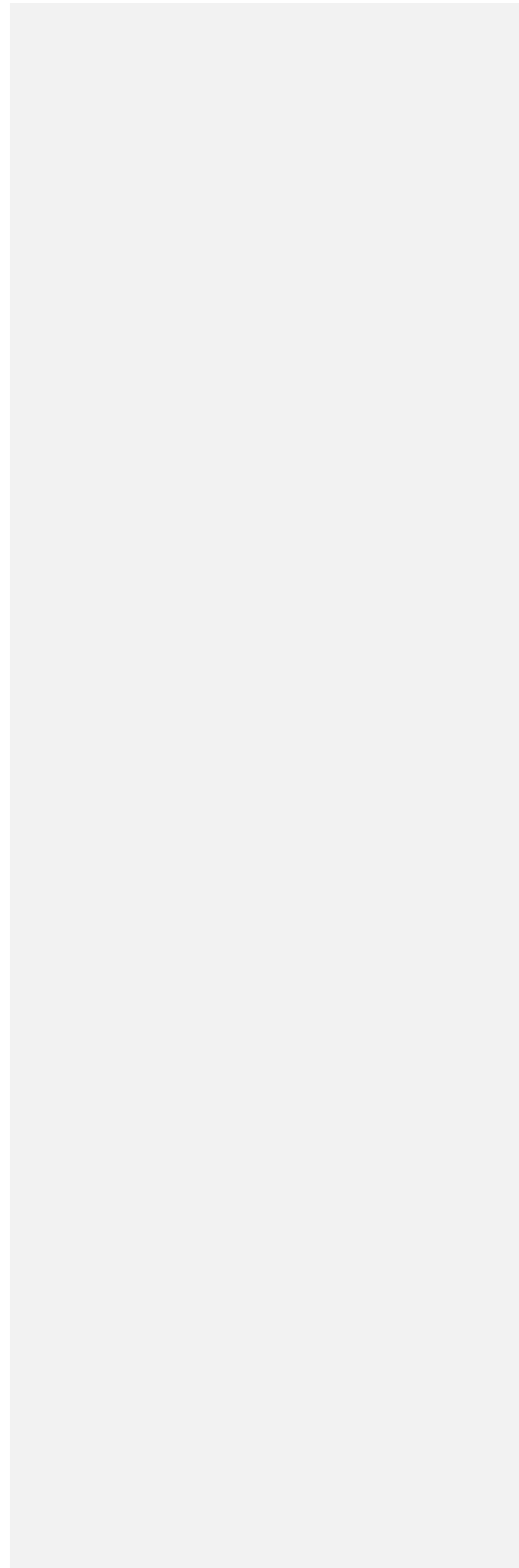
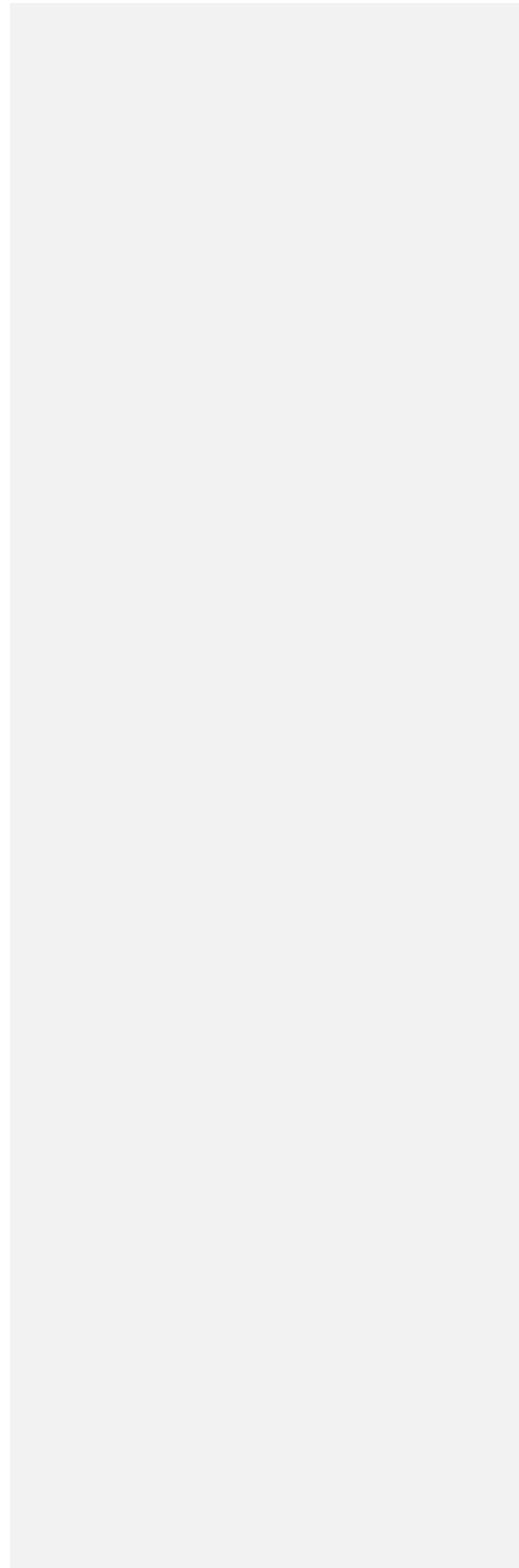


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***Introduction:
The Origin and Purpose of These Documents***

The documents in this collection were sent to me by Christian friends in India, who informed me that many Indian Christians listen to Dr. Michael Brown's podcasts and have become convinced of the Christian Zionist position he teaches. My Indian correspondents went to the trouble of transcribing twenty of Dr. Brown's podcasts on this subject. They sent the transcripts to me, with the request that I would insert my commentary point-by-point, which is what I have done.

Dr. Michael Brown is a deservedly respected Christian leader and scholar. He is of Jewish background and is educated in Near Eastern languages. He has written many excellent books on various Christian subjects and is very active in the defense of Yeshua/Jesus as Messiah in his dialogues with unbelieving Jews. He is a tremendous asset to the Body of Christ.

When it comes to a great number of theological controversies in the modern Church, Dr. Brown and I are on the same page. One thing that we see differently is what the New Testament teaches on the prophetic future of the Jews as a race and its implications for the modern State of Israel. Dr. Brown and I once debated about this, all too briefly, on a friend's podcast. It is questionable whether such a short exchange can qualify as a real "debate" since it was much too brief to cover the topic responsibly.

I am not temperamentally disposed to stir up arguments with others with whom I disagree. All of my previous debates have taken place by invitation from the other side, or from interested third parties. I generally agree to participate in any debate, when asked. I view debates as opportunities to educate audiences, not to score points against an opponent.

Though my responses to Dr. Brown will make Zionist Christians uncomfortable, I am of the opinion that no one can refute these answers through objective exegesis of scripture. I have no animosity toward Zionists, toward believing or unbelieving Jews, or toward the modern State of Israel. I am not in any sense "anti-Jewish," nor "anti-Israel," having no racial or political "dog in the fight." My interest is not emotional, but, as a Bible teacher, purely exegetical. So that none may mistake my position for something it is not, I will summarize it in advance as succinctly as possible. I believe:

- 1) The word "Israel" has several meanings in different contexts. It first referred to a man (Jacob)—then to his family. After the exodus, the word indicated a covenant nation created at Sinai. After the conquest, the term sometimes referred to the territory of that nation. In the days after Solomon, the nation split, and only the northern tribes were called Israel, in contrast to Judah. After the fall of the northern kingdom, Israel was used to speak of the nation of Judah. The prophets often used the word Israel to speak of what they called "the remnant"—that is, the faithful individuals within the apostate nation. This remnant is seen, in the New Testament as the followers of Jesus Christ, whom Paul calls "the Israel of God."

The term "the Jews" originally was a term for those of the Judean captivity in Babylon—which were largely of the tribe of Judah but included some individuals from the other tribes. After the exile, "Jew" has been a term to refer to anyone of Israel's stock, or who embraces the post-A.D.70 religion of Judaism.

- 2) The nation Israel was chosen by God to bring salvation to the world by birthing the Messiah into human history. As Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews." God accomplished this through

them, despite the efforts of their Gentile enemies and of apostate Jewish leaders to overthrow God's purposes. As for this divinely assigned role of the people of Israel, we may triumphantly proclaim: "Mission accomplished." Thank you, Jesus! And thank you, Israel, for your service.

- 3) Having performed this (the only known service for which they were chosen), the Jews have now stepped back into the community of nations and, like all others, have the obligation to find salvation in the Messiah. Jewish people who reject Christ are no different from Gentiles who reject Christ—so that the Jewish Caiaphas and Judas Iscariot are no better or worse, in the eyes of God, than was the Gentile Haman or Hitler. Salvation has nothing to do with *race*, but with *Christ*. Thus, all races are equal and are the same before God, though believers of any race are privileged over unbelievers of any race.
- 4) Jews who are in Christ (e.g., the apostle Paul, and Dr. Brown) are not distinguished in status from Gentiles who are in Christ (e.g., Cornelius, and me). There is no racial partiality with God (Rom.1:16; 2:9-11). The Bible provides no information about a special plan, in the New Covenant Era, in which believing Jews play a different role from believing Gentiles. The middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is completely dissolved in Christ (Eph.2:14-15). It would be a sin to re-erect it (Gal.2:18).
- 5) Messiah Yeshua is the hope of Israel, promised in the Torah and the Prophets (John 1:45; Luke 1:68-75). He and His salvation are the ultimate Abrahamic blessing promised to all nations (Luke 2:28-32; Gal.3:14). Other than the gift of Christ Himself, no other blessings to Israel are ever mentioned, or alluded to, in the New Testament. To think that having Jesus-plus-real estate (or Jesus plus *anything else*) is any better than having Jesus alone is to devalue Christ (Phil.3:7-10), and to mistake baubles for jewels.
- 6) In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was not *racially* homogenous. From the beginning, its status and membership were defined by *covenant faithfulness* (Ex.19:5-6), and Gentiles were as welcome to participate as were ethnic Israelites (Ex.12:48). There was never a time when every ethnic Jew was faithful to the covenant, or when every Gentile was excluded from Israel. There was always a faithful *remnant* in Israel—both of Jews and Gentiles—whom God regarded as His covenant people (see Ps.50:5, 16-17). All who were unfaithful—whether Jew or Gentile—were to be excluded from Israel (Ex.12:19). Race had, essentially, nothing to do with inclusion in Israel. It was all covenantal.
- 7) In the Old Testament, God made special, conditional promises to His covenant nation Israel. These included special favor, a special land, prosperity, protection, etc., to the faithful, while all the opposite things were promised to come on the apostate covenant-breakers (see Lev.26; Deut.28). There was never a time when every Jewish person was qualified to receive the covenant blessings. Only the faithful were, and still are, the true sons of Abraham (Gal.3:7, 9), or "the Israel of God" (Gal.6:16).
- 8) In accordance with the warnings written in the Torah, God punished the chronically unfaithful nation of Israel and sent them into captivity in Assyria (in 722 B.C.) and in Babylon (in 586 B.C.). Before doing this, God had given promises through His prophets to the *remnant* that He would eventually bring them back to their land, to restore their destroyed nation and temple. These promises were completely fulfilled through the instrumentality of Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah—five centuries before Christ. Beginning in 538 B.C., the

repentant remnant returned from exile and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. After this occurred, no further promises of restoration were ever given to anyone in scripture.

- 9) To the *remnant*, God promised that He would send an anointed King, who would redeem them, pour out His Spirit upon them, change their hearts, and establish a righteous kingdom among them under His rulership. The New Testament records the fulfillment of these promises in Jesus of Nazareth. Having died and resurrected, He has now been exalted and is reigning at the right hand of God, having redeemed and poured out His Spirit upon the *remnant* at Pentecost in or around the year A.D.30. He thus, in His own words, “fulfilled” all the Law and the Prophets. He said that, if any “jot” or “tittle” of the Law has passed (which is clearly the case—e.g., the sacrificial law) that this would mean that “all is fulfilled” (Matt.5:17-18). Any who wish to say that portions of the Old Testament Law or Prophets remain unfulfilled will have to take up their argument with Jesus Himself. If any part remains to be fulfilled, according to Jesus, every detail of the Law remains in force.
- 10) When Jesus came, the faithful *remnant* of Israel became followers of the Messiah. Obviously, no one rejecting the Messiah could be said to be “faithful” to the Father who sent Him! This faithful *remnant* of Israel was also called the Church (Gr. *ekklesia*—a word previously used in the Greek Old Testament to designate the congregation of Israel). Later, Gentiles also began to embrace the Messiah—just as Gentiles, like Rahab and Ruth, had joined the covenant people in Old Testament times. Thus, the faithful *remnant*, the Church, became a multi-ethnic body under the New Covenant—just as Israel, the Church, had been multi-ethnic under the Old Covenant. The New Covenant Church was the continuation and fulfillment of the Old Covenant Church—not its “replacement”—just as a grown man is the continuation and fulfillment of a little boy, and not his replacement (see Gal.4:1-5).
- 11) The New Testament speaks of this multi-ethnic body of believers as “*the circumcision*” (Phil.3:3; Rom.2:26-29), “*the seed of Abraham*” and “*heirs according to the promise*” (Gal.3:29), “*a chosen people and a holy nation*” (1 Pet.2:9), and a “*kingdom of priests*” (Rev.5:10). All of these were Old Testament titles for Israel. Similarly, this faithful remnant is also called “*the Israel of God*” (Gal.6:16).
- 12) At Pentecost, Christ became Head of a corporate body (1 Cor.12:12; Eph.1:22-23)—a “*New Man*” (Eph.2:15) where racial distinctions and circumcision count for nothing (Gal.5:6; 6:15). This is the New Testament parallel to the Old Covenant’s corporate body of the man Israel (Gen. 34:7), which was eventually identified as a nation by that name. In those times, the man/nation, Israel, was the “chosen” (Isa.41:8; 42:1-4), but today Christ is “the Chosen” (Matt.12:15-18). In Old Testament times, to be one of the “chosen people” required that one be in the chosen one, namely, the corporate nation of Israel, or “in Jacob” (Isa.59:20). By contrast, under the terms of the New Covenant, to be “chosen” requires that one be “*in Christ*”—the chosen corporate One (Gal.3:27-29; Eph.1:4). Israel was thus the *type* of which Jesus is the *Antitype* (the subject foreshadowed by the type).
- 13) God had promised that He would make a “new” covenant with the remnant of Israel and Judah (Jer.31:31-34), which He did at the Last Supper, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. According to Hebrews 8:13, God does not maintain two covenants (i.e., two marriages) simultaneously, so that the New Covenant has rendered the Sinaitic Covenant obsolete. God does not relate to anyone today on the terms of the obsolete covenant, but only on those of the one currently in force. This viewpoint is called *Supersessionism* (often mislabeled

“*Replacement Theology*”), because it teaches that the New Covenant superseded the Old Covenant, and that there is nothing left of the Old Covenant in force.

14) God has not defaulted on any promise He ever made to Israel. It can easily be shown from scripture that every promise God has made to Israel falls into one of the following categories, either: a) the promise was fulfilled precisely as stated, in Israel’s history; or b) the promise was conditional and was forfeited by Israel’s failure to keep the stated conditions; or c) the promise had a Messianic fulfillment and is now fulfilled to Israel’s remnant in Christ.

At variance from this historic Christian faith are those called *dispensationalists*—a group that emerged in the early 1800s. This position does not affirm that Jesus is the actual fulfillment of God’s promises to, nor is He the ultimate hope of, Israel. Instead, they assert that the real hope of Israel is an as-yet-unfulfilled future politico-spiritual phenomenon in the Middle East. They base this on the assumption that the Old Testament promises have never been fulfilled.

I believe it can be demonstrated exegetically and historically that the company of those who have held to the supersessionist position included Jesus, the apostles, the Church fathers, the Medieval Church, the Reformers, and a large percentage (possibly the majority) of the modern Church. Of course, the first two of these (Jesus and the apostles) would be disputed by dispensationalists, though they would not deny that this was the historic view of Christianity from post-apostolic times to the present.

Dr. Brown says he is not a dispensationalist, though (like me) he once was. He might refer to himself today as a “historic premillennialist,” but this would not be accurate, since historic premillennialists did not adopt dispensationalist ideas about Israel, as Dr. Brown does. Though a man can obviously give himself any label he prefers, when it comes to this topic, Dr. Brown seems like a dispensationalist, but lacking a pre-tribulational rapture. Every argument he makes about Israel and Zionism seems identical to those of *Dispensationalism*, so my critique will apply to both.

Dr. Brown (like the dispensationalists) regularly refers to the classical view of Christianity—i.e., *Supersessionism*, which he rejects—as “*Replacement Theology*.” Those who hold this view do not generally refer to their own position as “*Replacement Theology*” because the label is intended only as a pejorative and is misleading. Dispensationalists (and Dr. Brown) think that *Supersessionism* is well summarized by the statement “*The Church replaced Israel in the purposes of God.*” Hence, the nickname, “*Replacement Theology.*” As explained above, this is not correct. *Supersessionism* does not teach that the Church *replaces Israel*, but rather that the Church *is Israel, and always has been*—just as the Church was Israel in Old Testament times (Acts 7:38). It is the same entity but defined by a New Covenant requiring loyalty to Christ, rather than to Moses.

What has been “replaced” is the Old, Sinaitic Covenant, as the definer of membership in God’s society. It is now the New Covenant (which is equated with Christ Himself, in Isa.42:6; 49:8) which has superseded (or, rather, *fulfilled*) the Old Covenant. It is doubtful whether any Christian (as opposed to a Judaizer) will wish to be found at odds with this position. This means that all true Christians would be, in this sense, supersessionists, though most do not wear that label. Those who do wear it prefer terms like “*Fulfillment Theology*,” or “*Remnant Theology*,” which provide a more accurate description of the view than does “*Replacement Theology*.”

It would be very strange for any Christian to use “replacement” as a pejorative when the only thing being “replaced” is the Old Covenant, which Jesus fulfilled. The truly objectionable replacement is the dispensationalists’ own radical replacement: substituting for Christ a particular geo-political

development in the end times as Israel's hope. Who would trade Christ as one's inheritance for a mere piece of land? Is this the "princely price" for which some betray Christ's role as King and as the fulfillment of the promises of God? To seek the inheritance of a strip of land instead of the "spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Eph.1:3) is to sell one's birthright for a bowl of pottage (Heb.12:16-17).

This is truly a "replacement" that qualifies as an insult to God and to Christ. It is a modern-day error (beginning in the 19th century) of the first order. My responses in these documents are intended only to defend the apostolic faith and that of most of the Church of Jesus Christ for the past 2,000 years. If anyone has reason to take offense at one sector's "replacement" of the historic faith with a modern novelty, it would be those who stand with the New Testament and the historic Church against *Dispensationalism*.

The support for the dispensationalist view of modern Israel is not exegetical (as these documents will clearly demonstrate). Rather, the view is based upon the following:

- 1) *Sentimentality* (largely inspired by sympathy for the victims of anti-Semitism throughout history—and, especially *the Shoah*, or mid-20th-century Holocaust).

This sentimentality can be so irrational as to lead a great number of Zionists to refer to non-Zionists as "anti-Semites." This, of course, is as absurd as any polemical trick that could be employed, since *Supersessionism*, as a theological viewpoint, does not disparage or elevate any race at all, but asserts (as *Dispensationalism* does not) that all races—Jews and Gentiles—are in every respect equal in the sight of God. How could any such belief tend toward discrimination against any race?

- 2) *Failure to grasp* the nature of the covenant promises made to Abraham and the historical fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies. These will be discussed at length in the included documents.
- 3) *Confusion* over the modern phenomenon of the establishment of a modern, secular state, in 1948, in the territory that once housed the Old Testament covenant nation of Israel.

This confusion has to do with a poor analysis of modern history. Dispensationalists have long said (even before 1948) that the reestablishment of the State of Israel is a prophesied, inevitable feature of the end times. I referred to this as "confusion" for a number of reasons:

- Though the prophets did, in fact, prophesy the reestablishment of Israel, God brought this about after the Babylonian exile, more than 500 years before Christ was born. After this fulfillment, no additional promises were ever made about any subsequent restoration. There are literally no promises in scripture about a restoration of Jews to their land at the end of time. The prophets and Jesus did predict the second destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in A.D.70. However, no additional restoration of the nation from that judgment is anywhere hinted at beyond that point.
- The return, of which the prophets spoke, was a return of the *faithful remnant*—not of every ethnic Israelite—from the exile. The prophets described this as a return *to God*, not merely to the Land (Deut.30:1-3; Isa.10:21; 35:9-10; Jer.23:3-6; Ezek.36:24-27, etc.). Modern dispensationalists (in contrast to their nineteenth-century counterparts) argue that the prophets foretold a return of *unbelieving* Jews to the land, where they would later be converted.

They cannot produce any actual prophecies that say this, and this would contradict the passages that specifically refer to the returnees as a faithful, repentant remnant.

- Thus, the prophets spoke of a restored Israel as a politico-*spiritual* entity (which occurred in 538 B.C.). By contrast, the modern State of Israel is merely a religiously pluralistic, political phenomenon with no spiritual component or covenant connections to Yahweh, such as uniquely defined Old Testament Israel. The nation Israel was established at Sinai on the basis of their unique status under the Sinaitic Covenant. That covenant is now defunct and no nation can claim status on its terms. There is a New Covenant. Even if every Jew would embrace the New Covenant, this would not make them distinct from the Gentile believers and would therefore provide no basis for their being a special covenant nation.

To refer to the modern political phenomenon in the Middle East as a restoration of biblical Israel would be as valid as if a group of atheists today were to gather in the ancient Turkish location of Pergamos and thereby claim to be the restoration of the biblical Church of Pergamos from the New Testament times. How can atheists be the covenant community of God? Not geography, but spiritual continuity, would be required to make such a claim. Such spiritual continuity does not exist between ancient and modern Israel, which today has more Muslims (14%) than Christians (2%, most of whom are Arab Christians), and which has a slightly larger percentage of atheists (20%) than of observant Orthodox Jews (<19%). This situation bears no resemblance to anything the biblical prophets predicted—as a minority even of important dispensationalists (e.g., J. Vernon McGee) have reluctantly been willing to admit.

- It is premature to speak of a general regathering of the Jews—even merely geographically. The majority of global Jewry is still living in the *diaspora*—most of whom, as always, are seemingly content to remain where they are. Since 586 B.C., there has always been a minority of Jewish people residing in their ancient homeland. Nothing in this respect has changed, other than that the minority today might be slightly larger.

Today it is still a minority. It may yet be that most Jews will someday live there, but the assertion that they will do so is an article of dispensational faith, not an assured reality. It is not clear why dispensationalists would even wish for more Jews to move there, since it is a point of dispensational eschatology that a two-thirds of the Jews living in Palestine will be slaughtered by the Antichrist. If most Jews at that point in time were to be residing in Israel, the body count would then almost double the number of Jews as were killed in the *Shoah*. This gruesome expectation is (fortunately) based upon a very non-contextual interpretation of Zech.13:8. However, from the standpoint of those thinking this to be the case, it would seem that Jews would be much safer remaining in the *diaspora* and that any attempts to get them to relocate to Israel would be a particularly “anti-Semitic” enterprise.

- Dispensationalists believe that the restoration of the nation of Israel in 1948—even though not actually predicted in scripture—was a unique, last-days *miracle* of God. Thus, to fail to support it is seen as setting oneself against God, as well as the Jewish people. However, since nothing has happened in Israel that resembles anything scripturally prophesied, one is entitled to question whether this development is in any way a miracle of God. Dispensationalists often exaggerate the degree to which this phenomenon “defies all odds,” and few Christians seem sufficiently aware of the history that led up to the recognition of the modern state to be able really to evaluate how “miraculous” (or even how *righteous*) such a development was.

There is little in the lead-up to, and creation of, the modern Zionist state that cannot be readily explained in terms of natural trends and political intrigues. For example, few Christians know the degree to which the creation of the modern State of Israel can be attributed to the tireless political lobbying of the dispensationalists themselves—as has been acknowledged even by modern Jewish historians and secular Zionist leaders. Few Christians know of the terroristic activities of *Irgun*, the Jewish terrorist organization led by Menachem Begin, which contributed significantly to the British willingness to abandon their interest in Palestine and to support Jewish independence.

I am not interested in delegitimizing the modern State of Israel, any more than I would delegitimize the modern nation of America. Both have their share of shameful behavior for which to answer, and both have their virtues. I would not even deny that God may have directed the establishment of both of these modern nations (and many others—Acts 17:26). However, I would flatly deny that either of these modern-day nations is mentioned in biblical prophecy.

The documents in this collection will justify these points in the course of my responses to the transcribed statements made by Dr. Brown in his podcasts. Again, I am not picking a fight with Dr. Brown (though I would welcome the opportunity for further debate or, better yet, discussion), nor with anyone else. This is merely my answering common points frequently made in favor of a theological position that I find to be unscriptural and of which Dr. Brown is a worthy advocate. I have written these responses only at the request of my Indian friends, with a mind to helping them to put these arguments into biblical context. I bear no malice toward those with whom I disagree and have no motivation other than to allow the Bible to speak, as it always has, on this issue—and not to be obscured or covered over by modern Zionist sentimentality.

Though Dr. Brown and I agree on many theological topics, in this particular set of documents, we will be found to be in disagreement on almost every point. It will be obvious to the reader that both Dr. Brown and I have spent the last 50 years, and more, in the study of scripture and that we both have a respectable familiarity with the whole Bible. One may ask, “How can two men who both know the Bible well be in complete disagreement on so many points?”

The answer is that we are only in disagreement upon, essentially, one point—and that is, “*How can we harmonize all that the scripture says about Israel?*” Dr. Brown has adopted one paradigm, to which all his individual points conform, and I have adopted another. Both of us hold to theological templates upon which hang numerous individual sub-points. Where we differ is in the choice of each man regarding alternative paradigms. We agree that the promises of Bible prophecy and those made to Abraham, David, *et al*, were to find their fulfillment in the coming of Christ. The pivotal question that is debated is: “*Which coming of Christ—the First or the Second?*”

It will quickly dawn on the reader how many different biblical opinions are tied to this one question—and how costly and difficult it is for one to change his template. Such a change requires a rethinking of a vast body of prophetic material—a rethinking that many will find too daunting even to undertake. I began my ministry over 50 years ago, as did Dr. Brown, believing in his template. In the years since those beginnings, I have not demurred from rethinking the whole topic, which explains my having arrived at a different viewpoint on almost every point discussed in these documents.

I apologize in advance for the high degree of repetition in these documents. This was not under my control. I responded to the documents as they were transcribed and sent to me. Since Dr. Brown is a regular podcaster, and frequently discusses Israel, Zionism and what he calls “Replacement Theology” on his programs, it is not surprising that he makes frequent use of favorite arguments and talking points. The reader is welcome to object to the tediousness of covering the same ground repeatedly (imagine how tedious it was for me having to answer the same points repeatedly).

For this repetition, neither Dr. Brown nor myself can be blamed. I, because I have only dealt with the documents as they come into my hands, and he, because he did not know that these talks would be bundled into a collection and read one after another in one sitting. Also, when Dr. Brown repeats a statement that I have thoroughly refuted in an earlier document, it is not his fault for ignoring my response. These documents were not exchanged and responded to one at a time. I received all twenty of them at once, and he (assuming he will see them at all) will receive them all at once. I beg the reader’s indulgence in keeping these things in mind while reading.

Also, Dr. Brown may be at an aesthetic disadvantage in these documents, from a literary point of view. This also is not his fault. His comments were made on the fly in verbal discourse, whereas my answers were planned-out and edited as written responses with a mind to publication. Obviously, if, upon seeing them, Dr. Brown should wish either to edit or amend his statements, I would be most agreeable with his wishes.

The Index

Because of the frequent repetition of the same points, and the rambling, unsystematic nature of some of the presentations, I have chosen to create an Index of individual arguments for the reader’s benefit. In this Index, Dr. Brown’s points will be listed in the order of their first appearance in the collection, followed by every time that the same argument is raised and answered. The convention of notation for individual passages indexed will be, for example, **3:2**. The boldface numeral will identify the document number, and the un-bolded number will correspond to the specific paragraphs or sections that I have so enumerated in the documents.

Index of Dr. Brown's 182 Arguments

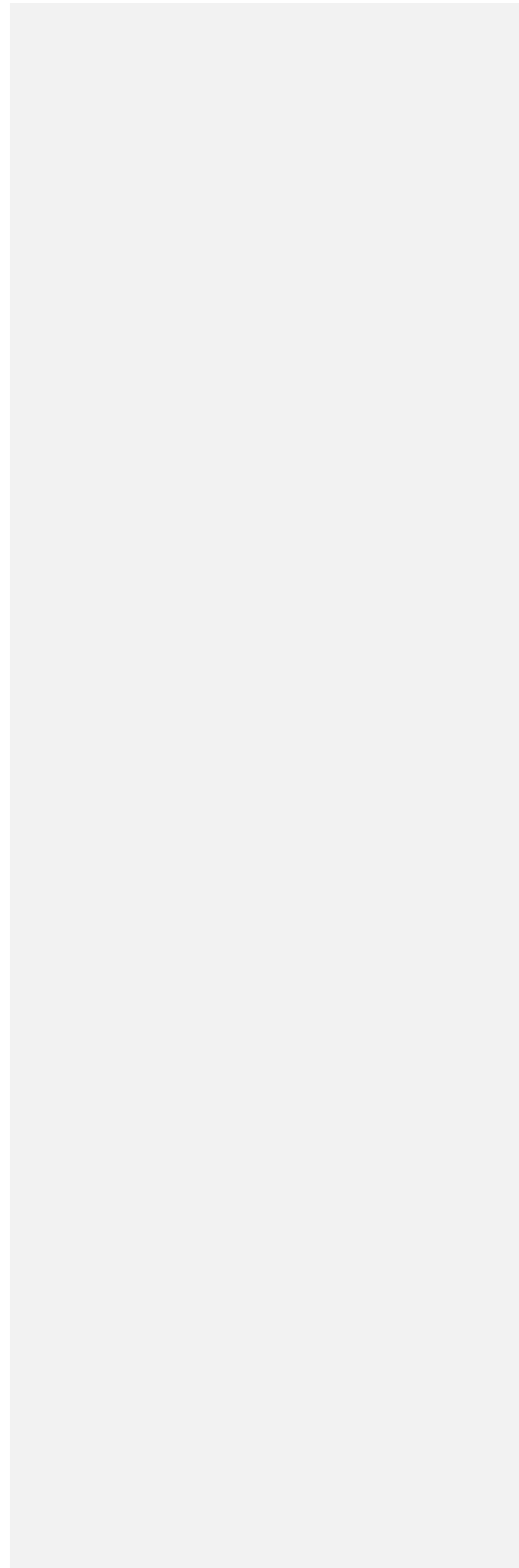
The kingdom was not taken from Israel, but from their evil leaders, and given to the apostles.	1:1
The Church is never called "the Israel of God."	1:2, 5
The "Israel of God" refers only to the Jewish believers.	1:3; 2:12; 8:6-8
There remains a difference between Jew and Gentile, just as there remain differences between men and women (Gal.3:28).	1:4, 9; 8:1; 12:1, 4
Paul writes as if the circumcised and uncircumcised are two distinct continuing categories in the Church.	1:4
Unbelieving Jews are still "beloved for the fathers' sake" (Romans 11:28).	1:6; 10:32; 14:2; 15:6; 18:8
God's gifts and callings are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).	1:7; 10:16; 14:2; 15:6, 11; 18:8
There will be a vast national turning of the Jews to Christ (Rom.11:26; Jer.31:1).	1:8; 6:4
<i>Supersessionism</i> says the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan.	2:1; 3:1
It should be called " <i>Replacement Theology</i> " over the objections of its advocates, who say this is not an accurate label.	2:1-4; 3:4; 5:1; 18:3
If God regathered someone other than those whom He scattered, He broke His promise to the latter.	2:3b, 4
<i>Supersessionism</i> is a sign of (or cause of) arrogance.	2:5; 5:19, 26; 10:19; 11:32
Promises remain of salvation and restoration to the Land for ethnic Israel.	2:6
Some promises concerning the return from Babylon never were fulfilled.	2:7; 7:5-7; 10:6, 9
Isaiah 11 has not been fulfilled in the return of exiles from Babylon, but is being fulfilled today.	7:7; 10:7
Zechariah predicts all nations coming against a Jewish Jerusalem at the end.	2:8
If you do not see a modern fulfillment in the present return, then your view should be called " <i>Replacement Theology</i> ."	2:9
Romans 9:6 does not say that Gentiles will become Israel.	2:10; 5:14
After Romans 9:6, the ten remaining references to Israel in Rom.9—11 are about the nation as a whole.	2:11; 4:45-46; 10:15; 11:7-9, 15, 30; 14:2; 15:4
To think "the Israel of God" refers to the Church is to cast away the grace of God.	2:13
Anti-Semitism and Jew-hatred are the fruit of " <i>Replacement Theology</i> ."	2:14; 3:2; 5:24; 6:10-11; 10:40-41, 45; 11:9; 15:16; 18:2
(Walking-back the previous) Some who hold this view are not Jew-haters.	3:3; 5:27; 6:11; 10:41; 11:35
Alternative terms for <i>Supersessionism</i> are sneaky ways of escaping the label " <i>Replacement Theology</i> ."	3:4-5
<i>Fulfillment Theology</i> says the promises are not given to Israel, but to Christ and the Church.	3:6-10
<i>Fulfillment Theology</i> asserts that God will not honor His promise to draw Israel back to the Land.	3:7
<i>Fulfillment Theology</i> thinks the disciples were stupid when they asked their question in Acts 1:6.	3:11; 10:42
We can tell the fulfillment theologians are wrong by the things Jesus did not say in response to the disciples' question in Acts 1:6.	3:12-19; 10:42-44
Peter predicted that all the promises God made to Israel have yet to be fulfilled, and will be when Israel repents (Acts 3:19-20).	3:20; 10:25
Jews do not have their own separate covenant with God, but need Jesus, like everyone else.	3:21
God made unconditional promises to the Jews, which He will keep.	3:22; 5:11; 15:12, 14
God scattered Israel according to the Sinaitic Covenant and will gather them.	3:23

As we see God sustains the Church by grace, we should think He also sustains Israel by grace.	3:24
The covenant at Sinai does not annul the promises...	3:24, 26, 31; 5:32; 6:2; 10:36; 15:14; 16:3; 18:8
In Galatians 3:16, Paul did not mean to say the promises to Israel as a whole have been nullified.	3:25
Romans 11 tells us that the promises apply to Israel as a whole.	3:27
Jesus is the apex of the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, but the other promise is also still important.	3:28
Paul knew that the word "Seed" could be singular or plural.	3:29; 6:12
God promised Abraham the Land as an eternal inheritance (Psalm 105:7-11).	3:30; 10:36; 15:10-11; 16:2
In Romans 9:1-5, Paul says that the promises still belong to Israel.	3:32; 5:14; 10:13, 29 ; 11:4; 15:2-3, 10; 18:8
If God does not fulfill the land promises to Israel in the last days, He is a liar.	3:33
Being a Zionist does not mean approving of everything Israel does, but only that one believes the State of Israel is God's doing and should be supported.	4:1
I find many people support Zionism, partly because of the Holocaust.	4:3
Many who oppose Zionism simply don't see the big picture.	4:4-5
Jeremiah 31:31 says the new covenant is with "Israel and Judah"—not another people.	4:6-7
People draw wrong conclusions from Jesus' cursing the fig tree, and the destruction of the temple.	4:8-9
No matter what the Jews do, they will always have special privileges with God.	4:10-11
If God doesn't keep His promises to Israel, there is no basis for thinking He will keep His promises to the Church.	4:12; 11:14, 40
We should stand with Israel, which will not require forsaking justice to the Palestinians.	4:13; 10:4
The promise of Jeremiah 30:10 has been fulfilled many times in history.	4:14
Jeremiah 31:10 applied to the return from Babylon, but only partially. Its fulfillment continues to this day.	4:15
<i>I have an argument no one has been able to answer:</i> If God scatters and curses a people, only God can regather and bless them. The present return must be from God.	4:16-17; 5:32; 6:14-16; 9:4, 17; 16:6; 18:9; 19:21
No people could survive so long as the Jews did without a homeland, apart from a miracle of God.	4:3, 18-19; 10:37; 16:5-6
Standing with Israel is standing with God.	4:20; 18:10
God is bringing Jews back to the Land in unbelief, as prophesied in Ezek.36.	4:22
Standing with Israel is standing against Satan, as per Zech.12:1ff.	4:23-24, 50
Zechariah 12-14 describe an end-times Jewish Jerusalem.	4:25-26; 18:11
The history of anti-Semitism proves the devil is against Israel.	4:27-29
Because Jesus came through Israel, this proves God has a purpose for Israel today.	4:29
If Satan wipes out the Jews, it will prove God to be a liar.	4:30
The Church is indebted to Israel.	4:31, 38-40
Romans 9-11 tell how God will yet keep His word.	4:32
Romans 11:11 indicates that Israel has not fallen beyond recovery.	4:33; 10:28; 11:16
The conversion of Gentiles will make Jews jealous and want to get saved.	4:33-34, 36-37; 11:17-20, 23; 15:5
Romans 11:12 and 15 speak of the future salvation of the world when the Jews get saved.	4:35, 48; 11:21-22,24
Standing with Israel is standing for justice.	4:41-47
We must support Israel to hasten Christ's coming, as Rom.11:25-26 says.	4:43-44
Matthew 23:39 says Jesus will return to a Jewish Jerusalem.	4:47, 49; 9:4; 10:3, 24; 18:11; 20:6
A man with a PhD says God told him to pray for the success of Zionism.	4:51

<i>Supersessionism</i> has God promising something to one group and giving it to another.	5:2-3, 17
The motives for one embracing <i>Supersessionism</i> are a mystery, requiring some speculative psychological explanation.	5:4, 27
<i>Supersessionists</i> (despite the view's connections with anti-Semitism) is attractive to Gentile Christians who would like to be Jews.	5:5, 20-21
They forget that there are promises that distinctly apply to Israel.	5:6
They say, "it's all about Jesus," but need to realize that He came to confirm, not end the promises to Israel. See Romans 15:8-9.	5:7-9,15; 10:18, 35; 18:8
Zionism isn't racism, because being a special race has been costly for the Jews.	5:10
<i>Supersessionists</i> think we should be more heavenly minded, forgetting that justice here and now are legitimate Christian priorities.	5:12
There is plenty of confusion over the actual ethnic identity of today's "Jews."	5:13
If you hold to Replacement Theology, you believe God did not bring Israel back to the Land.	5:16
Another reason people become supersessionists is their insecurity and feelings of inferiority for not being Jewish.	5:22, 25
If supersessionists want to be Israel, they should get circumcised.	5:28
<i>Replacement Theology</i> is ugly and wrong, for one reason or another.	5:29
If Palestinians hold to such a doctrine, they will not be supported by the Christians in the West—so they shouldn't.	5:31
If you believe there are no national promises that remain for the Jewish people, that is " <i>Replacement Theology</i> ."	6:1
If you say that promises in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the Church, that is " <i>Replacement Theology</i> ."	6:3
The Jews today have been regathered by God.	6:13
Many of the Puritans, and others like them, expected the Jews to be regathered to their Land.	6:17; 7:4; 10:9
The return of the Jews in modern times has to be a miracle of God.	7:1-2
Galatians 3:28 only means all are equal in terms of salvation.	8:1-2, 5; 15:16
Being Jewish is a racial distinction, not related to religious affiliation.	8:3-4
Palestinian Christians will never have the fulness of God's blessing until they acknowledge that it is God who has brought the Jews back to the Land.	9:3
When Jesus returns, the kingdom will be restored to national Israel (Acts 1:6).	9:4
In the "regeneration" the twelve apostles will reign over the twelve tribes (Matthew 19:28).	9:4
Joel 3:1-3 does not necessarily refer to modern proposals of dividing the Land between Israeli and Palestinian states.	9:5
God repeatedly refers to the Land as "My Land."	9:6-10
The land of Israel and the Jews have a unique role to play.	9:7; 11:27
Christians should pray for the Land and Jerusalem.	9:11; 10:10; 15:5
There are inevitable and legitimate questions regarding aspects of Ezekiel 40-48.	9:14
The history and identity of the Palestinians is complicated.	9:15-16
Ezekiel 36 predicts a return of exiles who are still in unbelief and rebellion against God.	2:4; 9:18; 10:5, 9; 15:18
Before the Jews regained control, the Land was barren and undeveloped.	9:19
Gentiles are helping the Jews return, which is a fulfillment of prophecy.	9:20
There will still be Jews scattered in the Diaspora until Messiah returns.	9:21
The writer of Psalm 137 invokes a curse on himself if he should forget Jerusalem.	10:1
Current events, like the moving of the US Embassy to Jerusalem, only make it more obvious that prophecy is being fulfilled.	10:1-2, 11
Bullet-proof passages about the Jews' return in end times: Isaiah 40-66	10:5
Bullet-proof passages about the Jews' return in end times: Ezekiel 36	10:5, 9
Bullet-proof passages about the Jews' return in end times: Jeremiah 30-33	10:5
The whole nation of Israel will worship God together (Jeremiah 24).	10:6

Jeremiah 16:14f tells of a return that eclipses the Exodus.	10:8
Jeremiah 31:35-37 says Israel will be a nation as long as the sun and moon endure.	10:14, 30
Romans 11:26 speaks of the wholesale conversion of the Jews in the end.	3:27; 17:11
F.F. Bruce agrees that Romans 11:26 is about the future conversion of Israel.	10:15, 19, 33
Preterism, which says "God is finished with Israel" needs to be debunked as dangerous theology.	10:17-18; 11:33
In Romans 11:25, the expression "partial hardening" implies "temporary" hardening.	10:20; 11:31; 15:8
In Romans 11:26, "thus" means "on the heels of this."	10:21; 11:36; 15:8
Jeremiah 31:1 says God will be the God of "all the families of Israel."	10:22; 15:8
Zechariah 12:10 through 13:1 speaks of a future massive repentance among the Jews.	10:23
Isaiah 59:20-21 predicts a last days turning of Israel to God.	10:26
The Church does not have the monopoly on grace.	10:31
To apply Romans 11:28-29 to the remnant is to "do violence to the word of God."	10:32
Isaiah 2:1-4 says the nations will stream to Jerusalem to be instructed.	10:34
An apostle cannot abolish these promises by a simple stroke of the pen.	10:35
Jesus came to fulfill, not to abolish.	10:35; 18:7-8
In Romans 9-11, Paul includes his teaching about Israel as part of the foundations of the Gospel.	11:2; 15:4
Paul has great agony in his heart over the fate of Israel.	11:3
The problem Paul addresses in Romans 9-11 has to do with the reason the leadership of Israel has rejected Christ.	11:3
When Paul speaks of the remnant of Israel, in Romans 9:6 and 11:5, he is not talking about the Church.	11:5
Paul says it is the remnant who always have received the promises of God—this refers only to Jewish believers.	11:6
Those who believe that individual Jews can be saved, but deny that the whole nation will be saved, undermine the whole Old Testament. That is like removing the first story of a two-story house!	11:10
Since the judgment was a literal one, the regathering cannot be a spiritual one.	11:11
It is deceitful to make an unconditional promise and then to break it.	11:12
When God keeps racial promises, it is not a matter of racism, but His integrity.	11:13
The fact that there is now a remnant of believing Jews means the whole nation will later be saved.	11:15
In Romans 11:13, Paul speaks to "Gentiles." He does not call them "Spiritual Israel," or "Spiritual Jews."	11:23
Israel's salvation is a prerequisite for Jesus' return.	11:25
In Romans 11:16, Paul said that the firstfruits and the root are holy, so is the whole batch and the branches. This means all Israel is holy.	11:28
A loan is different from a gift.	11:29
Luther was anti-Semite and believed in <i>Supersessionism</i> .	11:33
Hitler was anti-Semite and believed in <i>Supersessionism</i> .	11:33
The broken branches in Romans 11:17ff refer to supersessionists, and are doomed.	11:34
The only way we can understand "Israel" in Romans 11:26 is the same way it was used in v.25.	11:37
To see Romans 11:26 as a reference to anything other than the Jewish nation as a whole is to twist and turn upside down proper hermeneutics.	11:38
"Jacob" (Romans 11:27) is never used as a reference to the Church.	11:39; 15:5
In Corinthians 7:18 Paul tells Jews not to become Gentiles, so he sees some significant difference and importance in being Jewish.	12:2
The true "Jew" of Romans 2:28-29 is actually a physical Jew (not a Gentile) who has additionally been circumcised in heart.	13:1, 3

God will bless those who bless even disobedient Israel, and curse those who curse them (Genesis 12:3; Numbers 24:9).	14:1;18:8
The Jews today are still chosen by God.	14:3
God didn't promise to give them the Land and then take it away.	15:9
God said that if we [the Jews] repent, He will bring us back to the Land.	15:13
God can do whatever He chooses.	15:15
Christian leaders make ridiculous statements bashing Israel day and night.	15:17
God is most certainly a Zionist.	16:2, 7
Jesus was Jewish.	17:1
The original Christians were Jewish.	17:2
Christianity developed into a non-Jewish religion.	17:3, 10
Paul warned Gentile Christians not to forget their Jewish roots.	17:9
The Church abandoned the Jewish calendar, and made Jewish converts decide whether they would follow the Christian or the Jewish religion.	17:4, 12
The Church must honor its Jewish roots.	17:14
Palestinian Christians must stand against Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.	18:1
Palestinian Christians must abandon all forms of Replacement Theology.	18:1
Palestinian Christians must place Jesus at the center and love Israel.	18:1
To tell a Jew fleeing from persecution that "Jesus is the Land" is like telling a starving person "Jesus is the Bread of Life," and doing nothing for him.	18:4
Israel has the right to Palestinians' land due to the smallness of the territory they are taking from them, and Israel's need to defend themselves.	18:5
There are as many as 170 references in scripture to the land that God gave to Abraham's seed.	18:6
Twelve times the covenant is said to be everlasting.	18:7
Traditional Jews expect the Messiah to build the third temple.	19:3
Zechariah 6:12-15 says the Branch (Messiah) will build the temple of the Lord.	19:4-5
The Church can't be the temple referred to because it is unlikely that the Antichrist could set himself up in our midst.	19:9
Since a physical temple was standing in Paul's day, it is most likely he refers to a future physical temple in 2 Thessalonians 2.	19:10
Revelation speaks of a temple, but it may be symbolic.	19:11
The most important reference to a future temple is in Matthew 24.	19:12
Some of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D.70, and the rest is future.	19:12, 17,19, 22-23, 25, 26, 28
Similar examples of partial fulfillments are Ezekiel 36-37 and Jeremiah 30-33, where there is partial fulfillment in the return of the exiles from Babylon.	19:13-16
The building of a third temple used to seem impossible, but the return of the Jews to the Land in modern times makes it seem more plausible.	19:20
The disciples' reference to "the end of the age," in Matthew 24:3, cannot refer to the end of the temple age.	19:22
<i>Full-Preterism</i> is wrong and often is held along with other heretical views.	19:26-27
Luke 21 also speaks partially of A.D.70 and partially of the future.	19:31
"This generation" refers both to the disciples' generation and the last generation in the end times.	19:32
The Old Testament sacrifices anticipated the sacrifice of Christ; so also the millennial sacrifices will be a memorial of the sacrifice of Christ.	19:34
Isaiah 32:15-16 speaks of the Holy Spirit being poured out on Israel in the end times.	20:1
The Jews require a sign, and the Holy Spirit will be poured out with signs and wonders.	20:4
Acts 2:14ff mentions the last days outpouring of the Spirit on Israel.	20:5-6
Ezekiel 36 also mentions God putting His Spirit in Israel.	20:9



Document 1
Is the Church the Israel of God?

1. Dr. Brown: *Hey Mike.*

Mike (a caller): *I was just wondering, in Matthew 21, it says that the kingdom of God, it is going to be taken from the Jews and given to a nation bearing the fruits thereof it, when did that happen?*

Dr. Brown: *Yeah, it doesn't say that. You know what it says?*

Mike: *What does it say?*

Dr. Brown: *Yeah, so who's the parable spoken against? All right, it's about the religious leadership.*

Mike: *The Pharisees.*

Dr. Brown:

The Pharisees and the leaders, okay. So, here's what it says, Matthew 21:43, "Therefore, I tell you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a people producing its fruit, and whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but on whoever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

Verse 45, "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them, and although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds."

Right, who are the crowds? The Jewish crowds because they, the crowds held him to be a prophet, so that transition happened. It was taken from them and given to the Apostles and the other believers.

So, the leadership was taken from the corrupt leaders and given to the apostles who are all Jewish, and the leaders of the early Church were all Jewish. And the Jewish crowds, they held Jesus to be a prophet.

- *So, it wasn't taken from the Jewish people and given to someone else.*
- *It was taken from the bad leadership and given to other Jewish leaders.*

And then from there, the spiritual leadership is Jew and Gentile through the centuries, but it wasn't taken from the Jews, never taken from the Jews. It was taken from the corrupt leaders.

Response:

The ones from whom the Kingdom was taken were those who were "*miserably destroyed*" when the Master came (Matt.21:40-41; Mark 12:9; Luke 20:16). This was the whole nation of Israel and the Jewish System that were destroyed by the Romans.

The Kingdom was then said to be given to a nation or "a people" (Gr. *ethnos*). The word *ethnos* refers to a nation or "a people" (not to some minority group within a nation or people, like their leaders). It is the common word to speak of Gentile nations. ("the nations" as the opposite of "Israel"), but when it is used of Israel, it refers to Israel as an ethnic nation (e.g., Luke 7:5; John 11:48; Acts 10:35; 28:19).

The word *ethnos* does not refer to "people" (like a certain group or class of individuals) but to "a people" (an ethnic group or nation spoken of collectively). Israel was a "people," but the Pharisees were not "a people" (*ethnos*). They were a religious party. Likewise, the chief priests were not "a people" (*ethnos*), but a group of temple officers. Even the combined leadership of Israel through the

centuries do not comprise an *ethnos*. The Church, on the other hand, is a “people” (*ethnos*) and a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9-10).

To whom did Jesus give the Kingdom? Clearly, to His disciples (Luke 12:32). These disciples were, and are, the Church. It is true that they were Jewish disciples, but Christ does not make a distinction between His little Jewish flock, and the Gentiles later gathered into that flock. He said that such ingathering would result in “*one flock, and one Shepherd*” (John 10:16). Those who divide the Church into Jewish and Gentile elements for different purposes, status, or privilege are sinning—like Peter, when Paul had to rebuke him at Antioch (Gal.2:11-21). They are building again the partition that God broke down, as Paul attests (Eph.2:15; Gal.2:18). They are dividing asunder what God has joined together.

Even if we were to take the exegetically-flawed position that God simply took the apostles and put them in the place of the Jewish leadership, we still must identify the group they led as the Kingdom. What group did the apostles lead—the ethnic Israelites or the Church?

2. Mike: *Well, why is the Church constantly described as the Israel of God, the New Jerusalem?*

Dr. Brown: *I mean, it's not, it's never, never. It's never once. Mike, never.*

Response:

In Hebrews 12:22-23, “*the general assembly and Church of the firstborn*” is most certainly called the “heavenly Jerusalem” (which Paul says is “*the mother of us all*”—that is, like Sarah, mother of all the *children according to the promise*, as opposed to Hagar’s *children according to the flesh*—Gal.4:19). Paul also says that the children according to the flesh (Abraham’s natural offspring) will be cast out and will not share the inheritance of the Abrahamic blessings with the children according to promise—whom Paul has identified with the Jewish and Gentile believers (Gal.4:29-31)—i.e., the Church.

3. Dr. Brown:

Now Galatians 6:16,

- *“Peace be to all who follow this rule (speaking to the Gentiles in Galatia)*
- *and,” separate entity, “to the Israel of God.”*

Okay, it's two separate entities. “Now as many as lived by this rule, Shalom and mercy on them, and on the Israel of God,” which is Jewish believers in Jesus, like me, like Paul. That's the Israel of God. Paul does not call the Church the Israel of God as the vast majority of translations recognize.

Response:

The verse in Galatians reads:

“and as many as by this rule do walk—peace upon them, and kindness, [Gr. kai = “and”] on the Israel of God” (YLT)

Or, alternatively,

“May peace come to all those who follow this standard, and mercy [kai = “even”] to the Israel of God.” (ESV)

The question in dispute is this: Does Paul speak of two groups (“those who walk by this rule,” and “the Israel of God”), or are these different names for the same people?

The word *kai* is alternately translated into English as either “and” or “even,” and is often translated the latter way. This means *the Israel of God* could be another term for the group first mentioned or it could be distinguished from them. If we assume the latter, as Dr. Brown suggests, then the first group should have been referred to by some term speaking of their ethnicity as Gentiles to be distinguished from the Jewish believers. Why would any reader assume that the sweeping phrase, “*all who follow this rule*,” would exclude Jewish believers and designate only Gentiles among the believers?

As it is, to say that “*the Israel of God*” is different from, and does not belong to, the first group is to say that Paul acknowledged two groups in the Church: those who “*follow this rule*” and then “*the Israel of God*,” indicating that those who are called “the Israel of God” are not included among those who “follow this rule.” Whatever rule it is to which Paul was referring, there is no separate group of rules for Jews and Gentiles in Christ. Nor does Paul recognize any sub-group in the Church distinguished by their race, sex, or social status, to which he must send greetings separately (Gal.3:28). All believers are under the “*law of Christ*” (Gal.6:2). Is Paul saying that Gentile Christians obey the rule that Paul recommends, but the Israel of God (as a different group) does not? What rule, then, do the latter follow?

When Paul has spent six chapters demolishing the distinctions in status between Jews and Gentiles in the Church—even saying that all the Christian readers are children of Abraham, that the children according to the flesh (natural Israel) will be cast out, and that Peter had been a hypocrite in acting as if there existed any difference between Jews and Gentiles in the Church—how bizarre it would be for him then, at the end of the letter, reaffirm that very distinction?

It is true that most English translations translate *kai* as “and.” They apparently miss Paul’s theme in the Book of Galatians entirely, and unnecessarily make him contradict himself. There are plenty of translators who think *kai* should be translated as “even” in this verse (e.g., CSB, Phillips, Mounce, NET (fn), NIV, RSV). I don’t care what most translators do with *kai*, because all translators of this verse, including myself, choose the rendering of *kai* according to their theological persuasions—not from any demands of the Greek language. In my view, the demands of the context rule out distinguishing “the Israel of God” from the “Gentile” Church as a whole. If Paul builds again the distinction which he previously destroyed, he makes himself an offender (Gal.2:18).

4. Dr. Brown:

So there's neither Jew nor Gentile in Jesus, but I imagine, sir, when you go to the bathroom, you go to the men's room, not the ladies' room. It says there's neither male nor female, but male-female distinction still exists, just like Jew-Gentile distinctions still exist. But in Jesus, we're one, there's no caste system, there's no class system. We are equally children of God, equally branches of the vine, equally priests to God, equally loved by God, and equal relationship with God.

But Jew and Gentile distinctions exist. That's why Paul writes in, 1 Corinthians 7:17 and following, that if you're called circumcised, don't become uncircumcised. If you called uncircumcised, don't become circumcised. So side-by-side in the body, we have Jewish believers and Gentile believers, one in the Messiah, but not with identical calling in every respect, and not necessarily living the exact same way. There's unity and diversity, so the Church is not the new Israel, it's not a biblical teaching.

Response:

This is a popular argument, but it fails to do justice to Paul's meaning when saying, "*there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female.*" No one imagines that God has abolished the races or the sexes. In Paul's day, slaves still played a different role in society, and women fill a different role in the Church and family. Paul, elsewhere, delineates these different roles. However, these observations are completely unrelated to Paul's point in Galatians.

Paul is saying that no distinctions between such groups exist in God's valuation, including such matters as privilege or acceptance. To say, as some do, "Since there are still separate functions for men and women and for slaves and free men, so also there are different functions for Jews and Gentiles in Christ," naturally raises the question, "What are these separate functions, and where do we find them mentioned in scripture?"

When Paul told the uncircumcised Corinthians not to become circumcised, and Jewish believers not to become uncircumcised (1 Cor.7:18), he was not confirming the ongoing value of circumcision or Jewish identity in Christ. As the following verse demonstrates, he was saying the opposite. His advice was in the same context as his telling slaves not to care about becoming free nor free men to become slaves. He was not saying there are continuing, inherent differences between Jews and Gentiles or between slaves or free men. It is sometimes possible for a slave to become a free man, as Paul mentions *in situ*, or for a Gentile to become a Jew (that is, a proselyte). These are not unchangeable categories or identities in the purposes of God. He is telling all the Christians to be content to remain as they are because there is no relevant difference before God between slaves and free men, or between Jews and Gentiles.

If anyone thinks that Paul is saying there remains some non-trivial distinction between circumcised and uncircumcised people, he or she might wish to explain why Paul (in the very next verse) said that, in Christ, circumcision and uncircumcision "is nothing" (1 Cor.7:19; cf., Gal.5:6; 6:15).

5. Dr. Brown:

The Church is saved Jews and saved Gentiles. We make up the eternal people of God, saved Jews and saved Gentiles, we are the ekklesia, but the Church is not the new Israel, nor has the Church replaced Israel.

Response:

How can one make such an artificial distinction? Of the many terms used to describe the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Old Testament, the most ambiguous and flexible was the word "Israel." This one word could refer to a man's name (Gen.32:28), that same man's family (Gen.34:7), the nation formed of a racially mixed multitude at Sinai (Ex.19:2), the northern kingdom in contrast to the southern kingdom (1 Kings 12:19), and that subset of the race who were the people of God in fact, and not name only (Rom.9:6).

In the Old Testament ethnic "Israel" was "the circumcision," the "*seed of Abraham*," the "*people of God*," the "*ekklesia*" (in the LXX)—and was always comprised of faithful Jews and Gentiles. Additionally, Israel was God's "*inheritance*," the "*chosen race*," the "*holy nation*," and the "*kingdom of priests*." All of these titles, which were originally given to Israel, are now given to the Church (Eph.1:18; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Rev.5:10). By what artificial prejudice does one, while conceding all these

titles to the Church, nonetheless jealously deny to the same entity the term “Israel” that is everywhere else synonymous with them?

6. Dr. Brown:

Paul writes in Romans 11:28 and 29 that “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...”

Response:

This is a tricky verse. There are two “*they are’s*” in our English versions: “*they are enemies,*” and “*they are loved.*” Actually, “*they are*” is not found in the Greek text in either clause, which is why both occurrences are in italics in the NKJV. The Greek text reads: “*as regards indeed the gospel, enemies for you; as regards the election, beloved for the sake of the fathers.*” Are the “enemies,” as regards the gospel, the same people as “the election” who are beloved? Most translations add or subtract words to make it seem so. However, the term “*the election*” (the subject of the second clause) refers to the faithful *remnant*, whom Paul has already distinguished from the majority of Israel earlier in the chapter (vv.5, 7). Paul speaks of two groups: 1) the hostile majority of “Israel;” and 2) “*the election*” (*ekloge*)—the faithful remnant. Notice:

“Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the election (ekloge) have obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” (v.7)

“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election (ekloge) they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.” (v.28)

The Greek word *ekloge* only appears in scripture six times—three of which speak of election generically (Acts 9:15; 1 Thess.1:4; 2 Pet.1:10). The other three occurrences are all in this chapter (vv.5, 7, 28), where it appears in the latter two instances with the definite article—making “*the election*” a technical term in the present discussion. “*The election,*” in v.7, clearly refers to the faithful remnant of Israel (the two terms are interchangeable in v.5)—which, unlike the nation at large, has “obtained” what Israel sought. When Paul, in v.28, uses the same word with the definite article, he must be referring to the same group of people he had so recently referenced by that title—the faithful remnant. The connection between these two verses is obscured by modern translators, who often do not render the terms the same in both cases.

Therefore, Paul has two groups in mind in verse 28, just as in verse 7. There is Israel, on the whole, who has not obtained what they sought and who are the enemies of the gospel. Then there are those called “*the election*” (the remnant) who have obtained it and who are beloved for the fathers’ sakes (“*only those who are of faith are the children of Abraham*”—Gal.3:7). Thus, it is impossible to say that this verse is telling us that the same people who are enemies of the gospel are nonetheless specially loved by God (of course, all people are loved by God, but not in the special sense that Dr. Brown is claiming uniquely for apostate Israel).

Of all English translations, I have found none that translates this verse faithfully, except the KJV, NKJV, and ASV. All others translate the words in v.7 as “the elect” or “the chosen,” but when they find the same word in v.28, they pretend that the definite article is not there, and simply use the words “election,” or “God’s choice.” No wonder most readers become confused about Paul’s meaning. Unless someone reads the Greek (or the KJV, NKJV, or the ASV) no one would notice Paul’s usage of this terminology in both places.

7. Dr. Brown:

...[Rom.11:]29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Response:

Well, not all of God's gifts are irrevocable, since we read of God taking permanently from some nations—e.g., the Edomites (Deut.2:5), and the Babylonians (Dan.2:37; 5:28)—the lands and powers that He had previously "given" to them.

According to Jeremiah 18:7-10, all benefits and promises given to any nation (including Israel) are indeed revocable if that nation rebels against Him. The gifts and calling related to the *remnant* will never be revoked, since their membership is comprised only of the faithful. By definition, they are the ones who meet the covenantal conditions. All others are excluded (Ps.50:16-17).

Also, some who have received a "call" are not responsive, and are, as a consequence, not *chosen* (Matt.22:14). In 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, Paul distinguishes between 1) the "*Jews*," 2) the "*Greeks*," and 3) "*those who are called, both Jews and Greeks*." Certainly, to Paul, the "calling" of God that is never revoked is that to which believers have responded.

In this context, Paul is saying that the calling and promises He has given to the true Israel (the remnant) have not been repealed but fulfilled. Then again, Paul has already told us that they are not all Israel (and therefore not among those "called" or "gifted") who are of Israelite descent (Rom.9:6). He also has told us that those who have been "called" include both Jews and Gentiles in Christ (Rom.9:24). This calling has not been revoked. However, many in natural Israel have no part in the gift or calling, either now or in the future, because this special status is not given to Abraham's "*children [only] according to the flesh*" (Rom.9:7-8), but to the faithful.

Throughout Romans 9-11, Paul has been explaining how God's covenants and promises originally given to Israel have not failed to come true, despite the unbelief of most of the Jews. There is a remnant within Israel, who comprise the true Israel. They have received Christ and have therefore experienced the promised destiny to which all Israel was called. It is a calling to which the majority were unresponsive—but not the true Israel (see John 1:47; Zeph.3:13), who has now been joined by believing Gentiles in the reorganized olive tree (Israel).

That is Paul's message in Romans 9-11, namely, that it may appear that God has revoked His gifts and callings offered to Israel, but He has not done so. He has bestowed them upon the true Israel of God—the only "Israel" to whom they were ever promised. There has been no revocation, and thousands of Jews in every age have heard and responded to the unrevoked call and have consequently received the Messiah and His unrevoked gifts. In every age, most Jews have rejected the calling and the gifts, and have gone to their graves having permanently forfeited what the remnant has happily embraced. Reading any other message into Romans 9-11 is simply missing the point, bringing eschatology into a discussion in which Paul has introduced none.

8. Dr. Brown:

That's why God will keep his word to Israel as Romans 11:26 says and Jeremiah 31:1, and other verses, and there'll be a national turning of the Jewish people to Jesus at the end of the age. So vast a harvest of the nations, and mass turning of the Jewish people, making up the glorious ekklesia, the glorious Church, Jew and Gentile, together in Jesus.

Response:

Romans 11:26 is discussed more fully in several other documents in this series [10:15, 19, 20, 33; 11:31; 15:8; 17:11] so we will save our discussion of that verse for later. As for Jeremiah 31:1, there is no mention of the end of the age in that passage. It clearly refers to the present age inaugurated by Christ's birth (which is how verse 15 is applied in Matthew 2:17-18) and in which there is a New Covenant (vv.31-34, which Jesus and the apostles apply to their own time, in Matt.26:28; 2 Cor.3:6; Heb.8:6-13; 10:14-18). No New Testament author postponed the New Covenant to a future time of the end.

In Jeremiah 31:1, belonging to the same timeframe, God says that "*all the families of Israel*" shall be His people. Paul, in Romans 9-11 has already established that Israel is not equivalent to Abraham's children *according to the flesh*, but those *according to the promise*. In Galatians 4, Paul argues that we are the children of the promise—so it is not surprising that 1 Peter 2:10 speaks of us as "*the people of God*," as does Jeremiah 31:1. Jeremiah's phrase "*all the families of Israel*" is equivalent to "*all Israel*," in Romans 11:26. The completed and saved *Israel* is formed, Paul says, by God's bringing in the unhardened ones of natural Israel (the remnant) along with the fulness of the Gentiles (v.25).

9. Dr. Brown:

So, brother, we are one, there is nothing that separates us. I'm not better than you, you're not better than me, but I'm not a Gentile, you're not a Jew, just like my wife's not a man, and I'm not a woman, there are still distinctions within the body.

Response:

Again, the male/female, slave/free, Jew/Gentile dichotomies in Galatians 3:28 are being misused in Dr. Brown's comparisons. Paul is not here listing these three dichotomies as examples of distinctions in function, as Dr. Brown does. In other epistles (e.g., Ephesians and Colossians), Paul does acknowledge different roles for men and for women in the home and in the Church. In those places, he also acknowledges distinctions between slaves and masters in the household. In those discussions Paul's context and interest is miles away from his context or interest in Galatians. The "household codes" of Ephesians, Colossians, and other passages, comprise no part of Paul's concerns in Galatians. Here, his point is the matter of how one *identifies*, without such distinctions, in Christ (see vv.26-27). This has everything to do with *status* and *destiny*. There is no separate destiny for a Christian male or female, a Christian servant or master, a believing Jew or Gentile—because there is no separate status among Christians with reference to these categories.

In this passage, Paul is not mindful of the distinctions, nor the lack of them, regarding their *functions within social institutions*. He is discussing the fact that the Gentile Galatians ought not to be circumcised or become proselytes, because it means nothing to be a Jew or a Gentile. Circumcision and uncircumcision count for absolutely nothing (Gal.5:6; 6:15)—though this is the only thing that distinguishes between the identities of Jews and Gentiles, respectively.

That there is no significant distinction between Jew and Gentile is the whole message of Galatians, and when he states it again in 3:28, he bolsters the point by naming two other categories which, like that of Jew and Gentile, matter only in human estimations. As Christians know that slaves and free men, males and females, are no longer status distinctions in the Kingdom of God, so also, Paul argues, are the categories of Jew and Gentile.

If someone would have said to Paul, “But aren’t there still physical differences between men and women, and economic differences between slave and free men?” Paul could have said, “Yes, but that is entirely off-topic here.” We are not discussing day-by-day social functions here, but *identity in Christ*. All are one in Christ.

On the entirely dissimilar subject of the distinctive social and domestic functions of different groups, one might consult Paul’s “household codes” in Ephesians, Colossians or Titus—but these issues take us far from Paul’s concerns in Galatians. It is interesting that these household codes, while delineating roles of husbands, wives, children, fathers, slaves, masters, etc. somehow fail to identify any distinction in the roles of Jews and Gentiles. There were certainly both groups in the Churches to whom Paul wrote. Why did he leave them (and us) in the dark over such allegedly significant differences? The whole Bible neglects to identify any such Jew/Gentile distinctions in function—and yet such distinctions are alleged (by Dr. Brown) to exist as a reality qualifying Paul’s otherwise absolute-sounding statement in Galatians 3:28. If such functional distinctions between Jews in Christ and Gentiles in Christ exist, what are they? And why does the Bible never speak of them?

Document 2

Has the Church replaced Israel?

1. Dr. Brown:

I often refer to what I believe is wrong and potentially dangerous doctrine called Replacement Theology. I refer to it as Replacement Theology, or it's more technical term Supersessionism. What does it mean?

It means that people believe that the Church has replaced Israel in God's plan of salvation, or superseded Israel in God's plan of salvation.

But folks who believe this say to me "We don't believe it the way you're representing it. You're misrepresenting it, you're misunderstanding our position. We believe in Fulfillment Theology, not Replacement Theology—that all the promises to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus, so whoever is in Jesus, Jew or Gentile, they're recipients of the promise." Or, "We believe in Expansion Theology—that God has expanded the Commonwealth of Israel".

*And in fact when I had a friendly debate with Gary DeMar about some related issues, he pointed out the use of *ekklesia*, the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is used in the New Testament a couple of times by Jesus, in Matthew 16:18, translated Church, but better-translated congregation or messianic community.*

*That's now used in the book of Acts repeatedly and the epistles, the *ekklesia*, the Church, the messianic community, the congregation, and that's the same word that's used for Old Testament Israel. So, this is just a continuation of the people of God, and it's always been the people of faith, and now unbelieving Jews drop out and believing Gentiles join in, so nothing is being replaced.*

Response:

I agree with Gary DeMar's points—and so does Paul. There is no clearer discussion of Israel in the New Testament than that which is found in Romans 11:16ff. Israel is an olive tree. This image is borrowed from Jeremiah 11:16. Individual people are branches—either attached or unattached from Israel. Attached branches are part of Israel. Unattached branches are not. Simple!

Paul says that unbelieving Jews are former branches in the tree, who have been broken off, and are no longer part of the tree (Israel), just as unbelieving Gentiles never have been.

On the other hand, believing Jews (the remnant) remain a part of the tree (Israel), and have been joined by Gentile believers, who have now become part of the tree (Israel).

Therefore, "Israel" is comprised of Jewish and Gentile believing "branches." The more common biblical word for the entity comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers is the word "*Church*"—whose constituents are identical to those of the tree and equivalent to "Israel." This is no different from the case in the Old Testament, where faithful Jews and faithful Gentiles made up the covenant nation called Israel and the *ekklesia*.

There is no "replacement" of Israel by the Church because Israel is, and has always been, the Church. What has been "replaced" are the individual unbelieving Jews, who have been cut off from Israel by their rejection of Messiah, and in their place, Gentile believers have been added. This is the simplest concept, and nothing about it can be considered controversial among Christians. To say that

Supersessionism “replaces” Israel with the Church is a complete misrepresentation. Israel *is* the Church and always was so throughout the Old Testament. Certain Jewish individuals, who have defected from Israel by rejecting their King, have been removed and replaced by certain Gentiles individuals who have believed, but the tree has not been in any sense replaced, nor changed its identity. The faithful Jews are, and have always been, part of it—just as the unfaithful have always been excluded from it. Israel is the same tree it always was, and it was never “replaced.”

2. Dr. Brown:

I appreciate those arguments, and I certainly understand those arguments. But let me explain why it's right to call it Replacement Theology, all right, and then I'll answer the question, has the Church replaced Israel?

Here's why it's right to call it Replacement Theology. There are promises that God gave to the physical descendants of Israel in the Old Testament.

Commented [DG1]:

Response:

One slight correction. God never made unconditional promises to the physical descendants of Israel, other than to those who keep His covenant. This condition was attached to all the promises given to Israel's descendants (e.g., Ex.19:5-6; Deut.28:1ff, 15ff).

3. Dr. Brown:

And even Israel in its unbelief was preserved by God, and he said, I will scatter you in my wrath, but I will regather you in my mercy.

If he regathered someone other than he scattered, then they have been replaced. If he says to the Jewish people, I will scatter you, physical Jews, descendants of Israel in my anger, and regather you in my mercy, and the regathering is a spiritual gathering of Gentiles and Jews who believe in Jesus, then those recipients, the original recipients have been replaced.

Response:

Technically, God is under no obligation to regather every individual who was scattered. With reference to the Babylonian exile, most of those scattered were never gathered back, and they died in exile. God only regathered the remnant. The rest were never gathered nor entitled to be gathered. Did God, then, fail to keep His promise? No, the promise from the beginning was that only that “*the remnant shall return*” (Isa.10:22).

The promise of regathering was not to the same individuals who were scattered (since many of them would be dead 70 years later) but to Israel as a corporate entity consisting of the faithful (Jer.23:3). God has never unconditionally promised anything that would apply to everyone of any particular race. All of God's promises are to the faithful, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles.

4. Dr. Brown:

If God says in Ezekiel 36, about the Babylonian captivity, and the end time captivity, he says there that as he scattered his people Israel, he will bring them back. Who? Physical descendants of Israel, Jewish people, even in their unbelief, he'll bring them back to the land. If it now refers to somebody else, then they have been replaced, it is Replacement Theology.

It's just another way of saying it, whether it's fulfillment or expansion. If the original recipients of the promise are not the recipients of the promise today, then they have been replaced. And it is, therefore, Replacement Theology.

Response:

If the same millions of people who were scattered in the exile were promised to be regathered, then God's promise has failed for all of them other than that small remnant (approximately 50,000) who returned with Zerubbabel. The rest of the Jews of that generation (and most generations since) died in the *diaspora* and will not be returning.

Again, God's promises were only to the remnant of Israel (Rom.9:27). These promises have always been open to ethnic Gentiles, as well, since Gentiles could always become a part of Israel—as Ruth and Rahab did. To say that God has promised either to save or to regather all the ethnic Jews would make His promise a lie, since the vast majority of the Jews have not returned and have died without being regathered.

Even if the generation of Jews that were scattered died and every one of their distant grandchildren were gathered, these descendants were not the same individuals who were scattered. The actual people who received the promise were, in that case, “replaced” by their descendants in the receiving of the fulfillment of the promise. If God can scatter one multi-ethnic people (the nation of Judah, in 586 B.C.), and gather another multi-ethnic group of people living generations later, why can't that latter group be the multi-ethnic people who are in Christ? How would that compromise God's faithfulness to His promise. In no case are the very same people regathered who were originally scattered.

5. Dr. Brown:

And that's what Paul warns against in Romans 11, to the Gentile branches, don't be arrogant, don't think the natural branches were cut off, the Jewish branches, so the Gentile branches could be grafted in as if the Gentiles were any better. No, you stand by faith, and you can be cut off too, and God will ultimately graft the Jews back into that tree.

Response:

Arrogance has nothing to do with this. I am surprised that Dr. Brown thinks this to be the motivation of those who believe what the Bible teaches. I don't know what translation Dr. Brown is using. There is no verse in scripture that says (either in the Greek or any translation I could find) that “God will ultimately graft the Jews back into that tree.”

I know that Paul wrote, of the unbelieving Jews, “*they...if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in*” (Rom.11:23). That is a big “if,” making this an unequivocally *conditional* statement. Paul says that an unbelieving Jew who has currently been cut off by unbelief, can be reconnected if he becomes a believer. Has anyone ever disputed this? However, Paul does not predict that any future Jewish person or persons will be converted. He is merely stating the terms for re-inclusion. Why would this not be obvious to any reader?

Technically, Paul has only referred to the unbelieving Jews of his own day who had been broken off for their unbelief. When he says, “*God will graft them in again,*” the only antecedent to “them” would be those ones, previously mentioned, who, in his day, had been broken off, but who might turn again to Christ. If this is to be taken as an unconditional prediction, then it miserably failed to come

true. The overwhelming majority of the Jews to whom he has alluded—namely, those who in his day had been broken off due to their unbelief—died in unbelief and were never re-attached.

Paul nowhere says that all Jews will someday be believers (he clearly did not believe this and plainly denies it in Rom.9:27), nor that they will be grafted in again. Paul mentions nothing about any Jews of a future generation, since he is not talking about eschatology, but about Israeology. This chapter is identifying those whom God regards to be Israel (since Paul had earlier said this does not include all “who are of Israel”—Rom.9:6). They are the believing branches—both Jew and Gentile.

6. Dr. Brown:

In other words, there is a promise of salvation, national salvation for ethnic Israel. Not only so, the promises of physical restoration to the land, they apply, not because of Israel's goodness, but because of God's grace.

Response:

These “other words” are not a faithful restatement of anything that Paul has said. There is no such promise. Dr. Brown cannot identify one. He has tried to do so but can only cite statements that do not predict any such things, and restate them “in other words” (that is, words not found in scripture) that they in no sense can be said to mean.

Throughout scripture, the promise of salvation is plainly declared to be only for the remnant—which are the believing Jews among us to whom this promise has been fulfilled in Christ. Being “saved” does not refer to geography, so being in the Land has nothing to do with salvation, nor with Paul’s statement. There are millions of Jews currently in the Land, but very few are saved. How does being in the Land correlate scripturally with salvation? Salvation is not related to being in the land, but in **Christ**.

7. Dr. Brown:

And I say, Ezekiel 36, is one of those passages because what's promised there, and never happened with the return from the Babylonian captivity, it is still to happen. And with the Jewish people in the land, mercy would be, will be poured out on them.

Response:

It is not true that these passages have failed to be fulfilled. Ezekiel 36 and 37 predict the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. The restoration was to have two phases. The first (36:24; 37:12) is the physical restoration of the remnant of the exiles to their land from Babylon. It is likened to dry bones assembling from their graves into physical bodies of men.

The second phase (36:26-27; 37:14) refers to the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the returned exiles, likened to breath and life coming into those resurrected bodies. The first phase occurred in 538 B.C., and in successive waves of returning exiles. The second occurred at Pentecost, almost 600 years later. This fulfilled multiple prophetic predictions about the Messiah’s Age being also the Age of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek.39:29; Joel 2:28ff; Zech.12:10; 14:8 [cf., John 7:37-39]). Both phases are now fulfilled, as Peter plainly announced (Acts 2:16-18).

8. Dr. Brown:

And Zechariah tells us that all nations will come against the Jewish Jerusalem at the end of the age. So they have to be back in the land.

Response:

This is simply not the case. Zechariah never says a word about the end of the age. Zechariah speaks of a second destruction of Jerusalem, similar in effect to what the Babylonians had accomplished previously. In Zechariah's time, Jerusalem and the temple had been rebuilt, but they also would someday be destroyed (i.e., by the Romans), as Zech.14:1ff tells us. This happened long ago—not in our future. For those interested in more lengthy exposition on this subject, I recommend my lectures on Zechariah 12-14 (at www.thenarrowpath.com, under "Verse-by-Verse").

9. Dr. Brown:

If you don't see them as being restored to the land by God, then it is some form of Replacement Theology, even if you don't like the term.

Response:

There are replacements in scripture, but not a replacement of Israel by the Church. There is a replacement of the Old Covenant with the New Covenant (Heb.8:13), of unbelieving olive branches with believing ones (Rom.11:17), and of "the Land" with "the whole earth." Abraham's Seed is to inherit the whole world (Rom.4:13), a promise of which, in the Old Covenant, and in prophecy, *eretz Yisrael* was only a token and earnest. Christ is that Seed (Gal.3:16) as well as all those who are His, whether Jew or Gentile (Gal.3:29). The land, and the rest of the earth with it, are to belong to the Messiah and His joint-heirs (Ps.2:8; 72:8-11; Matt.5:5). Since they are, biblically speaking, "Israel," there has not been a replacement of Israel with any other entity.

10. Dr. Brown:

But what about Romans 9:6, Paul says, not all Israel is Israel, is that saying Gentiles will become Israel?

Response:

The true "Israel" is the *remnant* (Rom.9:27; 11:5), to which not all Jews belong. A few verses later, Paul speaks of the same remnant as *vessels of mercy*, and the *called* ones. This remnant—these "called" ones—Paul refers to as "*not of the Jews only, but also of Gentiles*" (Rom.9:22-24). Clearly, he identifies this "Israel" with the Church.

It is amazing how some scholars want so jealously to guard the word "Israel" (one of the most flexibly-used words in scripture) to keep the Gentile believers from being included in that definition (contra. Paul, in Eph.2:11-19). Even the Old Testament did not exclude Gentile believers from "Israel"—since any Gentile proselyte was part of Israel "*like a native of the land*" (Ex.12:48)—but modern dispensationalists wish to impose this novel exclusion under the New Covenant!

There is no question whether Paul viewed saved Gentiles as "*seed of Abraham*" (Gal.3:29), as "*the circumcision*" (Phil.3:3; cf., Rom.2:26), and as "*the children of promise, as Isaac was*" (Gal.4:28). The one term which they do not wish to yield (for some reason) is "Israel"—which is generally, in scripture regarded as a synonym of these other terms!

Those who reject *Supersessionism* mostly want “Israel” to refer to the nation (which they believe was significantly restored in modern history), or a race (excluding Gentiles). However, ever since the Exodus, the nation Israel has been comprised of a racially “mixed multitude” including Gentiles (Ex.12:38). The bond that defined the nation was not that of race (since a Jew could be cut off from Israel, and a Gentile could become a proselyte), but of covenant (Ex.19:5-6).

In other words, as long as it has existed as a nation, “Israel” always has included some Gentiles, and excluded some Jews. The only thing that has changed is the covenant that now defines them, and a subsequent demographic shift in racial percentages. There is now a new covenant, rendering the first one “obsolete” (Heb.8:13). That first covenant once defined membership in “Israel,” but now a new one does.

11. Dr. Brown:

In fact, in Romans 11, he refers to them as Gentiles. He's saying within Israel, there is a remnant. There is an Israel within Israel, and then the rest of 9, 10, and 11, he talks about the nation as a whole.

Response:

Yes, Jews and Gentiles, as races, are frequently distinguished in the discussion. The relation of racial Jews to racial Gentiles in the Church was, for Paul, a primary concern in Romans and many other parts of scripture. If Paul wished to speak of these two groups individually, which he often did, what other language would one suggest that he use than the terms identifying each category?

On the other hand, Paul, at the beginning of the discussion (and throughout) distinguishes racial Israel as a category distinct from that of the covenantally-faithful chosen people (also termed “Israel”—Rom.9:6). This latter designation is the theme of Romans 9 through 11, in which he is often discussing the relation of the *racial Israel* with the latter term, referring to *remnant Israel*. He clearly says they are not the same. However, he expects every reader who can follow an argument to be able to recognize when the term is being used one way, and when it is use the other way. It really is not very confusing to anyone who wants to follow Paul’s train of thought—rather than to simply support a favorite doctrine (one which Paul did not actually teach). My verse-by-verse lectures on Romans 9 through 11 are available to clarify this, if anyone (for some reason) really needs it to be made clearer.

12. Dr. Brown:

What about Galatians 6:16, doesn't Paul refer to the Church as Israel there? Look at what he writes to the Galatians, chapter 6:16, "Now as many as live by this rule, Shalom and mercy on them and on the Israel of God." Some translations say, even on the Israel of God. But the most natural reading of the Greek is "and".

You'll find that in the great majority of translations, and in the best commentaries, you'll see that supported widely as well.

Look, why would Paul refer to the Galatians as "the Israel of God" when the whole book he's telling them, you don't need to come under the law of Moses, you don't need to be circumcised, you don't need to become Jews?

Response:

The word “Israel” as applied to God’s people today (whether we are speaking of the Jews or the Church) has nothing to do with the observance of Torah. Dr. Brown himself does not assume that “the Israel of God” (which he regards as ethnically Jewish Christians) has any obligation to keep Torah. Therefore, let us not deflect from Paul’s message, by saying that a people cannot be called “Israel” when they have already been said to be free from Torah. Dr. Brown may not agree with us about the ethnic composition of “the Israel of God,” but we all agree it has nothing to do with Torah observance obligations, so his last point was irrelevant. (We have dealt more completely with Galatians 6:16, in our previous document 1:3, cf., 8:6-8).

13. Dr. Brown:

In fact, if you try to do that, then you make null and void the grace of God, you deny His grace by doing that. So, in short, what Paul is saying there is peace and mercy on all who follow this rule. And we haven't thrown out the Jewish believers, we're not throwing them out.” And on the Israel of God,—to the Israel of God, the remnant, Jewish believers in Jesus, the Messiah.

Response:

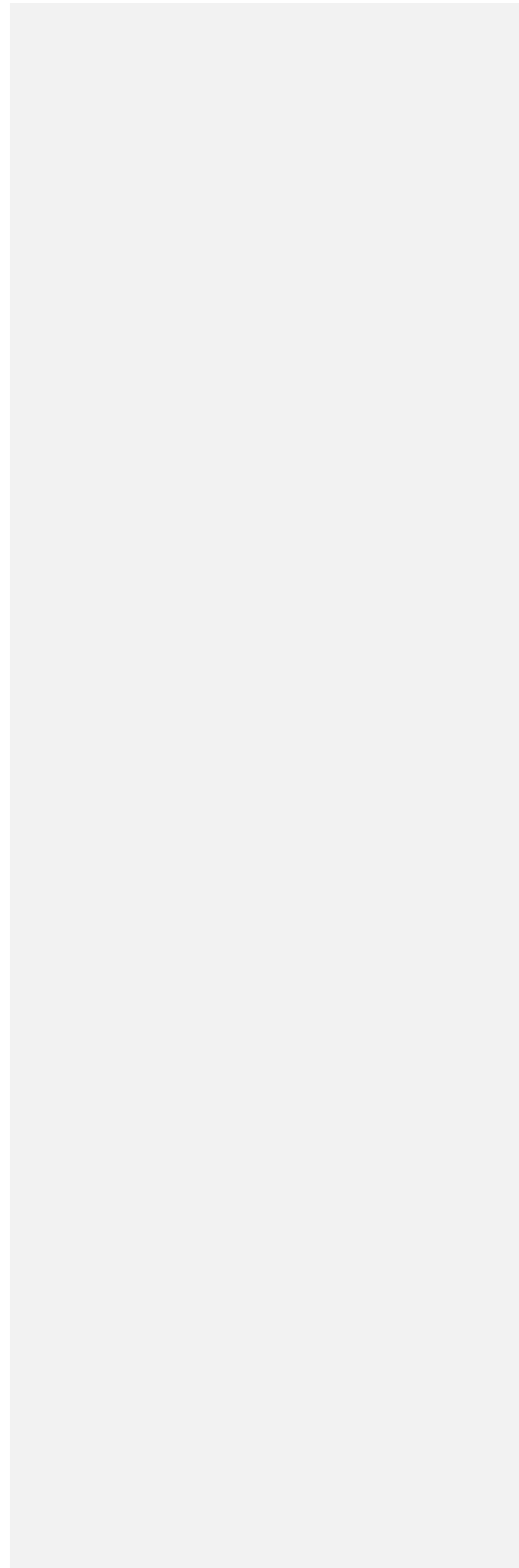
This suggests that something Paul had said earlier in the epistle would give Jewish Christians the idea that they were somehow excluded from the blessings of God, and that Paul (strangely) had to reaffirm to them that they have not been thrown out. However, Paul never said anything to give that impression. He had plainly said that Jews and Gentiles in Christ are one and are heirs according to the promise (3:26-28). He had said nothing to in any way disparage the salvation or inclusion of Jewish Christians. The suggestion that this was his concern in 6:16, seems like a very counterintuitive case of special pleading.

14. Dr. Brown:

Once again, the Church has not replaced Israel. You want to get into it in-depth, and see the fruit of Replacement Theology in the past, read my book “Our Hands Are Stained With Blood”.

Response:

It is interesting for Jewish believer, like Dr. Brown, to write “*Our Hands are Stained With Blood,*” since this is precisely what Jesus said to be true of the Jews in His time—particularly Jerusalem—and the blood-guilt, which He predicted would come upon His present generation (Matt.23:34-36). Speaking as a Jew, I suppose, Dr. Brown could say “*Our Hands are Stained With Blood,*” and could appeal to these words of Jesus, but he could not say this relative to his being a follower of Jesus. People who are genuine followers of Jesus do not shed innocent blood. “*No murderer has eternal life dwelling in him*” (1 John 3:15). The false “Church” certainly has done so, but “they” are not “we.” Our identity is not with man-made religious organizations, but only in Christ. If Dr. Brown is thinking of himself as being in solidarity with the Jewish race, then the “we” in his title can be supported by scripture. Likewise, if he is identifying with the false Church. However, if he is identifying as a follower of Christ, then he is not part of that “we” who have shed innocent blood. His title, in that case, should have been “*Their Hands Are Stained With Blood*”—since neither he nor “we” have shed any such blood.



Document 3

The Latest Form of Replacement Theology

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Let me talk to you about "Fulfillment Theology," and why it is just another manifestation of Replacement Theology.

You say, what's Replacement Theology? Replacement Theology is the notion that the promises that God gave to Israel in the Old Testament now apply to the Church in the New Testament. And that includes even the land, that includes any promises God gave Israel. God's purposes for Israel in bringing redemption to the world, anything like that, that this is now applied to the Church. The Church has replaced Israel. A technical name for it is Supersessionism, meaning that the Church has superseded Israel, all right.

Response:

To say, "the promises that God gave to Israel in the Old Testament, now apply to the Church in the New Testament" makes it sound as if some promised thing was taken away from Israel and given to someone else. To whom? Gentiles? But the early Church, for many years was exclusively Jewish. If God fulfilled the promises to the Jewish followers of Christ, how is this taking them away from Israel?

Dr. Brown insists upon calling the view he despises "Replacement Theology" precisely because he does not understand what the view teaches. He has been corrected about this numerous times, but he seems so heavily invested in his misunderstanding that he is apparently unable to release his grip on this pejorative term, despite its demonstrated inaccuracy. It is not that some new group called the Church has interloped to seize for itself the Old Covenant promises—as if Christians could claim that the Land or the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-14 are now ours!

The biblical teaching is that Christ came to Israel as the very fulfillment of the promises, and that the remnant of Israel received Him and inherited all that God has promised to them in Christ Himself. This is certainly how the Jewish believers and apostles in the New Testament saw it. Zacharias (Luke 1:68-70), Peter (Acts 2:30-31), and Paul (Acts 13:32-33) clearly say that God fulfilled the promises to the fathers in sending Jesus. They never mention an expectation that additional Old Testament promises remain to be fulfilled in their future. Christ is the fulfillment, and the Church (comprised of all faithful Jews and faithful Gentiles) is His organic Body. All that is Christ's is ours as joint-heirs (Rom.8:17). Any resentment toward Christ's Body is resentment against Christ Himself. Christ and His Body are not co-opting certain unfilled promises for themselves. Christ and His Body ARE the promised hope of Israel. One cannot deny this without denying the main theme of scripture.

The Old Testament was explicit in saying the promises were never for everyone (as if to include the apostate) in any given ethnic group, and the promises did not exclude any faithful person from any ethnic group. That was equally true in both Testaments. The hope of Israel, and the fulfillment of the promises, includes the welcoming of faithful Gentiles into Jerusalem's citizenry (Deut.32:43; Isa.2:2-3; 11:10; 54:1-3; 55:3-5; 65:1; Zech.2:4, 11; 8:22-23; Mal.1:11; Gal.4:26; Heb.12:22-23; Rev.21:9-10). If Jews wish to object to calling their own faithful remnant "the Church," they must also

object to the Septuagint's¹ usage of that term (and Stephen's usage of it in Acts 7:38). But what could possibly be the grounds for such an objection?

2. Dr. Brown:

[Supersessionism] is an erroneous view that in Church history opened the door to a flood of anti-Semitism, persecution of Jewish people, and even bloodshed, the shedding of Jewish blood, that's what Replacement Theology opened the door to.

Response:

It is absurd to say that this historic and biblical view of Israel and the Church "opened the door" for anti-Semitism. It makes as much sense to say, "If we do not teach a theology that places blacks in a position of privilege above all other races, we thereby open the way for groups like the KKK to persecute blacks." It would be difficult to find a better example of a *non-sequitur*.

There has been anti-Semitism as long as there have been Semites—long before the coming of Christianity. Will Dr. Brown suggest that Haman, Antiochus IV, or Yasser Arafat were supersessionists? There is zero connection between anti-Semitism (which is merely irrational and sinful hatred) and a Gospel that says, "Jewish people are just like anybody else: If they find Jesus, they belong to His Body. Without Him they are just like unbelievers of any race. It is only in Christ that the messianic blessings and salvation are found." This is the true affirmation of *Supersessionism*, which is just another word for what Paul referred to as "my Gospel."

Dr. Brown's statement must be understood to mean, "Unless we affirm that God favors the Jewish race over all other races (an intrinsically racist statement), everybody will have no choice but to hate and kill the Jews." But why would this be so? Most of my Christian friends are supersessionist in their beliefs (it is, after all, the teaching of Jesus and the apostles), but none of them thinks badly of the Jewish people, nor would wish to harm them. There is no logical connection between *Supersessionism* and anti-Semitism. This is a false claim that dispensationalists invented to silence their main competitor (historic Christianity) with the bogus charge of *racism*. This is indistinguishable from the disingenuous tactic used by the Black Lives Matter organization, who call us "racist," or "White Supremist," when we say, "All lives matter." The reasoning is exactly the same.

Those of Dr. Brown's persuasion like to point to John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, and even Adolph Hitler as examples of anti-Semite supersessionists. This is like saying that a Baptist minister will predictably be inclined to lynch black people, because some of the idiots in the Ku Klux Klan were Baptist ministers, or like saying that Beatles fans will kill movie actresses and other random victims, because Charles Manson did so. Such *ad hominem* attacks are logically flawed and gratuitously libelous. It diminishes the dignity and respectability of the person saying it.

It is true that Chrysostom and Luther made anti-Semitic statements (and I think Hitler also made a few!), but this had nothing to do with their theology about Israel. Anti-Semitism is Jew-hatred. It can be found in people of many religious beliefs, or of no religion at all. The only religion I know of that is officially anti-Semitic is Islam. Anti-Semitism in the West has nothing to do with one's theology. It is strictly a character defect, just like any other racism.

Nothing found in *Supersessionism* is condemnatory of Jews or provides any incentive or rationale for hating them. *Supersessionism* says nothing more than that God has fulfilled His promises to Israel

¹ The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures used commonly in the time of Christ and the New Testament writers.

in Christ. There is no insult to Jewish people in this belief—only a hopeful invitation for them, and anyone else, to receive the promises in Him.

3. Dr. Brown:

Now there were folks who hold to it today, who are not anti-Semites, who don't hate the Jews, who God forbid, God forbid, would never want to do any violence against Jewish people, yet it's a wrong theology.

Response:

Premillennialists often give the above obligatory disclaimer, even though it totally undermines their statements about the cause-and-effect relation between *Supersessionism* and anti-Semitism. But, if it obliges them to undermine their own credibility with such a disclaimer, why continue making the false accusation in the first place? They must retain this slander in their arsenal because it serves their cause (until examined) in the absence of any New Testament exegetical support for their views.

4. Dr. Brown:

What about Fulfillment Theology? Many people today say, "No, no, I'm not into Replacement Theology. I'm into 'Fulfillment Theology.'" Others have called it an "Inclusion Theology."

Response:

And with good warrant. Why not let the people who hold a viewpoint describe it in the terms that most accurately represent their position? Don't they know what they believe better than hostile critics would? Those alternative labels accurately describe the supersessionist position, whereas "*Replacement Theology*" does not—unless "replacement" is referring to the supersession of the Old Covenant by the New Covenant. If that is what it means, the label can be retained—but, in that case, no New Testament believer could possibly find anything objectionable in it.

5. Dr. Brown:

Let me go to a popular Christian Zionist website and look at how they define Fulfillment Theology. This is Reverend Malcolm Heading, and he says this, "In recent years, a new form of Replacement Theology has arrived on the Christian scene called Fulfillment Theology. Like Replacement Theology, it ends up contending that since the time of Jesus, the Jews no longer enjoy a God-given national destiny in the land of Canaan.

This time around it is not the Church that replaces Israel and takes over all her promises in Scripture, but in fact, Jesus, he fulfills in his life and redemptive work all the promises that God ever made to the Jews, even the promise that Canaan would be the everlasting possession of the Jewish people. Jesus is the promised land. This allows the proponents of this theory to distance themselves from the awful evil (as in the Apartheid State of Israel), and anti-Semitic consequences as in the Christian pogroms of history of Replacement Theology. However, they end up believing the same thing."

Response:

I have held to *Supersessionism* for at least forty years, and never was aware of any definition other than this so-called "new" one. When did this new one arise? Since Justin Martyr, and other Church fathers, held this view in the third century, I do not see how it is regarded as "new." And do we know that any other version ever existed? There are numerous ramifications of biblical *Supersessionism*—

some (labeled by dispensationalist, Craig Blaising) “punitive,” some “economic,” and others “structural,” but the basic belief is quite simply: *Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's hope*. In Him all the promises of Abraham have been fulfilled. The New Covenant has indeed superseded the Old Covenant (has any Christian held otherwise?). In terms of the New Testament witness, this statement is uncontroversial.

The critic cited above sees a difference between “Replacement Theology” (which, he says, has the Church replacing Israel), and “Fulfillment Theology” (which sees Christ as the fulfillment). To distinguish between Christ as fulfillment and the Church as fulfillment is to show a failure to understand Paul’s ecclesiology or Christology. Those of the true Church are the very “*members of Christ*” (1 Cor.6:15). The Church is “*the fulness of Him who fills all and all*” (Eph.1:22-23). The Head and the body are one organism. One cannot distinguish between Christ and His body (1 Cor.12:12) any more than one can distinguish between a person and his body (Matt.25:40). If Christ is the true Israel (as is clear in the New Testament), then so is His Body. Christ is *God's Firstborn, the Servant of Yahweh, the True Vine, the Seed of Abraham*—all titles that belonged to Old Testament Israel but are gathered up into Him who is the quintessential Israel. Dispensationalists (Dr. Brown says he is not one, but holds to dispensational views rather than to Historic Premillennial views of Israel) need to spend a little time in the light of New Testament ecclesiology, rather than groping around in the “shadows” of the Old Testament! The Day has dawned (Isa.9:1-2; 60:1-3; Luke 1:78). There is no need to stumble about in the dark.

6. Dr. Brown:

What does Reverend Heading mean? That in the end, if you say, “I believe in ‘Fulfillment Theology,’ I believe that all the promises God gave to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus.” They would say: “Galatians 3:16, that Jesus is the seed spoken of, or John 15:1 that Jesus is the true vine, meaning the true Israel. So all Jews, in Jesus, have a destiny, have promises just like anyone—any Gentile—in Jesus. In other words, promises given to the Church, but the promises given to national Israel no longer apply to national Israel.”

Response:

Relative to Dr. Brown’s statement above, it would be interesting to see someone try, from scripture, to support any alternative view to the one represented as that of “Fulfillment Theology.” Every promise to “national Israel” was conditioned upon national loyalty to the covenant (See Lev.26; Deut.28). According to Jeremiah 18:7-10, God has never made an unconditional promise to any nation. If one does not like this fact, take it up with Jeremiah—or with God, who spoke these things through him. Don’t be throwing stones at the ones who believe them.

7. Dr. Brown:

[Fulfillment Theology teaches:] When God said I'll scatter you and regather you, he's no longer going to regather them to the land.

Response:

He already did that, 2,500 years ago. No further promises concerning this were made after that time.

8. Dr. Brown:

He said that the land of Canaan is an inheritance for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their seed, after them. "No, no, it's no longer for them. It is now the whole world, and that is given to the Church."

Response:

That is certainly what Moses, the prophets, and apostles declare in unambiguous terms. Is there another holy book to which the Zionists are appealing? The "Church" is the corporate Christ—His Body. What is done to one of us, is done to Him (Matt.25:31ff; 1 Cor.6:15; 8:12; 12:12, 27). Does any professing Christian Zionist begrudge Christ His promised inheritance (Rom.4:13)?

9. Dr. Brown:

The end result [of the above statements] is the same thing, there are no national promises left for Israel.

Response:

Before anyone should object to this statement, we must ask whether Israel met the stated conditions for receiving and retaining the promises. Find the answer to that question, and then come and complain about our view that the nation has forfeited those conditional promises.

10. Dr. Brown:

And another website says this, that Galatians 3:16-17 is one of the major passages that is used by replacement theologians to support the idea that Jesus has become the greater Israel, and all those who follow Jesus are now the true Israel. And therefore, old Israel has no more national purposes in God. So there are no promises that apply to national Israel outside of Jesus. It's a serious error. It continues the error of Replacement Theology, and we'll show you why it is wrong scripturally over the course of this broadcast.

Response:

That should be interesting.

11. Dr. Brown:

But I just want to read to you from another website, and it's dealing again with this issue of fulfillment theology and Acts chapter 1. So let's just take a look.

Here, Acts 1, question is asked by my friend and colleague, Ron Cantor, 'were the disciples stupid, or will Jesus restore Israel?'

Response:

The question asks us to choose between two options: 1) the disciples were stupid; or 2) Jesus will restore the Kingdom to Israel. I think the Bible makes a strong case for both. The disciples often, in the Gospels and Acts, are described as frustratingly dull-witted, and slow to learn. Jesus occasionally expresses His exasperation with this trait in them (Matt.16:8-11; 17:17; John 14:9).

As for restoring the Kingdom to Israel—of course! That is precisely what Jesus came to do—and accomplished too! Jesus Himself reported to His Father that He had finished the work He had come to accomplish (John 17:4). Jesus announced the arrival of the Kingdom to Israel, and part of Israel entered into it (Matt.23:13)! The other part rejected it—which is the clear teaching of Romans 11:7,

25-26. Those Israelites (and Gentiles) who received Christ are currently enjoying inclusion in that Kingdom (Col.1:13). All others have been excluded, though that will change for any who may repent.

12. Dr. Brown:

You say, what's he talking about?

Well, in Acts 1, replacement theologian Dr. Gary Burge states, Acts 1:6 reads this, "Then they gathered around Jesus." They'd been with him forty days after his resurrection, "and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'"

The disciples have it exactly wrong, Dr. Burge says. Whereas Calvin said this question has as many problems as has words, Dr. Burge says that the disciples had it wrong, but that is not what Yeshua says.

Yeshua was never afraid to rebuke his disciples when they had it wrong. So, for example, he rebukes Peter and says, get behind me, Satan, but is that what he does here?

Does Jesus say to these disciples "Am I at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel, you fools, you idiots, how dumb can you be? Of course not."

Response:

The things that Jesus did not say do not themselves make any points at all for Dr. Brown's position. I believe the disciples, like most Jews of the time, had an inadequate understanding of both "the Kingdom" and "Israel." A full exposition of their mistake would have required for Him to go into matters which He had earlier said they could not yet bear to hear (John 16:12-13). They would learn soon enough, after the coming of the Spirit (John 16:13). Jesus deflects for the moment. He does mildly rebuke them for their inappropriate curiosity about times and seasons that are not theirs to know. In the meantime, Dr. Brown believes that a supersessionist Jesus would have said something like the following:

13. Dr. Brown:

[Jesus did not say to them] "I'm done with Israel."

Response:

He certainly was not. His redeemed people are Israel, and He will never be done with us.

14. Dr. Brown:

[Jesus did not say to them] "The Church has replaced Israel."

Response:

The Church has not replaced Israel, so we would not expect for Jesus to say anything like that. The Church is Israel, having passed from the "childhood" stage of the Old Covenant to its "adult" fulfillment stage in the New Covenant (Gal.4:1-7).

15. Dr. Brown:

[Jesus did not say to them] "All believers are the new Israel."

Response:

It is interesting for Dr. Brown to include this line. These Jewish disciples were indeed *“the Israel of God”* even by Dr. Brown’s definition of that phrase in Galatians 6:16. By not saying this, Jesus not only failed to affirm *Supersessionism*, but also fails to affirm Dr. Brown’s own interpretation of Galatians 6:16.

16. Dr. Brown:

[Jesus did not say to them] “I’ve become the Land”

Response:

Notably, they did not ask about the Land, so it would have been strangely off-topic for Him to address that issue.

17. Dr. Brown:

No, how stupid! No, he doesn’t say that!

Response:

These are all straw-man hypotheticals, irrelevant to the claims of *Supersessionism*. Not only did Jesus neglect to say such things, but neither would a supersessionist expect Him to say them. His failure to say these things would make Jesus a fine supersessionist—probably because He was one (Matt.21:43).

18. Dr. Brown:

This is what he says, he says, “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Now think of this, if the disciples said, “Jesus is this when we start building bombs and getting stockpiles of weapons to destroy all your enemies and start beheading the enemies of God?” Would Jesus say, “It’s not for you to know the times and seasons. God’s taking care of that, you need to be ready to witness?” No, he’d say “Of course, not. No, what are you thinking? I stand against those things. Are you crazy?”

Response:

The disciples were not asking Him anything about what they should do “at this time” (as the absurd question suggested above would be doing). They were asking when He was going to do something. He could have correctly said, “Yes, very soon. Wait for Pentecost.” Instead, He simply assured them that things will happen when God wants them to, and it is not for us to speculate about His time schedule. Ours is now, as always, to be busy about our Father’s business.

19. Dr. Brown:

He didn’t say their question was crazy, when they said are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel. He just said it’s not for you to know the times and seasons when that’s going to happen.

Response:

Correct, there was nothing in their question that was crazy. The problem was in the meaning they probably had in mind. They were almost certainly thinking about the nature of both “the Kingdom” and “Israel” differently from the manner in which they would understand these concepts in due time.

20. Dr. Brown:

And then Peter preaching, in Acts 3:19-20, [Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.] calls the Jewish people to repent that God may send the Messiah to fulfill all the promises that God gave to Israel. Oh, it's amazing how a verse can be taken and twisted completely outside of its contextual meaning.

Response:

What I find more amazing is how a verse can be quoted accurately, and then immediately to have its contents misrepresented! If one will read the verse, and then read Dr. Brown's summary of its contents, one will wonder if he perhaps quoted the wrong verse. Or did he simply ignore the words of the verse as he constructed his summary, freely adding ideas that are not mentioned in the text. Where, exactly did Peter refer to Christ coming to “fulfill all the promises that God gave to Israel” as something remaining to be fulfilled when Jesus returns? Not only did Peter not say this in this verse, but we have no record that he ever believed this.

21. Dr. Brown:

Jewish people need Jesus like everyone else. We sin like everyone else. We need mercy and forgiveness like everyone else. God has provided for us. First for the Jew, then for the Gentile, through the cross, just like judgment will come to us, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile outside of the cross.

So Jewish people need to be saved the same as everyone else. I do not believe that Jews have their own covenant with God because of which they do not need a Savior outside of just God being the Savior and etcetera. So Jewish people need Jesus like everyone else, that's number one.

Response:

To my knowledge, no Christian doubts that the Jews need a Savior like everyone else—except, maybe, John Hagee.

22. Dr. Brown:

Number two, God gave unconditional promises to the Jewish people that he will keep.

Response:

It is best not to say such things, since scripture provides no example of an unconditional promise, and God Himself unambiguously denies that any have come from Him. There are no unconditional promises to any nation (Jer.18:7-10). Can anyone name one? Have we not read Exodus 19:5-6, Leviticus 26, and Deuteronomy 28?

23. Dr. Brown:

And just as he scattered us under judgment in the Sinai covenant, he has promised to regather us. And he has regathered six million of us back to the land of Israel, not because of our goodness, but because of His goodness.

Response:

There is no reason to believe that the Jews are in the land today because of any promise of God. This was a political development brought on, largely, by the pressure exerted upon the UN from America and Britain. Both nations were influenced by dispensationalism, as even Jewish historians affirm. The ancient promises of God were that He would establish Israel as it had once been, as a theocratic, covenant nation (which He did after the exile). It was this religious covenantal status that distinguished biblical Israel from other nations, both before and after the exile. There is no such theocratic nation today. It has never come back into existence since A.D.70, and is not promised to do so. Zionists are so giddy about 1948 that they seem to miss this central fact.

Israel today is not a religious nation at all. It is a pluralistic democratic nation, like America. God never predicted a gathering of rebellious, unbelieving Jews back to the Land. He described a broken and repentant remnant coming back to the Mighty God (Isa.10:21). The "Mighty God," in Isaiah, refers to Jesus (9:6-7).

At the end of 2021, 1.9% of the population of Israel is Christian, and 77% of the Christians in Israel are Arabs. That means less than 1% of the Jews in Israel acknowledge the Messiah. Where is the evidence of the Jews returning to God? It is a dream so cherished by the dispensationalists that they seem unable to distinguish between it and reality.

It is not enough to say that many Israelis are observant Jews. So were the Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin who engineered the crucifixion of Christ and killed Stephen with their own hands. That is what a theocratic nation does to those who practice religions other than its state religion. Modern Israel has no identity defined by any covenant with God. Their existence is owed to a covenant with the pagan United Nations. They do not practice Torah (without a temple, they cannot), and they do not follow the New Covenant. This circumstance cannot be found endorsed or predicted anywhere in scripture. In 1948, a modern, secular democracy was created in the Levant—but a unique covenant nation was not. It is strange to say that God has done this, as if in fulfillment of some unidentifiable prophecy. There are many naturalistic explanations for what has occurred there, but no biblical ones.

24. Dr. Brown:

If the Church is sustained by God's grace, why can't Israel be sustained by God's grace? If God can do above and beyond what we would expect for the Church, why can't he do above and beyond what we would expect for Israel? The Sinai covenant does not annul the promises.

Response:

Well, the first question is answered by the fact that the nation of Israel and its unbelieving citizens are not under grace. God can do many things beyond what we think, but we have no reason to say He has done something if the thing has not occurred.

The promise of a special nation in a special land belongs to the Sinaitic Covenant, which is now defunct (Heb.8:13). The coming of the New Covenant has nullified the Sinaitic Covenant (Heb.8:13). The Abrahamic Covenant, on the other hand, has its fulfillment in Christ (Gal.3:16).

25. Dr. Brown:

So when Paul said God is talking about one specific offspring, was Paul claiming that the promises to Israel as a whole were nullified in that?

Response:

No, he was not saying they were nullified in that, but that they were *fulfilled* in that. Jesus Himself said plainly that He had not come to nullify or destroy the Torah and the Prophets. He has come to fulfill them—and that He must certainly have done—or else, according to His own statement, not one “jot” or “tittle” of the Law (this would have to include the sacrificial system, of course) has passed (Matt.5:17-18).

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were, collectively, referred to as Abraham’s seed, as the Servant of Yahweh, as the vine or vineyard, as Yahweh’s firstborn, etc. Israel defected, by perennially worshiping false gods, by killing her prophets, and by getting rid (as they hoped!) of the Messiah.

Therefore, since Israel refused to fulfill their covenant mission (defined in all these terms), God sent His own Right Arm to do so. In Him, the lines of Adam, Shem, Abraham, Judah and David were reduced into one faithful Seed, one Servant, one True Vine, and one Firstborn Heir. In Him, the ancient promises have been fulfilled at Pentecost and the era that was then inaugurated—the principal promises of significance being justification by faith, and the giving of the Holy Spirit to the people of God (Gal.3:6-7, 14).

Paul explains, however, that, even as Israel (Jacob, an individual man) became a corporate entity (a nation), so also has Christ, as the New Israel, become a corporate entity (Christ the Head, and the Church, His Body). This Body is comprised of the faithful remnant of Israel, who have been joined, as the prophets foresaw, by a multitude of believing Gentiles (e.g., Isaiah 11:10; 49:21-22; 54:54:1-3). This was true in Paul’s day, and is no less true today. In the Old System, one’s personal covenant status was determined by being “in Israel.” Since Pentecost, one’s covenant status is defined by being “in Christ.” The man Israel, in the Old Covenant, became a corporate people and a nation. Christ, in the New Covenant has become a corporate people and a nation, in which there is no Jew or Gentile, but all are one, and all (like Jesus Himself) have become Abraham’s seed “in Christ” (Gal.3:27-29).

26. Dr. Brown:

No, in the very next verse, he says the Sinai covenant, which comes 430 years after the promise can’t nullify the promise.

Response:

I have just described that no theological camp known to me ever said that the promise was nullified. In fact, *Supersessionism* is the only theology that affirms that God has been faithful to fulfill His promises in Christ. The dispensational and Zionist premillennialists simply hope that He may someday fulfill His promises (in the manner they imagine), since they refuse to allow the New Testament to define what fulfillment looks like. They prefer to interpret the promises as the Jews did and do, over whose mind (Paul tells us) there was and remains a veil preventing their understanding of the Old Testament (2 Cor.3:14-16). To my mind, it seems somehow disloyal for a Christian to adopt the benighted eschatology of the unfaithful Jews who crucified Christ instead of that which Christ and the apostles taught.

27. Dr. Brown:

And elsewhere he tells us in Romans 11 that the promises apply to the nation as a whole.

Response:

That would be interesting to see. Might we invite Dr. Brown to please point out the verse in Romans 11 that speaks of promises applying to the whole nation? I see no evidence of that in that chapter, or any other. Even in the Old Testament, individual unbelieving Jews were always said to be “cut off” from the people by their rejection of the terms of God’s covenant. There never was an unconditional promise or covenant that applied to unbelievers—whether inside or outside racial Israel.

In particular, Romans 11 never speaks of the whole Jewish race in any verse. When Paul speaks of Jews or Israel as a racial category, in contrast to Gentiles, he is always speaking of some Jews — never mentioning the nation or race “as a whole.” Paul begins by pointing out that some Jews (the unbelieving ones) have been excluded from God’s favor, while some Jews (the remnant), like Paul himself, have not been cast out. He goes on to prove that this has always been the case, throughout history, from the time of Abraham. He gives a specific example from the days of Elijah and says that things stand the same, also, “at this present time” (Rom.11:1-5). Paul then continues to talk about the distinction between the remnant and his apostate brethren, and to quote Old Testament verses that predicted this state of affairs (vv.6-10). So far, no reference to Israel as a nation, only two groups within the Jewish race. Nor has Paul made any reference to the future, but only to “this present time.”

Some want Paul to start talking about eschatology at around v.11, but there is no exegetical case that can make him accommodate them. He continues to talk about the remnant (himself included) as the agency through which the world (including other Jews and Gentiles) can be reached for Christ (vv.11-15).

Then comes the famous olive tree illustration that unambiguously establishes the point he has been making. The tree is Israel (cf., Jer.11:16). The faithful Jewish remnant, the believing branches, remain firmly attached, while the Jews rejecting Christ are like branches removed. Paul never predicts that these removed branches will return to the tree or embrace Christ. If he had predicted that they would, he would have lied, because most of the unbelieving Jews of whom he was speaking never did come to faith. Instead, most died in their unbelief.

Paul always argued that their return was a possibility, if they would become believers in Christ (this is saying nothing about them that is not equally true of Gentiles). Paul points out that Gentile believers have, in fact, been added to the tree (Israel), which is now made up of believing Jewish and believing Gentile “branches.” This entity, though a historic image of Israel, is obviously synonymous with the Church (vv.16-24). Still, up to this point in the discussion, we have encountered no reference to promises that have been made to any “nation as a whole.” Paul has only spoken of believers and unbelievers—among both Jews and Gentiles. No complete nation has been cut off, and no complete nation is predicted to come to faith.

Paul then restates the same teaching, switching from the metaphor of the olive tree (though it is the same point). He says that part of the racial Israel was hardened (meaning, of course, part of Israel, like Paul himself, was not hardened—see v.7), and the large influx of the Gentiles has poured in (as the prophets foretold). Paul then affirms, “in this way [by the addition of the Gentiles to the faithful remnant of Israel] all Israel will be saved”—that is, not just the Jewish branches of Israel but the Gentile branches as well (v.26).

There is no eschatology mentioned in this verse. The word “thus” (v.26) speaks of how God has brought salvation to “all Israel”—both the Jewish and the Gentile branches of the tree. Of course, it would be bizarre to say that Paul here is predicting all of racial Israel will be saved, since he had already plainly denied this prospect, citing Isaiah as his proof, back in 9:27. There he asserts that only the remnant of ethnic Israel will be saved. He would not contradict himself here.

That Paul is discussing the Church as the multi-ethnic people of God is confirmed by his reference to the “mystery” (v.25), which, for Paul, is a technical term for the revelation that Jews and Gentiles belong to one body in Christ (e.g., Eph.3:3-6).

Even if Paul believed (he did not) that every Jew would eventually be saved, he made no reference to Israel “as a nation,” as Dr. Brown suggests. Where he distinguishes “Israel” from the “Gentiles,” Paul is speaking racially, not politically of a nation. No one can find in the New Testament the slightest hint of a future nation in the former holy land. To be “saved” has nothing to do with being in a geographical place. Being saved refers to being “in Christ.”

This has brought us through vv.25-27. We have discussed verses 28-29 in an earlier response. Paul’s closing remarks (vv.30-36) likewise say nothing about promises to be fulfilled to a national entity. He only mentions that the Jews had the first opportunity to benefit the Gentiles, and that the Church (largely Gentile in composition) now has the opportunity to benefit the Jews with the Gospel—all of which presents such a marvelous display of the wisdom and justice of God that Paul cannot help but rhapsodize over it.

Again, there is no reference to God’s fulfilling any future promises to national Israel in Romans 11, nor any other New Testament passage, so I wonder where it is that Dr. Brown claims to find this idea in the chapter.

28. Dr. Brown:

So God's full purposes for Israel, reach their apex, reach their fullness in Jesus. Yes, but God's promises to the nation of Israel remain because God is not a liar.

Response:

This is a strange compromise. The first statement is a purely New Testament understanding of the truth of the Gospel—which is agreeable with *Supersessionism*, but not with Zionism. The second statement, as I have just argued, is pure fabrication, and seems to flatly contradict the first statement. If “God’s purposes for Israel” have reached their high point 2,000 years ago, as Dr. Brown acknowledges, any future promised development must be regarded a “low point” in God’s dealings.

29. Dr. Brown:

Well, they say, “Paul didn't know that Zera or Sperma was collective, and therefore, he misinterpreted and said, it's just one that it's speaking of, namely Jesus.” Well, Paul understood Hebrew well, and Paul understood Greek perfectly well, and he knew exactly what he was doing. Here, look at this, Romans 4:13, Paul speaks about the promise to Abraham and his offspring ‘Sperma’, in Greek, all right. In 4:16, he says, “That is why it depends on faith, that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring,” all his Sperma, all his Zera. He understands it's a collective singular.

And then he says, this 4:18, “In hope, Abraham believed against hope that he should become the father of many ‘nations’ as he had been told, so shall your ‘offspring’ be.”

He understood it wasn't just speaking about one person. But he's probably focusing on one verse, in particular, about the promise of blessing through the offspring of Abraham, and he's saying that promise comes through Jesus. But does that then supplant all the other promises God gave Israel? No, of course not, that's not Paul's point.

Response:

Paul recognizes that Abraham's "seed" includes many people—namely, all who are Christ's (Gal.3:29). However, this is not in contrast to there being only one "Seed," because Paul says all who are in Christ are "one" (Gal.3:28). Christ is one and many, just as a husband and wife are two, but also one. A marriage is a corporate unity, so is a body. Christ is the one and only Seed. Our "seed" status is strictly by virtue of being "in Him"—along with all who are "in Him." Paul's distinctive teaching of the Body of Christ (found in no other authors, but conceptually agreeable with John 15:1-6), and his favorite, distinctive term "in Christ," lie at the root of his argument about the Seed of Abraham, which cannot be understood without reference to that larger paradigm.

Paul distinctly acknowledges, in Galatians 3:16, 27-29, the singular and the corporate aspects of the word "Seed" or "Offspring." A man who has a son can speak of that son as his offspring. All the parts of his son's body are that man's offspring. If the parts of his body were living individuals, as with Christ's Body, then they would, collectively, all be that man's offspring. However, those who are not part of his body would not be his offspring.

Galatians 3 does note the collective, plurality of Abraham's "Seed," but Paul does not include unbelieving Jews in that category: *"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham"* (v.7)—as Jesus also said (John 8:39, 44).

30. Dr. Brown:

When the psalmist says in Psalm 105:8-11 that God gave the land of Canaan as inheritance to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for a thousand generations as a lasting covenant, this has nothing to do with the Sinai covenant.

Response:

The Land is promised to Abraham's seed (viz., according to Paul's unambiguous definitions, to Christ and those who are in Him) and is a token of the greater "land" which the Seed will inherit—namely, the world (Rom.4:13). As for a possession in the Levant, this was given to the nation of Israel, provisionally, as a token of the larger future inheritance. It was not a permanent, unconditional possession, and was always in danger of being forfeited by Israel's disobedience. They could lose the Land permanently (see: Lev.18:24-28; 25:23; Deut.28:15, 21, 46, 63).

Under the terms of the Old Covenant (which is now obsolete and replaced by the New Covenant—Heb.8:13), once driven from their land, they could be restored to it and it to them upon the condition of their repentance (Lev.26:40ff). After the Babylonian exile, Yahweh made good on this promise because the first covenant (of which such national promises were a part) still stood in Zerubbabel's time. That covenant no longer pertains, and, under the New Covenant, all inheritance rights belong to the Messiah and those "in Him" (Ps.2:8; Matt.5:5; Rom.4:13; Gal.4:30-31).

The promise made to Abraham was to him and His Seed (Gal.3:16), not to the nation of Israel. As Paul points out (in Gal.3:17) the promise was made 430 years before a nation of Israel even existed, and that nation is not named in the Abrahamic promise. When God created that nation at Mt. Sinai, the nation was given the conditional opportunity to enjoy the Abrahamic promises. Their rejection

of God's terms caused Yahweh (as He said it would) to seek "another people" (Deut.32:21), who, by their faithfulness, would qualify as children of Abraham and heirs of the promise.

The inheritance referenced in Psalm 105 has to do with Abraham and his seed—a category defined by the faith of Abraham (Gal.3:7). This promise not only predated the creation of the nation of Israel by hundreds of years (Gal.3:17), but also has outlived the nation of Israel by thousands of years. The nation of Israel was defined by the Sinaitic Covenant and occupied only a sliver of 1,500 years (out of the past 6,000) of human history. They could have been God's covenant nation forever if they had been obedient. This is what God offered them, but they were not sufficiently interested to keep the simple conditions upon which it was offered.

God gives nothing, including land, to any nation without conditions for its permanence (Jer.18:7-10). God also "gave" Mount Seir to Edom (Josh.24:4). Many lands were "given" by Yahweh to Nebuchadnezzar, and the same lands were later given to the Medes and Persians (Dan.2:37-38; 5:28). These lands are not in the possession of these nations today—and will not be in the future. How is it thought to be different with the nation Israel?

The conditions of Yahweh's covenant were violated by Israel. God had warned them that such violation would bring the curses of the covenant upon them, which (according to Moses) would remain on them "forever" (Deut.28:45-46). Yahweh's promises and His threats are both reliable. The blessings and curses were associated with the covenant related to Israel, collectively as a nation (Deut.28:1), unrelated to the fates of individuals of any particular race. Of course, individual Jews and Gentiles alike can, and do, escape this curse, in Christ (Gal.3:13).

31. Dr. Brown:

Paul writes in Galatians 4 that the Sinai covenant, which is 430 years after the promise to Abraham, can't annul the promise.

Response:

Precisely. The Sinaitic Covenant cannot annul the Promise. The reverse is true. The fulfillment of the Promise in Christ has nullified the Sinaitic Covenant (Heb.8:13). It is the supersessionists who affirm this biblical point, not the Zionists.

32. Dr. Brown:

And not only so, but Paul says in Romans 9 that the promises belong to the children of Israel.

Response:

Romans 9:4 does indeed mention God having made the promises to Israel, meaning the remnant. He also says that those promises have not failed to come true (v.6)—which is another way of saying that they have, in fact, come true. In v.8, he clarifies that the inheritance status does not pertain to the "children according to the flesh," but to "the children of promise." In Galatians 4:21ff, Paul identifies these two groups, respectively, with unbelieving Israel, and with believers in the Messiah. The latter are the children of promise, and the inheritors of the promised blessings. According to Paul, the former are not entitled to inherit the promises made to Abraham (Gal.4:30-31).

Paul speaks, as did Isaiah and Jeremiah, of the nation of Israel as a single lump of clay from which God has made two separate categories ("vessels"). The one is made for dishonor and wrath, and the other for mercy and glory. The first consists of the apostate Jews, and the second is the believing

remnant. Significantly, Paul says of this remnant that they are *“not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles”* (v.24).

In v.27, Paul emphasizes that racial Israel possesses no national or racial claim to the promises—and that only the remnant will be saved. It is hard to know how someone can read Romans 9-11 and get everything just the opposite of what Paul clearly writes! In God’s economy, humans are not divided along racial lines, but upon faith lines. Thus, believing Gentiles are regarded by Him above unbelieving Jews (Isa.56:3-8; Matt.8:10-12), just as believing Jews are regarded more highly than unbelieving Gentiles.

33. Dr. Brown:

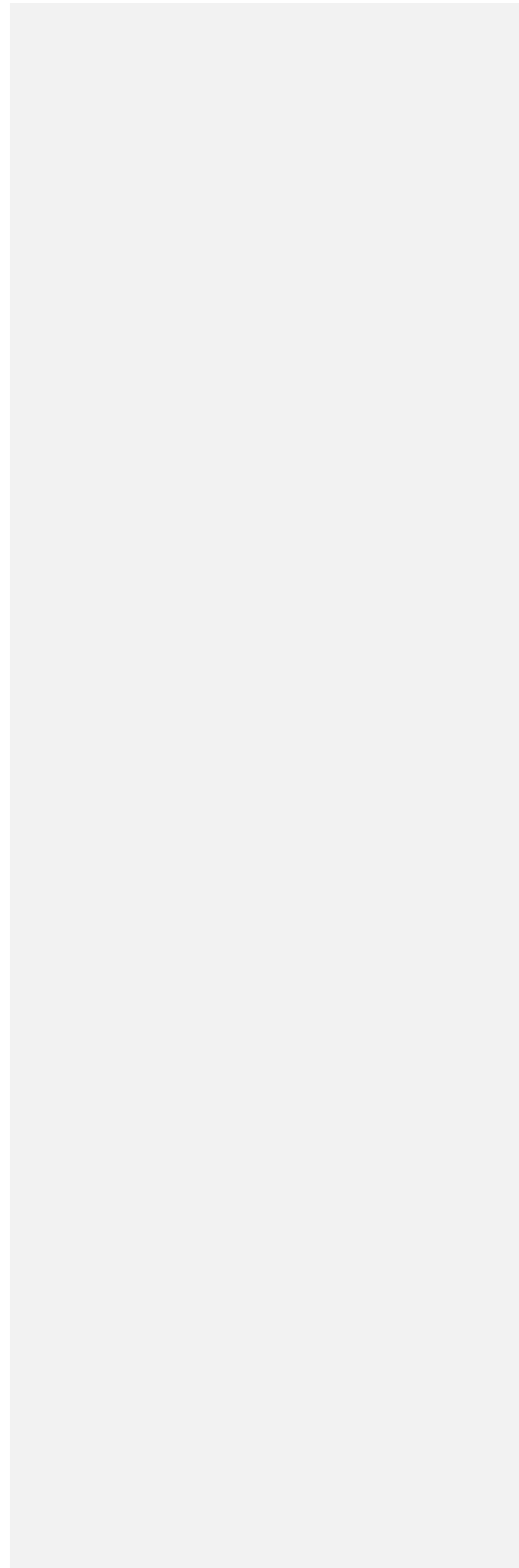
But that does not undo the rest of the promises that God has given to Israel. His very integrity depends on it. He is not a liar, nor does he engage in double-talk.

Response:

Are we to then conclude that God’s integrity hangs on His agreeing with this particular, modern doctrine, which His own word refutes? Paul says that the promises have not failed to come true (Rom.9:6) so His integrity is intact. He has fulfilled His word. Integrity requires nothing else of Him.

His special promises, made to the nation of Israel, were made at Sinai—which is where and when Israel became a nation. The promises were clearly stated at the time to be conditional to the nation, and the nation clearly violated every condition (see, e.g., Psalm 106). There exists no covenant nation today that includes unbelievers, because all unbelievers are excluded from the covenant (see Psalm 50:16-17).

The faithful remnant of the Jews (i.e., Christ’s disciples), and the Gentiles that have joined them in their faith in Messiah, are now the “chosen race,” the “holy nation, the “kingdom of priests” (1 Peter 2:9-10; Rev.5:10). There is only one such race, nation, and kingdom.



Document 4

Should We Be Concerned About Israel?

1. Dr. Brown:

Should a Christian be a Zionist? That does not mean should a Christian support every last thing Israel does. It does not mean "Is Israel above critics?" It means, "Should a Christian believe that God has brought the Jewish people back to the land, and be standing in solidarity with the Jewish people back in the land?"

It does not mean that Israel believes in Jesus the Messiah. It does not mean that Israel walks worthy in every way of God's grace. It means, "Should we recognize that God has brought the Jewish people back to the land?" and "Should we stand with Israel?"

Response:

There is today a nation in the territory of ancient Palestine, called "Israel"—just as there was between A.D.30 (when Christ was crucified) and A.D.70, (when the nation Israel ceased to exist). It was an unbelieving nation that rejected the Messiah. Did the Christian Church in the first century bless or support the political state of Israel? I find no evidence that they maintained any solidarity with that government that crucified Christ and stoned Stephen.

Speaking of that State of Israel which crucified Christ and persecuted the Church, Paul said that the wrath of God had "*come upon them to the uttermost*" (1 Thess.2:16). Jesus said that it was their failure to receive Him that caused God to send their enemies (the Romans) against them to end their existence as a nation (Luke 19:41-44). How is the unbelieving, Christ-rejecting nation that is in that place today—or the appropriate Christian attitude toward it—any different today?

According to the prophets, the return of the exiles from Babylon (the only return and restoration mentioned in scripture) was to be occasioned and accompanied by their returning to God. Since the passing of the Old Covenant, the only way one can return to God is through Jesus and the New Covenant (i.e., by becoming a Christian and a member of the Church).

In scripture, the regathering was to be a consequence of (or essentially simultaneous with) their return to God (See Leviticus 26:40-43; Deut.4:29-31; 30:1-3; Isa.10:21; Jer.31:18-21; 33:11; Hos.5:15-6:1). This occurred among the remnant, beginning in 538 B.C., but has not subsequently happened (nor been predicted to happen) again. The nation has now existed for over 75 years—going on three generations. They did not return to God prior, nor subsequently, to returning to the Land. There has been no turning to Christ (nor even to the Jewish religion) by the Israelis in general. Nothing about the situation in the Middle East reflects fulfillment of any biblical predictions.

Simply to get all the Jews into one place would not represent a restoration of their covenant nation. They became a nation under the terms of the Sinaitic Covenant in Moses' day. That covenant has been made defunct by the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prediction of the New Covenant God would make with Israel and Judah. This New Covenant was established by Christ 2,000 years ago. If we are to embrace Zionism, which covenant shall we say forms the basis of the present nation Israel? Certainly not Sinai (which is defunct), nor the New Covenant (which Israel rejects, and which makes no reference to the land promise anyway). Is it the Abrahamic? No, because the heirs of those promises are said to be those who are Christ's (Gal.3:29), which is not the case with over 98% of the

population of Israel. We are seeing no indicators of any restoration of a covenant nation in that ancient land. Can someone point one out, or is this only in the imagination of Zionists?

2. Dr. Brown:

There is great controversy over this, especially with the younger generation. Those who are my age and older, it's just been kind of in our spiritual blood. When I got saved, the Church where I got saved, they knew that God had brought Israel back to the land. They knew that God had regathered the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Response:

Yes, dispensational ideas were infused along with the actual Gospel with many American Christians of the baby-boomer generation, which includes Dr. Brown and me. Having such prejudices infused "in our blood" does create barriers for us to read the scriptures without the imposition of that artificial grid. I was of the same generation. I taught the same doctrines and my "blood" was certainly in that same condition. However, I determined to read the scriptures for myself, apart from the imposed dispensational glasses, and when, as Paul said, the heart is turned to the Lord "*the veil is removed*" (2 Cor.3:16). I suppose this transition might have been more difficult for me if I had been a Hebrew Christian but I have known many Jewish believers who have forsaken the dispensational paradigm, and who see the scriptures clearly now.

3. Dr. Brown:

As I travel around the world, in many nations, I've seen supernatural support for Israel written in people's hearts. I'm the first Jew they've ever met, but they have been praying for Israel for decades. Perhaps, it was the revelation of the horrors of the Holocaust, two-thirds of all Jews in Europe wiped-out, 90 percent of the Jews in Poland wiped-out. Think of it: 3 million out of 3.3 million Jews in Poland wiped-out.

The idea in just a few years, for the first time in 2000 years, the Jewish people would be regathered with a national homeland in Israel, that would have seemed completely impossible. So, the regathering, the reconstituting of Israel was clearly a miracle. And the attack of the surrounding nations to wipe them out was clearly an ugly act to destroy. And maybe there was more sympathy for Israel. Maybe there was more recognition that God himself had acted.

Response:

The recognition of the horrors of the holocaust was indeed a great incentive to pity the Jews and to favor a return to their homeland (an analogue today might be sympathy toward the displaced innocents of the Uyghurs in China). Even before the Shoah, many Christians and non-Christians alike felt strongly favorable to the secular Zionist agenda of Theodor Hertzl, and the British premillennialist Balfour.

A combination of Israeli terrorism (by groups like *Irgun*, led by Menachem Begin) and dispensational pressure on American presidents did more than anything else to bring about the results of 1948. More than any other man, the dispensationalist teacher, William E. Blackstone, inspired the movement of Zionism among Christians, and lobbied many U.S. Presidents to endorse the creation of a Jewish State. President Harry Truman finally succumbed to this pressure. Truman even admitted that he did so because he had few Arab, and many Zionist, constituents. Truman even

pressured certain voting nations in the U.N. to vote for the establishment of Israel, upon the threat of withholding American aid to those countries if they did not do so.

The leader of American Zionism at the time, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Louis Brandeis, said that dispensationalist Blackstone was the true "Father of Zionism," since his labors predated even those of Hertzl, the generally acknowledged founder. In 1919 and 1920, the secular American Zionist Conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles singled out Rev. Blackstone for special honor for his outstanding contribution to the Zionist Movement. One could argue that the 1948 recognition of Israel by the United Nations was the work of Harry Truman, whose decisions were largely influenced by American dispensationalists.

Of course, those who think that the Bible predicted this can argue that God used these forces to establish the modern State of Israel. Those who notice that no scripture ever predicted this, however, are free to suggest that political and religious pressures might very well have brought the same result, with or without divine agency.

4. Dr. Brown:

But as the years have gone on, you have a younger generation that's grown up with the Jewish people there. There is no miracle, it seems, behind it. They weren't there during the 6-day war. They didn't see the horrors that Israel lived through over the years, and God's deliverance that you could say was miraculous.

Response:

Many nations have had their seemingly miraculous military victories. Afghanistan, drove out Russian occupiers, and the Ukrainians have had more victories over the same invaders than anyone could have predicted. God may be in these victories, but no biblical prophecy could be appealed to in order to confirm this.

It is true that Israel has had several significant victories over what seemed to be overwhelming opposition. Not all were evidently miraculous. Israel's having a highly organized, U.S.-backed military power against a disorganized, inferior campaign by multiple, disjointed Arab groups, might have some bearing upon the victories of the Six-Day War. The wonderful rescue at Entebbe, on the other hand, does seem almost miraculous. Then again, the seagulls that came in answer to the Mormons' prayers, saving them from the locust plague that would have wiped them out in Salt Lake, also has the marks of a miraculous intervention. World War II included quite a few amazing outcomes that look, in retrospect, like God's doing. God's kindness toward the innocent or helpless does not necessarily speak of His endorsement of their religion or of their country (see Matt.5:45; Luke 6:35).

5. Dr. Brown:

And they see the suffering of the Palestinians, and they don't look at the larger picture. They see a wall up in Bethlehem causing hardship for Christians who live there, and they think, why is Israel being so mean? They don't realize that Israel put up a fence, over 90 percent of it is fenced, and a little bit is a wall, to keep murderers out, to keep snipers and murderers out, you have a wall to keep the snipers out. They haven't looked at the larger narrative, and they say, well, Israel is being cruel, or Israel is being unfair. Israel has all the weaponry. Now, Israel is the mighty Goliath, and the Palestinians are the poor David.

We are just Christians who have a heart for justice, and they see suffering. They want to do what's right. So how do we sort this out biblically? And is God calling believers to take a stand?

Response:

I agree that Christians must stand for justice. This will cause us to favor Israel in certain conflicts and, at other times, to be critical of Israel. This is no different from our assessment of the actions of any other nations. It has everything to do with scriptural priorities—namely, the obligation to pursue justice—but little to do with biblical prophecy.

6. Dr. Brown:

Jeremiah 31, starting in verse 31, "The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. This is the covenant that I will make with the house 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. Then no longer will a man teach his neighbor, a man his brother saying, "Know the Lord!" because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord."

Notice that the new covenant was not made with the Gentiles, with the nations. It was made with Israel and Judah. And it is through Israel and Judah that the new covenant goes to the whole world.

Response:

Yes, this is precisely what happened. But once it went out "to the whole world," what was the result? Obviously, the global Church. That is the story told in the Book of Acts, and all subsequent history. Remember, the nations of Israel and Judah have always included faithful ethnic Gentiles.

7. Dr. Brown:

Perhaps, someone reading this would say, "Well, if it's a new covenant, maybe it's a new people also. If it is a new covenant, maybe God has new covenant partners. If it is a new covenant, maybe God's through with the old people because they broke my covenant."

Response:

The New Covenant, as promised, was made with the same people with whom He had made the first covenant, *viz.*, the faithful of Israel and Judah. As the first covenant was made in a feast attended by the representative elders of Israel (Ex.24:9-11), so also Christ made the New Covenant at a feast with the representative elders of Israel's faithful remnant (1 Cor.11:24-25). We call that council the Last Supper. There, Jesus entered into the New Covenant by the ritual of drinking ceremonial wine, which Jesus said was "the New Covenant in my blood." Thus, Jeremiah and Michael Brown are correct about the original recipients of this covenant. It was made with Israel's remnant (the only "Israel" to whom any covenants pertain—Rom.9:6).

However, in the Old Covenant, some Jews were excluded by their disobedience (e.g., Ps.50:16) while some Gentiles (e.g., Rahab and Ruth) were included for their faith. The same is true with the New Covenant. Some (most) Jews have been excluded by their own disobedience to Messiah, while some (many) Gentiles have been included due to their faithfulness to Him and the terms of the Covenant. What is so hard to understand about that? The Jews and Gentiles who are included in the covenant have become Christ's Body, the *ekklesia*. The Jews and Gentiles who are excluded are (as Hosea 1:9 puts it) "*not My people*." In this respect, the constituents of the Old Covenant Israel and New Covenant Israel are defined identically—by faithfulness to the Covenant

8. Dr. Brown:

One of the great errors in Church history was when Christian leaders began to teach God is finished with Israel. There are believers today who hold that, although individual Jews like me can be saved, there are no national promises for Israel. That when Israel rejected the Messiah, God rejected Israel forever; that when the temple was destroyed, when Jesus cursed the fig tree, God was cursing Israel, and saying I'm done with you forever.

Response:

It would be hard to find a better interpretation of the cursing of the fig tree, or the destruction of the temple, than the explanation that Dr. Brown is rejecting. How does he interpret these things—especially Christ's statement that the fig tree will never bear fruit again? What would "finished with Israel" mean? With the political nation or the distinct ethnicity?

9. Dr. Brown:

Is that what scripture teaches? Notice Jeremiah 31:35. It is almost as if God anticipated this objection. He anticipated the idea that people would say God is finished with Israel.

Verse 35, this is what the Lord says, "He who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decreases the moon and stars to shine by night; who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar, the Lord Almighty is his name. Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the Lord, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me?"

What if they sin? What if they are guilty? What if they come under God's wrath? Verse 37, this is what the Lord says, "Only if the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the Lord."

Response:

If v.35 is taken to mean the natural nation of Israel, then the prophecy was a false one. Israel did, indeed, "cease to be a nation" more than once after the prophecy was given. The first was in 586 B.C., from which circumstances it was later restored to its former national status in covenant with God. Then, it ceased to be a nation again, in A.D.70—from which it has never been reestablished as anything but a secular, political democracy established by a secular tribunal unmindful of any divine covenant.

We can call this "a nation," but it is not a restoration of the nation of Israel as constituted under God's theocratic rule, under the Old Testament. Nothing in Israel today defines it as the same nation that was destroyed in A.D.70. It is not the same people (the group originally scattered have all since died), nor the same religion. They are not established as a monarchy under the Scion of David (whom they deliberately renounce). The only similarity is that lots of Jewish people lived in that part of the world before, and lots of Jewish people live in that part of the world now. The same could have often been said of Alexandria, Poland, Russia and New York City. Getting lots of Jews into one territory is hardly a restoration of the covenant nation that had been destroyed. Some Jewish people have lived in Palestine through the past many centuries but most Jewish people do not live there, as has been the case since 586 B.C. In what sense is the Modern State of Israel a "restoration" of what any prophet would recognize as Israel?

So, the prophecy of Jeremiah has failed twice in the past, if referring to the political state of Israel. However, the *remnant* of Israel, in Christ, has never ceased to be a nation before God, as Peter points out (1 Pet.2:9). If we do not wish for Jeremiah to be proven a false prophet, we ought to recognize the

fulfillment of his prophecy in Christ and His followers, in whom “Israel” remains a theocratic nation in the form of the *ekklesia*. Thus, before the old nation was destroyed, the new one was founded, maintaining the integrity of God’s promise in Jeremiah.

There is no problem with v.37 since no theological camp has ever said that God would “*reject all the descendants of Israel.*” Paul is at pains to prove that God has done no such thing, since he himself was an Israelite of the faithful remnant (Rom.11:1-2). Bringing these Israelites into the Messiah’s New Covenant community is not “rejecting” them!

10. Dr. Brown:

God is saying no matter what his Jewish people do, the people of Israel, even though they may be disciplined, even though we may be scattered and exiled, no matter what we do, he will preserve us as a people.

Response:

Well, Jeremiah never actually said anything like that...unless “*as a people*” refers to the redeemed in Christ. It is true that this “people” will never be rendered extinct.

11. Dr. Brown:

I find it striking that many Christians understand God deals with us based on grace. Yes, he holds us responsible. Yes, he calls us to obedience, but how many times have we fallen? How many times have we fallen short of the goal? How many times has the Church failed in different ways? God deals with us with his grace, and somehow we have a problem extending that same grace to Israel.

Response:

I don’t. If it were left up to me, they would all be saved right now by the same grace as I am. Paul felt the same way (Rom.9:1). Grace, however, is given to the humble, who repent and believe in Christ. There are no promises to any others. Grace comes to one “through faith” (Eph.2:8-9).

I not only believe in grace, but in God keeping His promises (which include His threats). He made both promises and threats to Israel, and they chose to cash in on the threats, not the promises. God fulfilled those threats. This has nothing to do with any lack of grace. God still extends grace to any Jew (or Gentile) who trusts in Christ. No shortage of grace there! If any Jew is deprived of grace, it is not because of “Replacement Theology,” but because of his or her refusal to come to the throne of grace—out of disdain for the One they would find reigning there.

As for the threats of the Old Covenant (as with the promises), those were made to the nation, as a political entity. Individual Jews may become part of the saved remnant at any time. Those who are not of the remnant are not saved and can claim no promises. In fact, God said that the curses would be “*upon you, for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever*” (Deut.28:46). Are those who argue for unconditional “forever” promises to Israel also willing to acknowledge the “forever” curses? If not, why not?

If someone wants to argue that there will be a reprieve from the national curses before “forever” runs out, then is that person not likewise obliged to say that the “forever” promises might have an end? Of course, neither the promises nor the curses are unconditionally “forever” for individuals. Many individual Jews have forfeited their national blessings, choosing instead a life of sin, and many Jews have escaped the national curses by coming to Christ. The blessings and curses of Deuteronomy are not applied by Moses to individuals, but to the nation as a whole (see Deut.28:1). The forever

curse may indeed have come upon the nation (as God promised it would!), but every Jew and Gentile makes his or her own choice between personal blessing (salvation) or cursing (rejection). The blessing, however, is now and ever will be only found in Christ. Those who are in Christ are also the Church.

12. Dr. Brown:

Somehow, we forget that this is not about ethnic superiority. It's not about the Jewish people being better than anyone else. It's not about the Jewish people being superior. It's about God's faithfulness. This is a matter of the integrity of God. If God cannot keep his promises to Israel, you have no confidence he can keep his promises to you, the Church.

Response:

No one holding my position would believe for a moment that God fails to keep His promises. Remember, the supersessionists are the ones who affirm that He truly *has fulfilled them* in accordance to His faithfulness. Those, like Dr. Brown, who cannot say this have no proof of God's faithfulness in the matter, since nothing like what they believe to be promised has happened—or may ever happen. It would be the futurist who stands in danger of seeing God as being unfaithful in the fulfillment of His promises. Their wishful thinking serves them as their only confidence in God really keeping what they imagine to be His promises.

On the other hand, God's faithfulness guarantees both the fulfillment of His promises and of His threats. Supersessionists believe that God has made good on His promises and on His threats. Michael Brown's camp acknowledges neither—and adamantly denies the latter.

13. Dr. Brown:

Let me give you a few reasons why you should stand with Israel. And in standing with Israel, I believe you will also pursue justice for the Palestinians. It's not either/or. It's both/and. Number one, you are siding with God when you do so.

Response:

So, siding with people that the Bible calls God's "enemies" is siding with God (Rom.11:28)? I am pretty sure David disagreed, when he wrote:

Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
(Psalm 139:21-22)

I personally do not hate anybody, whether Jew or Gentile. However, David seemed to feel he was expressing his loyalty to Yahweh in saying of Yahweh's enemies, "*I count them my enemies.*" He seemed to be taking the position: *The enemy of my Friend is my enemy.* While I have no animus personally against God's enemies, I would have a hard time defining my palpable support of His enemies as "siding with God." I am pretty sure that Paul shared David's sentiments when he wrote: "*If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.*" (1 Cor.16:22). This particular curse would apply to the nation of Israel, as presently constituted, along with all other unbelievers.

14. Dr. Brown:

Take a look with me in Jeremiah 30. This promise has been fulfilled many a time in Jewish history. Verse 10, "So do not fear, O Jacob, my servant. Do not be dismayed, O Israel," declares the Lord. I will surely save you out of a distant place; your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob again will have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid. I am with you, and will save you," declares the Lord. Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you. I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you, but only with justice. I will not let you go entirely unpunished."

Response:

Dr. Brown says that this promise has been fulfilled many times in history. As far as I know it only requires one fulfillment, which came, of course, in the return of the repentant remnant from Babylon, in 538 B.C. Yet the impression I have gotten is that Dr. Brown has been arguing for a future fulfillment. On what basis is belief in a second fulfillment (or many historical fulfillments) warranted? And how can God's faithfulness hang on an additional future fulfillment?

15. Dr. Brown:

Now, go to Jeremiah 31, the next chapter, Jeremiah 31:10—"Hear the word of the Lord, O nations. Proclaim it in distant coastlands. He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd." You say "Well, that happened when they were scattered in Babylonian exile over 2500 years ago and then were regathered by God, a generation or two after Jeremiah". Oh, it applies to that, but many still remained in exile. It was not fulfilled then. It is ongoing fulfillment to this very day.

Response:

No prophesy predicts that every Jew will be returned from exile, whether in 538 B.C. or at any other time. Many died in exile, and many do so every day. Those who have died in exile (the majority of the Jews of the *diaspora* throughout history) were never gathered back to the Land, and never will be, so far as anyone can predict.

Dr. Brown can suggest that, at the best, all the "surviving" Jews in exile will be regathered—but surviving at what point in time? Those surviving at this moment have no divine promise to be among the living even a year from now—so they cannot claim such a promise.

Where does the prophet specify "every living Jew"? The return in 538 B.C. did not involve every Jew living at the time the prediction was made—nor at the time of the prediction's fulfillment. Where is there anything promising that every future Jew will return?

Even the dispensational teachers usually admit that the promised regathering need not include every living Jew. They usually suggest that it will be the "remnant" that returns (as the prophets themselves say)—but they believe the remnant will be a very large percentage. Though I have not asked Dr. Brown, my guess is that he would agree with that statement.

A "remnant" might refer to 97%—or to 3%. If the latter, why would we say this did not happen in 538 B.C. and subsequently? Though no one really knows, it is thought possible that as much as a third of world Jewry may have lived in Palestine in the time of Christ. This means that the remnant that had returned there by that time consisted of, perhaps, 33%. Would that qualify as a "remnant" having returned? One-out-of-three would seem to qualify as a remnant, if Zechariah 13:8 were allowed to define the term. If so, why say the prophecies remained unfulfilled?

Of course, ultimately, Paul saw the prophecies about the return of the remnant as fulfilled in the remnant's return to God—Jews like himself, who had turned to Christ. This is certainly his point in the citation of Isaiah 10:22, in Romans 9:27. Isaiah himself had said that the returning remnant would be coming to *"the Mighty God"* (10:20), a term found only one other place, i.e., in Isaiah's previous chapter, as a reference to Christ (9:7). Isaiah and Paul, therefore, both saw the return of Israel to their true "land" as fulfilled in those Jews who came to Christ. Thus, Paul indicated that the promises to the remnant have their fulfillment in his own time: *"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace"* (Rom.11:5).

Paul sees the return of the remnant of Israel to the Mighty God as being fulfilled in the conversion of Jews like himself *"at the present time."* Like the rest of the New Testament writers, Paul never speaks in any of his writings of a geographical return of exiled Jews to the promised land.

16. Dr. Brown:

So let me lay out something really simple for you. It's so simple that no one has yet been able to rebut it. I've put it out on my national radio show, where people can listen and call in, no one has rebutted it. I've put it out in debates, where people have come in trained and ready to refute me, they have not been able to rebut it. I've posted it on social media where hundreds of thousands or millions can see it, and no one's been able to rebut it. All right, simple principle. We know from scripture if God blesses, no one can curse, right. If he curses, no one can bless. We know if he opens a door, no one can shut it. If he shuts a door, no one can open it. If he smites, no one can heal. If he heals, no one can smite. That's who he is.

Response:

If God wills to gather all the Jews into Israel, this certainly has not occurred, and many have died in exile, because man can indeed resist God (Luke 7:30; Acts 7:51). On the other hand, if God wishes to prevent Jews from moving to Israel, He can forcibly prevent them. The question is, has God sought to regather the exiles? If so, He has failed in His attempt for three-quarters of a century. Some Jews have returned there. We have no reason to believe that God wished to prevent them. Jesus indicated that, when it comes to people worshipping God, geography counts for nothing (John 4:21, 24).

Nothing in biblical theology (i.e., *Supersessionism*) would predict that random Jews, who have settled all over the world, would be specifically prevented from settling in Palestine as well as other places. Nothing about this modern migration counteracts the curse that Moses said would (and which did) come upon them. The overwhelming majority of Jews alive today have never relocated to the "holy land," and most of those who have done so still living under the *anathema* of 1 Corinthians 16:22. Besides, a Jew living in Israel is not necessarily better off than is a Jew living in Miami. In what sense can it be said that modern events indicate a reversal of the Mosaic curse?

17. Dr. Brown:

Some claim as many as a million Jews were killed in the war against Rome from AD 66 to 74. So, God scattered us in his anger. If God scattered us, nobody can regather us. If God scattered us, we do not have the power as Jewish people to decide to overthrow God.

Well, he scattered us, but we're going back. Now that would mean that his judgment is meaningless, that would mean he says, okay, I'm going to close a door, and no one can open. You say, well, I'll just push it open. I'm going to open the door no one can close, but we'll just close it. If God scattered the Jewish people in his anger, then how did we get regathered?

You cannot just say it's political. You cannot just say it's the United Nations. You cannot just say it's human sympathy after the Holocaust. If God scattered us, we don't have the power to ungather ourselves. That's the first thing. We recognize this is the hand of God. And on a totally natural level, we can see that it's miraculous.

Response:

First, I have looked in vain for a scriptural proverb or rule that says “what God has scattered no man can regather,” though the closest wording to this I could find was, “*he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad*” (Matt.12:30). This sounds as if Jesus is saying that some people do indeed scatter what He is attempting to gather. They shouldn't, but they do anyway.

Then, there is that other place where Jesus said that he had tried to “gather” the children of Jerusalem like a hen gathers her chicks, but that they had thwarted His efforts (Matt.23:37). This sounds like people can do pretty much what they want to against God's will. Another case is where it says that Pharisees rejected God's will for them by not being baptized (Luke 7:30). I also found “*What God has joined together, let not man separate*” (Matt.19:6)—again suggesting that man *must not* do something, but implying man's ability to do so (why forbid one to do what is the impossible?).

In Revelation, Jesus said that He “*opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no man opens*” (Rev.3:7). This has a particular application. It is not an absolute statement about all situations. We may safely assume that Jesus, in His lifetime, must have shut some physical doors that other people afterward opened. Christ's statement has specific meaning to the Philadelphian Christians, who were apparently being opposed by the local synagogue (v.9), which sought to debar them believers from God's household and Kingdom. Jesus is saying that it is He, not man, who opens or shuts all access to His Kingdom—and that, in their case, He had “*set before [them] and open door, and no one can shut it*” (v.8). Any application of this statement to the situation of the Jewish diaspora would be entirely speculative, since it would be, in principle, different from His meaning in the context.

Second, how were the Jews gathered, if it was not of God?

We have previously mentioned the political and religious pressures that brought about the declaration of the United Nations making Israel a modern State. Many political developments, whether regarding Israel or other nations, have come about through similar forces throughout history. But what of Dr. Brown's claim that a people God scattered could never regather without God “un-scattering” them? I think the argument rests on more than one false premise:

- 1) That nations or groups of people cannot eventually recover from the immediate effects of God's judgments, without His having revoked their curse;
- 2) That the gathering of Jews in the Middle East today is in any sense a reversal of whatever curses may have rested upon them, according to Deuteronomy 28;
- 3) That anything now occurring in the Levant was predicted to happen in scripture.

In the first place, we know that God completely judged and destroyed Egypt, in the time of Moses. Yet that nation eventually recovered (not to its original prestige, certainly)—which parallels what has happened to Israel in modern times—and has endured for millennia since then.

The modern Jews in Israel may be like their predecessors in the northern kingdom, who said, after they were judged, “*The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; The sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars*” (Isa.9:10). This was a rebellious

determination to ignore or thwart God's judgment. Is there a parallel today? If they rebuild the rebellious temple again it will certainly be nothing blessed by God (it will be a rejection of the finality of the sacrifice of Christ). Will they do this? They might, but it will not signal a reversal of God's rejection of that sacrificial system.

Over sixty percent of the Jews who were scattered throughout the world before 1948 are still scattered, over 75 years later. They have not regathered and there is thus, at this present time, no restoration of the Jewish population that God scattered. It is not even close. Even if God does not prevent a portion of Jewry from migrating back to the land of their ancestors, they have not regained their former power or glory, just as Egypt has not. Both nations were devastated by God, and both have tried to patch things back together—but the glory has departed—for both. This may be one reason why Jerusalem is "*spiritually called...Egypt*" (Rev.11:8).

In the second place, if every Jew in the world were to find his or her way back to the modern State of Israel, this would not be a restoration of the nation, unless that nation, like Israel of old, were to be a temple-based, Judaic, religious nation following the Mosaic covenant. It would then actually look a lot like historical Israel (which God rejected and obliterated in A.D.70). That, in itself, would not be evidence that their rejection had been reversed, or they had neutralized God's judgment. Every Jew could be in Israel today and still be under God's judgment.

After all, Israel existed as a nation for forty years after their rejection of Christ. They continued with business as usual, even when God had rejected them and was about to destroy their entire political and religious system. Their ethno-religious status had changed to "obsolete" prior to its having "vanished away" (Heb.8:13). If Israel today were to become everything it was before its destruction in A.D.70, it would still be under God's curse while rejecting the Messiah, as it was then! To restore temple worship would be nothing but a deliberate slap in the face of God, who had destroyed it previously due to His Son's death having procured its obsolescence. Restoration of animal sacrifices would be tantamount to thumbing their noses at the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

In the third place, I await any Zionist to show me a prophecy in which the gathering of Jews to their land in unbelief is predicted. Even the dispensational scholars (historically keen on all prophecies about Israel) denied that Israel would return to the land in unbelief—until, of course, the pagan United Nation created the modern unbelieving State of Israel. After this, dispensationalists all say the prophets foretold the regathering of Israel in unbelief (talk about current events leading exegesis by the nose!).

18. Dr. Brown:

Some centuries ago, there was a European ruler who asked his court, give him a proof of the existence of God in one word. And one of his advisers said, 'that's easy, sir, the Jew'. That was before the modern state of Israel. Our existence alone is a miracle. No people has been scattered from his homeland for 2000 years and yet retained a national identity. Some of you are Italian-Americans or Irish-Americans or things like that, and you have different ethnic backgrounds. Over a period of decades, you merge more and more with the American people. Centuries later, you don't have that heritage and backgrounds. Asian-Americans given enough time will just be Americans. If we had 2000 years from now, African Americans would just be Americans. In other words, no matter what your ethnicity or culture, over a period of time, long enough out of a homeland, you lose that identity.

Response:

Similarly, Jews who live long in America usually become Americans. America is a melting pot to be sure. However, racial and religious groups often last for centuries without being in their ancestors' lands. Black people who have been out of Africa for centuries retain their racial distinctives, and could continue to do so for millennia, unless they intermarry heavily with people of other ethnicities (the same is true of *diaspora* Jews). Many who regard themselves today as Jews have a significant racial Gentile heritage.

Being a "Jew" in modern times means only that one does not have a Gentile mother. Even a Jewish mother may only have only one Jewish parent (her mother)—and only one Jewish grandparent (her maternal grandmother), meaning her "Jewish" children may be 7/8 Gentile in ancestry. This same principle can go back any number of generations so that a modern Jew's ancestry might easily go back through a string of Jewish mothers (and Gentile fathers) several generations, making the modern "Jew" (in such a hypothetical case) less than 1% Jewish by blood. This result would be reached in six or seven generations (the math is simple enough).

We don't know how often this has happened, but there is also the phenomenon of a female Gentile proselyte (now regarded as Jewish) to be counted as the "Jewish mother" and she may be the only "Jew" in a lineage where the offspring for generations afterward are called "Jews," though the only "Jew" in the lineage had no Jewish ancestors at all. How often has this happened? Maybe not often, but it is a real possibility, and we would not always know whether or not it had happened, but the number cannot be imagined to be zero. According to the genealogy services, I am >1% Jewish in terms of genetics, which is about as much as some who could be self-identified as Jews. Does that mean my existence in the world is a miracle, and that I am to be gathered back to the Land?

Today, Jewish identity is more a matter of culture than of race. Two Jewish sisters may both marry Gentile men. In one case, the man converts to his wife's Judaism; in the other case, the wife converts to her husband's Catholicism. The children of the two couples have equal amounts of Jewish and Gentile "blood," but one family's children are raised worshipping on Sabbath, observing Passover and Hanukah, while their cousins worship on Sundays, celebrating Christmas and Easter. The families are identical in racial composition, but one is a "Jewish family," while the other is a "Catholic family" and regarded as Gentile. The difference in these identities has everything to do with culture and religion, and nothing to do with race. Culture is easily transmitted through the generations without respect to geographical homes. The Gypsies in Europe have been without a settled homeland for many centuries, but their survival as an ethnicity and a culture hardly requires a miraculous explanation.

It may be true that people of Jewish culture and religion have maintained this identity away from their homeland for millennia, but this would be because they happen to have been forced from their homeland millennia ago. In all lands, some Jews retained their (anti-Christian) religion and culture jealously (though not so much their racial purity). To them this identifies them, distinguishing them from other peoples. It would be folly to predict that a similar number of Hindus expelled from India, or Muslims expelled from Arabia for many centuries would fail to maintain their Hindu or Muslim identities in their foreign domicile nations.

If they did, they might choose to see this as a miracle, though there would be no reason anyone else would be forced to see it in this way. The homeland of Christianity is also Israel, but most Christians have not been to Israel over the past 2,000 years. Christians also survive as a religious identity without a homeland (1 Pet. 2:11). We can scripturally view this preservation as a miracle,

but no one can reasonably argue that Christianity would necessarily have been abandoned by all its adherents—miracle or no.

19. Dr. Brown:

No one has ever been scattered from their homeland for 2000 years, retained their identity, and then come back to their homeland. And then revived an ancient language that hadn't been spoken. It's never happened before. Who's behind it? God.

Response:

Dr. Brown answered his own question as if it was merely a rhetorical one. It is not. It may be that God that did it. It may also be that God is behind the present surge of Islamic fervor and conversions to that religion by many in Christian lands...but I doubt it. Why would God advance an anti-Christian religion, nation or movement? That is what Islam and Judaism both are—anti-Christian systems of belief and culture. This we must affirm from the biblical definition of Antichrist: *"Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son"* (1 John 2:22). So, Dr. Brown is confident that the promotion of a system that the Bible identifies as "Antichrist" is a miraculous act of God? Each is entitled to his own opinion, I suppose, but this suggestion raises reasonable questions as to whether God is on the side of Christ or Antichrist. *"What accord has Christ with Belial?"*

20. Dr. Brown:

That's step one. We recognize God has regathered the Jewish people, he promised in his word. Therefore, we're standing with God. There were people who were praying for this decades before the Jewish people were regathered because they saw it in scripture, and they said it has to happen.

Response:

Where? Scripture passages, please.

21. Dr. Brown:

You say, "But Israel didn't deserve it. Under the law, the Sinai Covenant, God said if you disobey, I'll curse you, and I'll scatter you, and if you repent, I'll bring you back. Well, they didn't repent. Israel was founded by atheists and communists, and most orthodox Jews/religious Jews were against it."

Israel was founded as a secular nation. To this day, 75 percent of the nation is fairly secular. It doesn't really live by the sabbath commandments and things like that. Israel has immorality and drug problems like everybody else. True.

Response:

Dr. Brown has made an excellent case for my position—though I never say Israel "didn't deserve it" since that would be irrelevant. What is it they didn't deserve—to have a European tribunal confiscate the homes previously held by others, and to put Israel's name on their title in place of the former inhabitants? Yes, I think we can reasonably say Israel didn't deserve this. The Palestinians also did not deserve what happened to them. There were injustices all around—which God hates.

We must acknowledge that life isn't fair. It wasn't exactly fair to the Native Americans tribes that they lost their territories to European settlers. We did not deserve their land. However, no one can

turn the clock back now, undoing all the injustices and returning all lands to their original, or most recent, inhabitants.

If someone says, “Israel did not deserve to be brought back under God’s blessing, because they were not repentant,” the best way to answer that is, “True, but then, they have not been brought back under God’s blessing. They are still as lost in their new location as they were in the lands they left. They reside there under the curse of 1 Cor.16:22—just as the unbelieving Gentiles do.”

22. Dr. Brown:

Ezekiel 36, just as it happened in the Babylonian exile, it happened in our day. God says in Ezekiel 36, I am not doing this because you’re righteous. I am not doing this because of your goodness. I am doing it because my name is being blasphemed. I am doing this for my glory and for my purposes.

And I’m going to bring you back into the land. And when I bring you back in the land, I’m going to sprinkle clean water on you there. I’m going to cleanse you once you’re back in the land.

And since Israel has been regathered, there’s been a steady flow and a steady increase of Jews coming to faith in Jesus, Yeshua. And what was just a handful before is now thousands in the land of Israel. God is sprinkling clean water back on our people.

Response:

The Israeli population is 1.9% Christian, and over 70% of that number are not ethnic Jews, but Arabs. Of the miniscule number of Messianic Jews in Israel today, how many were converted there, and how many moved there as believers from other countries? I don’t know the figures, but the answer would be “many.” Dr. Brown says these numbers represent a “steady flow” of Jewish conversions over the past 75+ years. Seems more like a drip, drip, drip. I would imagine that Jewish conversions to Christianity take place at a higher rate in America than in Israel (there is less persecution for those who do so in America than there is in Israel). Arguably, when it comes to their relationship with God, the Jews are better off living here than there.

As I pointed out above, the scriptures predict the Jews returning to their land (i.e., in 538 B.C.) only after their repentance (Deut.30:1-10)—and as a consequence of it. Ezekiel 36 nowhere suggests that those who would return would be unbelievers. The cleansing and giving of His Spirit that He promises is fulfilled in the cross and Pentecost. This did not happen in 538 B.C., but those who returned with Zerubbabel were those who had a heart for God. Those who returned from that captivity (and no other return is predicted in scripture) did so because they were those “whose spirits God had moved” (Ezra 1:5). These were clearly the repentant remnant, and this happened before they returned to the land with Zerubbabel. There is no record of anyone who returned in unbelief—nor does the Bible predict that any would do so. God’s promise is that those to whom God will say, “This is my people” will be the same ones who say, “Yahweh is my God” (Zech.13:9; Hos.2:23).

23. Dr. Brown:

Number two, when you stand with Israel, you stand against the devil. When we look at scripture, we’ll see in a moment. We will see that the whole world is ultimately going to come against Jerusalem, either every nation or a coalition of nations will ultimately come against Jerusalem and come against the Jews in Jerusalem. And, in fact, God will bring them there in judgment. There will be, and there is, world hostility towards Jerusalem.

Response:

This is assuming that Zechariah 12 is about the end times. This was not the approach Jesus and the apostles took toward Zechariah 12-14 (which is one protracted prophecy). The verses at the end of chapter 11, immediately preceding chapter 12, are applied to Judas' betrayal of Jesus, in Matthew 26:15; 27:3-10. Jesus Himself identified the fulfillment of Zech.13:7 with the scattering of the disciples at His arrest (Matt.26:31). The opening of a fountain for cleansing (Zech.13:1), and the outpouring of the Spirit (Zech.12:10) seem to be identified with the piercing of Jesus' side and the outpouring at Pentecost (John 19:34-37; 7:37-39). In John 7:37-39, we find an allusion to Zech.14:8. Chapter 14:2 is best identified with the destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in A.D.70 (cf., Luke 19:43-44). All in all, we find many applications of this prophecy to the salvation and judgment events of the first century, and no New Testament writer unambiguously applying any part of this prophecy to the last days.

24. Dr. Brown:

And when you look at the history of anti-Semitism, the history of Jew-hatred, there's only one real explanation for it. The devil hates the Jews and wants to wipe the Jewish people out.

Response:

No doubt he would be happy to do so. Those who hold animus against a certain race often hate them all because of some injury they have sustained at the hands of one or a few of that race. Jewish prophets, saints and apostles (to say nothing of Christ!) have caused Satan no end of trouble in the past. If anyone can be expected to bear a grudge, it would be the devil. On the other hand, he also seems to be pretty nasty to a great many other groups of people (Uyghurs and Kurds come immediately to mind)—who have caused him a lot less historical trouble than have the Jews.

25. Dr. Brown:

Zechariah 12, and we'll go to some New Testament verses in a moment. "A prophecy: The word of the Lord concerning Israel. The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person, declares: "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves."

Response:

These verses can more easily be applied to the efforts to destroy the Jews and their religion by such adversaries as Haman and Antiochus Epiphanes in the years and centuries following the return of the exiles, and prior to the events of Christ's earthly ministry, described in the later verses in Zechariah 12 and 13. There is nothing in the passage pointing specifically to an eschatological future.

Dr. Brown asserts that the only reason for anti-Semitism is the devil's hatred for the Jews. The verses quoted to support this do not mention the devil at all. However, I am pretty sure that all racism of any kind is devilish and irrational. Does this mean that the devil has special hatred for the African races, since they have arguably been enslaved and oppressed by others to a degree that would rival the Jews throughout history? It seems that the devil hates pretty much everybody. He may have special hatred for those whom God loves specially and plans to use for His purposes—which means, in Zechariah's day, the Jews, but in ours, the Church.

26. Dr. Brown:

So, notice this, Jerusalem is the capital of Israel here in this text. It is inhabited by Jewish people. What's pictured in Zechariah 12 and Zechariah 14 has not yet taken place. It is not yet happened. So this is a future verse.

Response:

We would be better served by a demonstration that this has not taken place than by a mere assertion. Dr. Brown asserts that Zechariah 12 and 14 are about the future, even though the chapter falling between them (i.e., 13) is known to have a fulfillment in the Garden of Gethsemane (Zech.13:7; Mark 14:27). I have already provided multiple New Testament applications of this prophecy to the first century. Where might one find biblical evidence of its application to the 21st century?

27. Dr. Brown:

In this book, 'Our Hands Are Stained With Blood' I have one chapter called The Diabolical Plan, where I discuss the history of Jew-hatred of anti-Semitism. I wrote this book out of a tremendous burden, a spiritual agony of heart. I wrote the book in 1992. It has never gone out of print since then. It has been translated into more languages than any book that I've written.

But in the chapter on anti-Semitism, I talk about the nature of Jew hatred. Now you can be critical of Israel without being an anti-Semite. You can disagree with Israeli policies without being a Jew-hater. But when you demonize Israel, when you demonize the Jewish people, when you believe the lies and the charges against them, then you're guilty of anti-Semitism.

Response:

First, congratulations to Dr. Brown on the success of his book.

Second, I think every true Christian would agree that all racism, including anti-Semitism (as well as specially favoring Jews, or any race, above others), is devilish, and must be condemned. I am willing to believe Dr. Brown's assertion that anti-Semitism may be the most longstanding racism that can be documented, which is a terrible thing. Shame on the racists! Shame on Satan!

Third, it is good that Dr. Brown acknowledges that to be critical of Israel is not the same as anti-Semitism, since all the prophets, Christ, and the apostles were quite critical of Israel. I heard Dennis Prager say that one who is not a Zionist is *de facto* anti-Semitic. This seems to go too far, since anti-Semitism has to do with racial hatred, while many who oppose Zionism (including many Jews) seem to have no racial animus at all, but are merely concerned (like the prophets) about matters of justice. Even *Supersessionism* is not anti-Israel—though it provides no biblical rationale for Zionism.

One might postulate that a reason the Jews have suffered more racial hatred against them could be that they have been minority populations in more lands than has anyone else in history (except Christians, of course). Native peoples often are suspicious of, and spread rumors about, countercultural coteries of foreigners in their midst who tend to keep to themselves. This may be especially so if those minorities regard the locals as unclean and keep their own strange cultural traditions rather than adopting those of the local population. I am not saying that this justifies any persecutions, but it explains why many foreign minorities and refugees are often distrusted in the new domicile nations where they settle. Jews have historically been in these circumstances in more countries, for more centuries than have other minorities. This does not take anything away from the demonic nature of the persecution they have suffered, but it also means that the data would not demand the conclusion that they are uniquely the target of Satan.

28. Dr. Brown:

So, I look at anti-Semitism in history, and I notice that it's the longest hatred in history. You can trace it back in sources outside of the Bible over 2300 years, where Jews as Jews are singled out for hatred. And within the Bible, you can trace it back longer. It's the longest hatred. Why? It's the most widespread hatred. How so? Well, I've read literature by white supremacists. I've read literature by black supremacists. And what they have in common is they admire Hitler, and they hate the Jews. How's that?

Response:

I am not sure, but I hardly see what it has to do with biblical interpretation, which is where we need to be focused when discussing theological controversies. We cannot always say who is in the right or who has God's favor merely by identifying how many scoundrels come against them. Many corrupt rulers (including America's) are hostile toward Putin but this does not make him a martyr for God's cause.

God predicted that such things as these would happen to the disobedient Israelites when scattered throughout the world (Lev.26:36-39; Deut.28:28-34, 37, 65-67)—the reading of which things is enough to make any sensitive heart cringe and moan! Moses does not mention the devil specifically as involved in this (though I do not doubt his involvement), but, since God knew these things would happen before He chose to scatter them, we must ask, "Who is it that has chosen to subject them to such things?"

And who is responsible? Surely those who were warned of such things and failed to heed the warnings—and often still fail to heed them. If my son, against my warnings, hangs out with the wrong element and is killed in gang-related violence, whoever killed him is guilty—but he alone is responsible for his having voluntarily strayed into the path of danger. It is tragic in any case but responsibility for outcomes must be reasonably distributed.

29. Dr. Brown:

Why? It's a demonic irrational hatred because Satan knows if he can wipe out the Jewish people, then he makes God into a liar. And because Jesus, the Messiah, came through the Jewish people, there is a purpose that God has for Israel to this day.

Response:

That last sentence is a *non-sequitur*. The fact that God fulfilled His promises in Jesus does not logically predict for God making additional promises extending beyond the fulfillment of the earlier ones. Those of Dr. Brown's position seem to think the salvation of the remnant of Israel in the Messiah to be a relatively small matter compared to the prospect of receiving a slice of Mediterranean oceanfront property! What a devaluing of what God has provided in Christ! Paul could not stop rhapsodizing about what he (a Jew) had received "*in Christ*" (e.g., Eph.1). Yet we are told that God has let Israel down unless they also receive a piece of real estate the size of New Jersey (something for which Paul the Jew never showed the slightest interest)!

The superstitious notion that this plot of earth is somehow sacred to God above all other real estate seems to ignore the Bible's larger vision: "*The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein*" (Ps.24:1). Paul said that the Seed of Abraham is to inherit "*the world*" (Rom.4:13). What is this sentimental obsession with obtaining an inheritance with such a tiny geographical footprint?

Don't get me wrong. I understand the desire to have a sovereign state in which one's people are not gratuitously persecuted by the government or indigenous populations. In today's political environment this desire is very reasonable, and I am favorable to Israel (or any other people) being left alone in a land of their own, without foreign molestation (in fact, I wish the same for Palestinians, and people of all lands). However, apart from matters of politics and temporal security, it is a mistake to interpret the possession of a tiny piece of property in terms of God's eternal purposes for His people.

The fact that Jesus came through the Jewish people, fulfilling the Law and the Prophets is the best proof that God is not a liar. Nothing else is required of God to prove His faithfulness to keep His promises and threats. What has happened to Israel since A.D. 70 is, tragically, just what God said would happen to them if they turned from the covenant. This, too, proves that God is not a liar.

30. Dr. Brown:

And if Satan can wipe out the Jewish people, then he makes God into a liar and stops his final purposes.

Response:

Again, there is no biblical connection between modern Israel and the vindication of God's faithful character. He has faithfully saved the remnant and faithfully destroyed the apostate nation—both of which He promised to do. *"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...And it shall be, that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess"* (Deut.28:15, 63). The promise is clear and the fulfillment unmistakable.

There is no possibility that the Jewish race will ever become completely extinct because the remnant, which God promised to preserve, is among us in the Body of Christ (Dr. Brown himself being among them). Strangely, Dr. Brown seems to indicate that the eventual disappearance of every atheistic, Buddhist, New Age, or Satanist Jew, would mean that God has failed to preserve a remnant, and that He has then broken His promise not to *"cast off all the seed of Israel"* (Jer.31:37). Why is Dr. Brown so enamored with the geographical movements of the apostate Jews, and so unimpressed with God's faithfulness in preserving their faithful remnant in the Messiah, as He promised He would?

31. Dr. Brown:

Number three, we as followers of Jesus are repaying a debt to Israel. We are repaying a debt. Romans 11:11, this was a great mystery. Israel, the chosen people as a nation, rejects the Messiah when he comes. The Gentiles, the outcasts, the outsiders, they receive him. What happened to God's promises to restore and bless Israel? Did the promises fail? What happened? It would be as if Jesus returns and the Church rejects him and the Muslims receive him.

Response:

I am not sure the meaning of this last analogy. Is Dr. Brown comparing the Jews to the Church and the Gentiles to the Muslims? I am not seeing the connection.

Would this not, in such a case, make the so-called "church," which rejects Christ, no longer the Church—and Muslims, who accept Him, no longer Muslims, but Christians? The latter would then be

identified as the Church, would they not? This kind of thing happens all the time. Alleged Christians forsake Christ and are no longer part of His Body. Also, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, and atheists are often converted, embrace Christ, and become part of His Body. Dr. Brown speaks as if this would be an absurdity. Yet, Church members and pastors daily depart from the faith, and thousands of Muslims (often through dreams of Christ) embrace the Messiah. This is neither complicated nor absurd.

What Paul describes is the phenomenon of Gentiles embracing the Messiah, just as the faithful remnant of the Jews have done. It's not really that mysterious. Although it may not have been made entirely clear in the Old Testament, there were plenty of predictions of the Gentiles seeing the Messiah's light and of Israel's rejection of it (e.g., Paul cites Isaiah 65:1-2, to this effect, in Romans 10:20-21).

32. Dr. Brown:

Well, what happened? It was a great mystery. We're used to it because it's history as it was unfolding. It was a shock. So Paul takes three chapters in Romans, that's how big and important it was. Romans 9, 10, and 11, as the chapters are currently divided, to spend time on this, to explain to the Roman believers about God's purposes to Israel and explain how he will yet keep his word.

Response:

The impression I get from Romans 9 was that Paul wrote it to explain to the Jews the nature of God's purpose for, and promises to, Israel. It is their objections, not those of the Gentiles, that he seems to address there. In chapter 11, he also addresses the misunderstanding of some Gentiles, who mistakenly think that they are superior to the Jews. These three chapters say nothing about how God "will yet keep His word," nor about any future events at all. What Paul says is that God has already kept His word (Romans 9:6) by saving the only "Israel" whom He ever promised to save—the remnant (9:27; 11:1-7). There is no eschatology in there.

33. Dr. Brown:

Romans 11, v 11, "Again I ask did they stumble so as to fall," meaning fall beyond recovery. Is it over for Israel? Not at all, rather "Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." This is God's purpose.

Response:

There are several verses in chapter 11, into which dispensationalists like to insert words like "permanently" (v.1), "irretrievably," "beyond recovery" (v.11), "temporarily" (v.25), or "then..." (v.26). By inserting words that Paul could have used (had he wished to do so), but which he did not, they have created a new Pauline epistle, containing an eschatological plan for natural Israel which Paul never endorsed. Paul mentions nothing about eschatology in Romans 9—11. Such words must be gratuitously inserted to change the course of his discussion to something it is not, and dispensationalists promiscuously insert them.

The above example is similarly explained by Dr. Brown. The hypothetical question assumes that Israel has stumbled, as is the case of many Jews. Michael Brown wants this to become a prediction about their recovery in the end times, but Paul only speaks of what happened, expressing no specific interest in the topic of what may happen in the future. His question is about *the purpose* of their stumbling (was it merely that they might fall—with no greater purpose than an expression of God's

vindictiveness?). Paul shows no interest in the question of whether their stumbling was *temporary*—only of whether its occurrence had a greater purpose in God's plan.

As it turns out, their stumbling did result in greater inclusion of the Gentiles. God can sovereignly make a good thing out of a bad thing. Of course, the same could have been accomplished without their fall. If the Jews had all received Christ, that would have been even better (it is better to obey than to disobey). It would not have deterred the entrance of Gentiles in any way that we can tell. If the Romans had hated Jesus, but the Jews had loved Him, Jesus still could have been crucified for our sins by Roman hands. The Jews' rejection was on them, and them alone. If the remnant that received Christ and became the Church had consisted of 100% (instead of, perhaps, 1%) of the Jewish population, this would not have prevented Jesus' being crucified. It would have meant that the original Church would have begun its mission having 100 times the Jewish work force for reaching the world. The Great Commission probably would have been fulfilled much sooner. We may assume that those who rejected Christ could, if they had instead accepted Him, have accomplished a great deal for Him just as the smaller remnant did without their cooperation.

As it turned out, God—ever resourceful—used the Jews' rejection of Christ and persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem and elsewhere, to scatter the evangelists throughout the world to reach the Gentiles (Acts 11:19-20). Only a Calvinist would argue that the rejection of Christ by 90+ percent of the Jews was predestined by God. I know Dr. Brown is not a Calvinist, so he must not believe this.

34. Dr. Brown:

When the Gentile believers are enjoying the promises that God made to Israel, Israel would be envious. As the Gentile believers are walking in the fullness of the Spirit, as the Gentile believers are enjoying the benefits of the new covenant, as the Gentile believers have become sons and daughters of God, then Israel becomes envious. And Israel says "You have our Messiah. You have our God. You have our promises. We want that."

Response:

It is interesting that Dr. Brown seems to affirm that the Gentile Christians "have our [Israel's] promises." Yet we are told that this is the very claim that allegedly makes *Supersessionism* objectionable! People like Dr. Brown say, "Replacement Theology is that belief that says the promises made to Israel now belong to the Church." Now Dr. Brown admits that this belief is true. The Bible teaches it unambiguously.

Those, like Dr. Brown, who deny that God has fulfilled His promises to Israel in Christ, claim that the Jewish race, as a whole, has been *temporarily* set aside by God. This claim has no support from any biblical text and is not true to facts on the ground. A steady stream of Jewish people, like Dr. Brown himself, have been getting saved continuously since the time that Paul wrote. There has been no exclusion of their race by God, any more than any other race (Acts 3:26; Gal.3:8-9; Rev.7:9ff).

The dispensationalists' emphasis is on the very word not found in any text: "*temporarily*." In the passage before us, Paul says that salvation coming to the Gentiles was to make Israel jealous. Dr. Brown sees in this some kind of prediction that jealousy will result in the conversion of Israel. Paul does not predict this at all. In fact, he says he was himself hoping that this jealousy would, through his ministry, bring about repentance on the part of Jews. His ministry did not, as near as we can tell, bring about the salvation of many Jews—who nonetheless exhibited plenty of jealousy toward him.

Significantly, the passage Paul is quoting is Deuteronomy 32:21. In that verse, the provoking of Israel to jealousy is not said to bring about their conversion—only their angst. In Deuteronomy 32, the result of the jealousy is not the conversion of apostate Israel, but the taking by God of a new people, which include, according to v.43 (which Paul quotes in Romans 15:10), Gentiles. Verse 43 also predicts the following:

- A) Avenging the blood of God's servants (which Jesus said would occur in A.D.70—Matt.23:35-36);
- B) Rendering vengeance to His adversaries (which also occurred in A.D.70—Luke 21:20-22)
- C) Providing atonement for His people (i.e., the faithful remnant. This is, of course, through the cross).

Therefore, neither in Deuteronomy 32, nor in Paul's citation of it, is there any clue about a future conversion of apostate Israel. Only their destruction and the salvation of the righteous remnant (and the inclusion of the Gentiles) are mentioned. On what basis may we gratuitously add foreign meanings to the text? Should we not be more reverent, and tremble at His word, rather than manipulate and add to it in the service of our favorite unbiblical doctrines?

35. Dr. Brown:

He says, "if their transgression means riches for the world and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring?" (Rom.11:12).

He says, "I am talking to you Gentiles, and as much as I'm the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them." So he says, one reason I go to the Gentiles is to provoke my people Israel to jealousy, to envy. "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be, but life from the dead?" (Rom.11:15). If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy. If the root is holy, so are the branches."

In other words, Israel's future ingathering and salvation are of great, great importance.

Response:

The first thing to say is that the affirmation in the last line has no parallel in the New Testament, including anything in verse cited. In all the New Testament there can be found no mention of (nor interest in) the return of the *diaspora* to the Land. Romans 11 will speak of the "salvation" of "Israel" (v.26), but never of any regathering to the Land.

When expressing his heart's desire for Israel's destiny, Paul mentions nothing about land promises or the regathering of the *diaspora*. What is his longing for Israel? "*That they may be saved*" (Rom.10:1). Why is it that the idea of salvation in Christ so thoroughly eclipses the geographical issues in the mind of Paul while it is the latter that so thoroughly dominates the minds of Christian Zionists? Do we need to write a Third Testament to accommodate this propensity to discount what Christ has done, and to elevate Israel to the place of prominence that the New Testament gives only to Christ? We could call this, "*The Replacement Testament*" as it gives to Israel the place belonging only to Christ. Christian Zionism requires this Third Testament, since nothing to its purpose can be found in the New Testament.

Dr. Brown makes much of Romans 11:12 and 15. Here is how they read:

Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! (v.12)

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (v.15)

The first thing to observe in placing these verses in juxtaposition is that “*the world*” (vv.12, 15) seems equivalent to “*the Gentiles*” (v.12). Also, “*their fullness*” (v.12) seems to be the equivalent of “*their acceptance*” (v.15). I do not imagine I will find any challenges to this observation from those of the other camp.

Dr. Brown, like many dispensationalists, sees in these verses a prediction by Paul that the Jews, who have rejected Christ in the past, will someday embrace Him. If Paul is anticipating such a development, then it would be still in the future and these would have to be taken as eschatological statements. However, it can be shown that these verses provide no support for such expectations.

Romans 11:12 and 15 contain no predictions of the future, but, in the Greek, can easily be read as hypothetical. “If God got such results out of a bad thing (their fall; their rejection) how much could He do with the good thing (their acceptance; fullness)?”

The word “will” does not occur in the Greek text of v.15, so that nothing is actually predicted. Instead, the Greek of the respective verses reads, “*what their fullness?*” and “*what their acceptance?*” The circumstance may be seen either as expected or as merely hypothetical. The missing verb that allows the translators to insert the word “will” can as easily accommodate the word “would.”

It is similar to saying, “If I am relatively happy without having my dream girl as a wife, how much happier my life with her?” There is no prediction here that the speaker will ever find his dream girl, but only a contemplation of how great that would be. Paul does not predict that all Jews will necessarily turn to Christ—but, since God accomplished so much without their cooperation, how much more could be accomplished with it?

We know that Paul speaks in this way of hypothetical situations, because, in verse 24 (another “how much more” statement, like v.12) he writes “*how much more will these [Jews], who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*” Some take this also as a prediction, but only by ignoring the previous verse, which says that this is only potential: “[the broken branches] *if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in*” (v.23). Paul is not talking about Israel as a whole, but of individual Jews (branches) being grafted back into the Israel from which they alienated themselves by unbelief. He certainly was in no position to claim that any of them, in particular (nor all of them), would meet the conditions for being grafted into Israel again—though they are all welcome to do so! No proper exegesis of Paul’s statements could turn this statement into a prediction of the salvation of all the currently apostate Jewish people.

Paul is not even speaking of “future” Jewish people. He has been discussing the problem of those who, in his day, “*were broken off*” (v.17). He uses the past tense, referring to individual Jews of his time who had rejected Christ. He never changes his subject to some future generation. Of those Jewish branches who had rejected Christ and been broken off (namely, most of the Jews in his day), Paul says that they are not without hope, if they do not remain in unbelief. Upon repentance, they—those same Jews—can be grafted back in, as he himself was. But this presumably would have to happen to them before they died, which, of course, did not happen for most of them. What is true of the unbeliever in Paul’s time is, of course, true of unbelievers of all times, but there is no mention of any specific future generation of Jews, and no prediction of the repentance of any person or group in particular.

Alternatively, vv.12, 15 can be seen from a very different angle. When Paul says, “*how much more their fullness?*” (v.12), and “*what their acceptance?*” (v.15), we must ask “*Whose fullness?*”; and “*whose acceptance?*” To whom does “*their*” refer in these clauses? In the case of v.12, the nearest antecedent is “*the Gentiles,*” and, in v.15, the nearest antecedent is “*the world*” (also referring to the Gentiles). True, the Jews have been called “*they*” in the first clauses of both verses, which leads many to identify them as the subject of the final clauses of the verses as well. But this is far from necessary or obvious, since, in both verses, between the first “*their*” and the second “*their,*” a new noun has been inserted.

It would be a complete toss-up between the two options: 1) the second “*they*” is the same as the first “*they;*” or 2) the second “*they*” is deliberately contrasted with the first “*they,*” and refers to the nearest antecedent in the sentence. The grammar would equally allow for both. However, there is one datum that favors the second option over the first.

If Paul is speaking of the Jews as the second “*they*” then he is assuming the readers are already familiar with the belief that all the Jews will someday be brought to faith in Christ. He would be alluding to something that has never been affirmed earlier. The verses in question contain no predictions, but allusions to something already known.

Yet, where would they have gotten this prior knowledge? Paul speaks as if it is a given, though he has never been to Rome to speak to this audience nor previously mentioned any such expectation in this letter. Such a development is not predicted in the Old Testament, by Jesus, nor in any of Paul’s epistles elsewhere. He speaks of it matter-of-factly, as if they know of it. There is no mention in Romans 9-11 (where it would be most expected), nor anywhere else, of a future acceptance of Christ by all Jews. In fact, in Romans 9:27, he outright denies that this will happen. From where would his readers have been expected to pick-up this idea?

On the other hand, it is a given that Gentiles were and are being accepted. While “*their fulness*” following the word “*Gentiles*” has its parallel in Paul’s phrase “*the fullness of the Gentiles,*” only thirteen verses later (v.25), the term “*fullness of Israel*” or “*of the Jews*” is found nowhere in scripture. It was also a given that the Gospel was bringing in the Gentiles the “*world*” over (Col.1:6), so that the “*acceptance*” of “*the world*” would be more familiar to the readers than would any idea of the acceptance of all the Jews, which is nowhere predicted nor mentioned. It could go either way (without involving eschatology in either case). Paul mentions no eschatological future of the nation Israel.

36. Dr. Brown:

Well, is that what happened in Church history? Has the Church made Israel envious? Sadly, no...[Dr. Brown here cites numerous instances of “Christian” anti-Semitism as having the effect of driving Jews away from Christianity]. Rather than provoking the Jewish people to envy, the Church has driven the Jewish people away through much of our history.

Response:

Of course, hating Jews has never been any part of Christian discipleship and those regarding themselves as Christians, who have hated the Jews, have essentially betrayed their Master who is a Jew Himself. This is deplorable, and this history is not unfamiliar to today’s supersessionists. There is nothing in this position that would endorse or encourage Jew-hatred nor in any way contribute to it. We cannot, nonetheless, allow our sympathy for persecuted or oppressed people to determine our theological conclusions which ought to come only from scripture.

Our hearts grieve the wrongs done to the Jews and to every other people who have unjustly suffered at the hands of the wicked. Persecution of minorities is the more horrendous when it is done by people who falsely profess to represent Christ. Nonetheless, our discussion should focus on what the Bible teaches. The Bible predicted that these horrible things would happen to Israel if they rejected God's covenant. Sadly, they chose that option. Everyone must own his own crimes. The Jews' rejection of Christ is on them; the persecution of Jews is on their persecutors. God will someday repay each one according to his own works.

37. Dr. Brown:

You say, "Well, a lot of what you spoke of, though, is before the Protestant Reformation, before so many things change. It's true.

1523, Martin Luther wrote a little booklet called "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew." In that mini-book, he said the Jews are the older brothers and sisters. We are the younger brothers and sisters. Perhaps, if we treat them with humility, they'll turn. They'll turn in mass and recognize Jesus as the Messiah. He said this, "If I had been a Jew and seen these coarse blockheads running the Church, I would have rather been a pig than a Christian."

Well, twenty years later, he did not see Jewish people turning in mass to Jesus. Twenty years later, he actually saw Christians who were becoming interested in Jewish customs. Twenty years later, he was old and sick. Twenty years later, he was shown writings by Jewish rabbis blaspheming Jesus, speaking in the ugliest terms against Jesus. Some of this ugly writing that the Jewish leaders did in response to the Church persecution and hatred, inexcusable but they did it. Martin Luther wrongly thought that Jews cursed Christians three times a day in the synagogue. Whatever caused it, Luther turned tremendously hostile against the Jewish people.

And in 1543, he wrote a little book called "Concerning the Jews and Their Lies." Years back, before the days of internet, I could still find that book in print in Neo-Nazi Anti-Semitic catalogs. In the book, Luther called the Jews an insufferable devilish burden. And he gave counsel to the princes of Germany as to how to deal with the Jews.

- *Number one, their synagogues and houses of worship should be broken down and set on fire.*
- *Number two, their rabbi should be forbidden to teach under penalty of death. He went on that they should be deprived of all good jobs.*
- *He went on that they should be gathered together in ghettos.*

Response:

Since Martin Luther is no role model of mine, his teachings and his sins do not directly impact my theology. For that I rely only on canonical writers. In the absence of scriptural support for their views, the Christian Zionists must continually resort instead to ad hominem attacks, citing examples of very bad things that some non-Zionist theologians have said. I trust Dr. Brown will not lay such charges at the feet of John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, or Paul, who said things every bit as intemperate about the Jewish enemies of Christ as did Luther (with the exception that they recommended no persecution of them). See Matt.3:7-9; 23:31-36; Acts 2:23; 1 Thess.2:14-16.

38. Dr. Brown:

There is the spiritual debt that is owed to Israel, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Response:

There is no such debt implied or mentioned in scripture. The one debt that Paul places upon Christians generally, whether Jew or Gentile, is to love one another (Rom.13:8).

Paul also said that the largely-Gentile congregations of the first century were indebted to the Jewish Church in Judea (Rom.15:27), but this was a debt owed to Jewish Christians who had evangelized these Gentiles, thus putting them directly in their debt. Our comparable debt is to those who evangelized us, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. The Gospel was not a gift to us from the Jews. They themselves rejected it and opposed its being preached to Gentiles. The Gospel is a gift which God gave us, despite its being vociferously opposed by all but the believing Jews (that is, the Jewish Church).

39. Dr. Brown:

- *It is through the people of Israel that you have your Bible.*
- *It is through the people of Israel that you have the prophets.*
- *It is through the people of Israel that you have the Messiah.*
- *It is through the people of Israel that you have the apostles, all of them Jews.*

There is a spiritual debt.

Response:

I grew up hearing (and repeating) that Christians owe a debt even to unbelieving Israel, because “they gave us the scriptures, the prophets, the Messiah, and the apostles.” But, it was not the unbelieving Israel that gave us these things. In fact, the unbelieving Jews tried to eliminate all of these things—killing the prophets and the Messiah, and trying to kill the apostles to prevent their evangelizing the Gentiles. No, unbelieving Israel gave Gentiles nothing, and did their best to prevent the Gentiles from receiving any blessing from God. It was God who gave the prophets (2 Chron.36:15-16), the Messiah (John 3:16), and the apostles (Eph.4:11)—and, through them, the scriptures—sovereignly overriding every attempt of Israel to destroy and deprive the world (and even themselves) of them. Our debt is to God, not to His enemies.

40. Dr. Brown:

And one way [the debt] can be repaid is by praying for the salvation of Israel. Another way that it can be repaid is showing solidarity with the Jewish people. It is only tears of repentance that can wipe away the stain of blood. It is tangible acts of love that can wipe away the horrible taste of Church history.

Response:

First, as mentioned, no such debt exists, other than to God.

Second, none can object to praying for the salvation of the Jews, as Paul himself did (Rom.10:1), though prayer for their salvation is not on a different level of duty than prayer for the whole world (Matt.6:10).

Third, standing in solidarity sounds like some kind of “yoking” which we are forbidden to have with unbelievers (2 Cor.6:14).

We are to stand in solidarity with Christ, and His followers. Christians who oppose supersessionist brethren seem to “stand with” the nation that rejects Christ and “stand against” the saints who serve and love Him. This is a stance that needs to be recalibrated!

Commented [DG2]:

When it comes to our approach to secular nations, like Israel, we have no automatic duty to support any of them. Our assessment of, and reaction to, each nation must be based upon its individual merits. Every nation, including America, has its crimes and its virtues. We must criticize the former and commend the latter. We must support no nation, even our own, simply by default. We are citizens of a Kingdom not of this world, which alone commands our absolute loyalty. All others we must judge, as does God, by their works.

41. Dr. Brown:

Number four, you're standing on the side of justice. You're standing on the side of justice. Is Israel perfect? No. Does Israel need to be held accountable when it's not perfect? Yes. Do we have reason to criticize Israel at times? Yes. But if you want to stand with justice and liberty, you stand with Israel.

Let me make it real simple. It's often been said, and it remains true, that, if the Palestinians were to put down their weapons, there would be no more war. If the Israelis were to put down their weapons, there would be no more Israel.

Response:

All Christians must stand for justice and must be color-blind about it. The saying about laying down arms is no doubt a true statement about “peace,” though the question of “justice” must be analyzed separately. Peace is only a good thing when it is a just peace.

It is true that Israel now wants peace and would probably not instigate wars against the Arabs in a disarmed Middle East. Who knows, though? They have not had that luxury since 1948. In fact, the Jewish paramilitary groups, *Irgun* and *Lehi*, attacked and massacred the non-aggressive Palestinian village of Deir Yassin, killing 107 villagers—including women, children, and those seeking to flee or surrender—in that very year. Maybe we give Israel more credit for being peaceable in temperament than is deserved.

Israel now has what it wants—i.e., the land formerly inhabited by Palestinian Arabs (with U.S.A. as an ally). People who have what they want often just want peace to prevail with no interruption of the *status quo*. Such people don't really like being pestered by the freedom-fighters who believe their land has been stolen from them and their people been reduced to refugees. The desire for peace and the practice of justice are very different considerations.

We definitely should condemn all injustice, whether it is committed by Israel's enemies, or by Israel herself. It seems there has been a fair amount of bad behavior on both sides.

42. Dr. Brown:

There were two hundred thousand Arabs, Palestinians who stayed in Israel when it became a nation. There were about eight hundred thousand Jews in the surrounding Arab nations. When Israel became a nation in 1947-48, they had to flee for their lives. They were expelled from their countries. Israel absorbed them. Some had to flee their countries, most were absorbed by Israel in its infancy.

There are about six hundred thousand Arabs in what was then Palestine. The Palestinian leadership said, “Get out of the country. A cannon cannot distinguish between a Jew and an Arab. When we wipe out the Jews and drive them into the sea, go back to your lands.”

About two hundred thousand remain and between four- and six-hundred thousand were scattered, depending on the numbers. Did the surrounding Arab nations take them in? No. They made a resolution: “None of us will take them in.” This is an Arab resolution from the 1950s, “We will not absorb the

refugees. We want them to remain refugees to make Israel look bad." They live in other nations like Lebanon, they live in refugee camps, in Arab nations.

Two hundred thousand Arabs stayed in Israel. The Israelis said, "Stay here. We are neighbors. There's no reason for you to flee. We are neighbors." Two-hundred thousand stayed. Today, they are 1.5 million. They make up 20 percent of the population of Israel. They have more rights and freedoms than any Arabs in the Middle East. They represent 10 percent of the Israeli parliament. They represent one of the supreme court justices.

They have far more liberties than the Palestinians living on the so-called West bank or in Gaza. In fact, when polls have been done, they have said, "We do not want to be under Palestinian leadership. We want to be under Israeli leadership." If we could get the Palestinians to put their weapons down and say "we want to live at peace," Israel would be a great neighbor, and their lifestyles would be greatly enhanced.

Israel has shown how they treat Arabs who don't want to kill them. They are good neighbors, and they work for the prosperity of all. If you really want to help the Palestinians, strengthen Israel, and help them get better leadership for the Palestinians, and then there'll be justice.

Response:

I have always assumed these things to be true and have always been fairly favorable to Israel. However, I have no first-hand knowledge of all the facts on the ground, and our opinions should always be subject to change, if necessary, upon the receiving of new, relevant information. In any case, none of this has any bearing upon scriptural exegesis, so it merely distracts from the concerns at hand.

43. Dr. Brown:

Last point, number five: If you want to see Jesus return, you should stand with Israel. Why do I say that? Well, as we read on, Romans 11:25f, "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.'"

Response:

"In this way" all Israel will be saved. Paul is talking about God's promises to "save Israel," and he is addressing in what manner God has accomplished this. Dr. Brown thinks Paul is talking about a future salvation of future Israel, but how do Paul's words address any such alleged national conversion? He argues thus:

- A) Part of Israel has been hardened (referring to Jews of Paul's time who have rejected Christ, which are the natural branches broken off the olive tree, which is Israel—Jer.11:16)
- B) A full number of Gentiles are coming in (like new branches added to the olive tree, which is Israel)
- C) In this way the entire olive tree, "all Israel"—will be saved (namely, all the branches—both Jewish and Gentile). The future tense simply reflects that this, as an ongoing project for over 2,000 years, will be completed in the future.

Paul has thus explained *how* God has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will continue to fulfill His great promises to save Israel, like the following:

Isa.45:17—

"Israel shall be saved by the Lord..."

Jer.3:23—

"Truly, in the Lord our God Is the salvation of Israel."

Jer.23:6—

"In his days [that is the Messiah's] Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely..."

Paul has said nothing about the "when" of Israel's salvation, only the "how"—*"in this way."* It is by the inclusion of Gentile and Jewish believers (natural and foreign branches) that Israel (all of it, the whole tree) will be saved.

To see Paul's paragraph as speaking chronologically is to have him say nothing about the "how"—which is the only issue he addresses.

44. Dr. Brown:

So, Israel's salvation is the climactic event that culminates in the return of the Messiah.

Response:

If Paul had mentioned the Second Coming of Christ in this passage, it might be possible to affirm something like the above. The statement is flawed on two points: 1) Paul nowhere predicts that all Jews (nor any more than already have) will come to faith and be saved, and 2) there is no mention of the Second Coming or any other eschatological event in Romans 11. This raises serious questions about the conclusion drawn above. It appears to be 100% *eisegetical*.

45. Dr. Brown:

Earlier in Romans 9, Paul said, "Not all Israel is Israel," speaking of the remnant within the nation, but then ten times he speaks of Israel through Romans 9, 10, and 11, speaking of the nation as a whole.

Response:

With all due respect, this is a rather poor argument. It goes like this: "There are ten times when Israel is used a certain way, though it is used two ways, once, in the beginning of the discussion. Ten is a higher number than one, so in the one disputed passage of 11:26, the majority rules."

Maybe so, if we confuse exegesis with arithmetic. I had rather use common sense, follow the argument, and let Paul interpret himself, than to count occurrences of a word used in one way as opposed to another way. This is like Jack Hibbs, when he attempts to disprove *Supersessionism* (a word and a concept with which he was apparently not very familiar) by saying, "How can they say that? The word Israel occurs, what? Two-thousand times in scripture?" This was his big argument against "Replacement Theology."

Yes, and Jesus is called "the Lamb" twenty-seven times in Revelation, but that does not mean He is literally a baby sheep. The word is used to refer to literal baby sheep far more frequently in scripture (over 150 times). The use of a word, especially when it is used both literally and non-literally in scripture, must be determined on a case-by-case basis in context—not by counting its occurrences.

In Romans 9-11, Paul introduces his discussion of Israel by pointing out that there are two different uses of the word Israel which need to be recognized (Rom.9:6). He then uses the word predominantly in contexts where it is contrasted with Gentiles—a dead giveaway that he (in those places) is speaking of ethnic Jews. But what of that other, all-important, meaning that he mentioned at the beginning of the discussion? Why did he begin by introducing that distinction? Was it a mere “throw away” line? Does he never return to it?

Yes, he gets back to it. In its first instance, he says that the true Israel to whom the promises apply is not co-extensive with racial Israel. At the end, he points out that the whole of Israel that will be saved consists of the faithful remnant of racial Israel, joined by the full complement of believers from other races. This is after he has stated plainly that only a remnant of racial Israel will be saved (9:27) and that Israel is like an olive tree composed of only believing (but not only of Jewish) branches. This is the “all Israel” (i.e., the believing Jewish and the Gentile branches of the tree) who will be saved.

This is what one arrives at by following a writer’s actual train of thought, rather than assuming in advance that he wishes to support our own theological hobby horse, changing and adding words to the text, and then reading counterintuitive meanings into numerous verses, hoping to recruit Paul to our position.

46. Dr. Brown:

And here, he says, “all Israel.” There will be a future turning of the nation of Israel. I can’t say when it could happen. It could be a hundred years from now or ten years from now. God knows. It doesn’t guarantee the salvation of any living Jew, but there will be a time, where there will be a national turning.

Response:

There is no mention of a national turning in Romans 11:26—nor any predictions about the future at all other than the suggestion that the present process of saving all believers will continue into the future. Dr. Brown apparently thinks Paul said, “After that” (i.e., after the Gentile inclusion) “all Israel will be saved.” If Paul had made a chronological statement, then we could see eschatology here. However, Paul said “Thus” or “in this way” all Israel will be saved. In what way? Why, he has just described it in terms of the olive tree. Is it still insufficiently clear? He has just said he is telling the Roman Christians the “mystery” (v.25)—which he elsewhere identifies as the phenomenon of Jews and Gentiles becoming one body, without distinction, in Christ (Eph.3:3-6).

God has promised that “all Israel will be saved,” but “they are not all Israel who are of Israel.” Only the remnant will be saved (Paul was not unclear about that at all—9:27). “All Israel” is the whole olive tree (Jer.11:16), from which some Jews were broken off (“hardened” v.25), and into which many Gentiles have been grafted (the fullness of the Gentiles coming in, v.25). In this way, all Israel (not just the ethnically Jewish element in it) will be saved. No eschatology is found in this chapter—only methodology. There is no word of prediction of end-time events anywhere in the passage.

47. Dr. Brown:

Jesus, rebuking the religious leadership, in Matthew 23, says, “Jerusalem, you won’t see me again until you welcome me back as king”. Revelation 1:7, “Every eye will see him when he comes.” If Jerusalem won’t see him until it welcomes him, no one will see him until Jerusalem welcomes him. The people of the Messiah in the city of Jerusalem must be the ones to welcome him back to Jerusalem.

Response:

It is a lovely thought. May it indeed come to pass! However, Jesus did not predict that they would say such things—only that they would not see Him anymore unless and until they should say this. It is as if a parent would tell the stubborn child, “You will have no dessert until you have eaten your food.” There is no actual prediction that the child will eat his food (or get his dessert), but only that there will be no dessert if he does not do so.

Jesus is telling His detractors that He would no longer appear to them in public preaching, and the only way they could see Him would be for them to become His disciples themselves (described as their saying, as other Jews had said already, during His triumphal entry, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*”).

Of course, they literally “saw” Him a few days later, hanging on the cross, but He was not speaking in that literalistic manner. He explained to His disciples, “*A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me...he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*”

They asked, “*Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?*” to which He answered, “*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him*” (John 14:19-23).

He was not alluding to a time when either the Jews or His disciples would see Him at His Second Coming. We know this because He especially addressed His remarks to that specific generation (Matt.23:36), which had their house (the temple) left to them desolate (v.38). That was the generation that saw Jerusalem fall, in A.D.70. Jesus’ comment made no reference to any later generations. They were the generation that had the opportunity to see and hear the Messiah speak in their midst. They squandered that opportunity and would see Him no more unless it was in the sense that disciples “see” Him (Heb.2:9). These men are now long dead, so they will not be around to see His Second Coming, other than in the resurrection of the unrighteous. Jerusalem came to its end 40 years later. Jesus never makes reference to a later Jerusalem or its inhabitants, as Dr. Brown suggests.

48. Dr. Brown:

And look at this, as far as the Gospel is concerned, “They,” the Jewish people, “are enemies on your account, but as far as the election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gift and his call are irrevocable.”

Response:

This is an oft-repeated refrain with Dr. Brown, but we have already addressed the error in this argument elsewhere [See: 1:6; 10:32; 14:2; 15:6; 18:8].

49. Dr. Brown:

Think of this, when Jesus the Messiah returns, it’s not just people getting out of their wheelchairs in a healing meeting. It’s millions of people getting out of their graves. When will that happen? When a Jewish Jerusalem welcomes him back.

Response:

This is nowhere stated in scripture. How is this statement justified?

50. Dr. Brown:

Therefore, if you're the devil, you want to wipe out the Jewish people. If you can't do that, you want to keep them out of Jerusalem. If you can't do that, you want to keep them from believing in Jesus. And that's why we pray for the regathering.

Response:

This is a strange hierarchy of priorities. It lists the devil's main concerns as if they are in this order:

- 1) To kill Jewish people, making their race extinct, or, failing that,
- 2) To keep them from moving to the Middle East, or, failing that, at least
- 3) To prevent them from believing in Christ.

If these three things are all important, they would seem to be given in the wrong order. That the Jews (like anyone else) would believe in Jesus is certainly more important than their survival on earth, and their survival would itself be more important than their being in Jerusalem. I am not sure whether any races ever completely die out—since there is a great deal of intermarriage between races and tribes—but if one race or another should go extinct, I am not sure how that would affect the grand scheme of God's purposes, or history in general. All people (including all Jewish people) will die. The great tragedy is in their dying on bad terms with God. If every living Jew or Englishman were to die at the same moment, rather than one-at-a-time over the period of a century, how is one of these prospects a greater tragedy than the other?

I say this because all people individually die. If all the Irish (my own ethnic background) were to become extinct as a race, it would only mean that all the Irish people had died, which was, in any case, inevitable—since every Irish person is eventually going to die anyway. I am not sure to whom it would make a difference whether all the Irish died at once or if they died gradually, one-by-one. All that matters is that those who die, whether Irish or otherwise, should do so on good terms with God. How could a guarantee that there will always be a few surviving Irishmen for the rest of history be of any legitimate concern to any given Irishman? My grandfather Gregg had one son. His son had two sons, only one of which had sons. Of those grandsons, neither appears to be leaving a male heir. Thus, with the death of these remaining grandsons, our clan will seemingly be officially extinct. So what? In the grand scheme of things, what does it matter?

If a Jew believes in Christ when he dies, then his dying will not be a tragedy for him any more than if he were an Irish believer. Why should it matter to him whether he was the last of his race to leave earth for heaven? Did he expect any of his people to live forever on the present earth? Since all will die individually, what difference does it make to any individual (or to God, or to the devil) whether this happened to all in a single cataclysm, or was dragged-out over centuries?

I am not saying the extinction of the Jews (nor the Irish, nor Chinese, nor Nigerians) would be either good or desirable—only that such is inevitable. Every person will someday die, regardless of race. This is a tragedy for those who do not know Christ, of course (though no more or less so for a Jew than for an Irishman), but it is a reality for which every believing Jew and Gentile is quite prepared. The tragedy is in the death of any who does not know Christ, and the atrocity would be on the part of the monsters who bring about any such extermination. It is not a tragedy to die in faith, but it is an abomination to cause the unjust death of another.

The devil's concern for the Jews, and for all humans, is that they may die before coming to know God. He doesn't care whether they die in one land or another. To live long enough to see Jesus' return would be wonderful, but it is not guaranteed to anyone, and has no impact upon one's eternal destiny.

Nor will it matter where on the planet a person may be living when seized by death, or when Jesus comes. The only goal for Israel expressed by Jesus or the apostles was that they should come to faith in Christ. How did the other two matters mentioned by Dr. Brown suddenly become the chief priorities for the devil to attack? What does the devil care if a Jew lives in or outside Jerusalem, so long as he is lost when he dies? Why would it matter whether one who dies is the last Jew or the last Irishman, so long as Christ has saved him?

Of course, the reason Dr. Brown provides for Satan's wanting to keep the Jews from returning to Israel is that he believes such a return is necessary to vindicate God's integrity, and to precipitate the Second Coming of Jesus. However, neither Dr. Brown, nor any other, can responsibly exegete any passage to yield the latter idea. The only thing that is stated to necessarily precede the end is the evangelization of the world (Matt.24:14). Yet, many Christians, who ought to be heavily invested in this goal, are distracted by Middle Eastern politics and demographics—even contributing Christian dollars to the promotion of carnal ends unrelated to Christ. Now there we can see a plan of the devil!

51. Dr. Brown:

One of my friends, now a PhD in New Testament, is leading a Messianic Jewish congregation. He studied at a seminary in Japan. It was founded by a Japanese missionary in the 1940s or 30s. He was a missionary in another country. God called them back to Japan and said, here is your mission "You must raise up Christians to pray.

- *Number one that the Jewish people are regathered to the land.*
- *Number two that Jerusalem comes back to Jewish hands.*
- *And number three that Jews receive the Messiah".*

Well, we've seen one, we've seen two with constant battle, and little by little, we're seeing three. These are the purposes of God that we stand for.

Response:

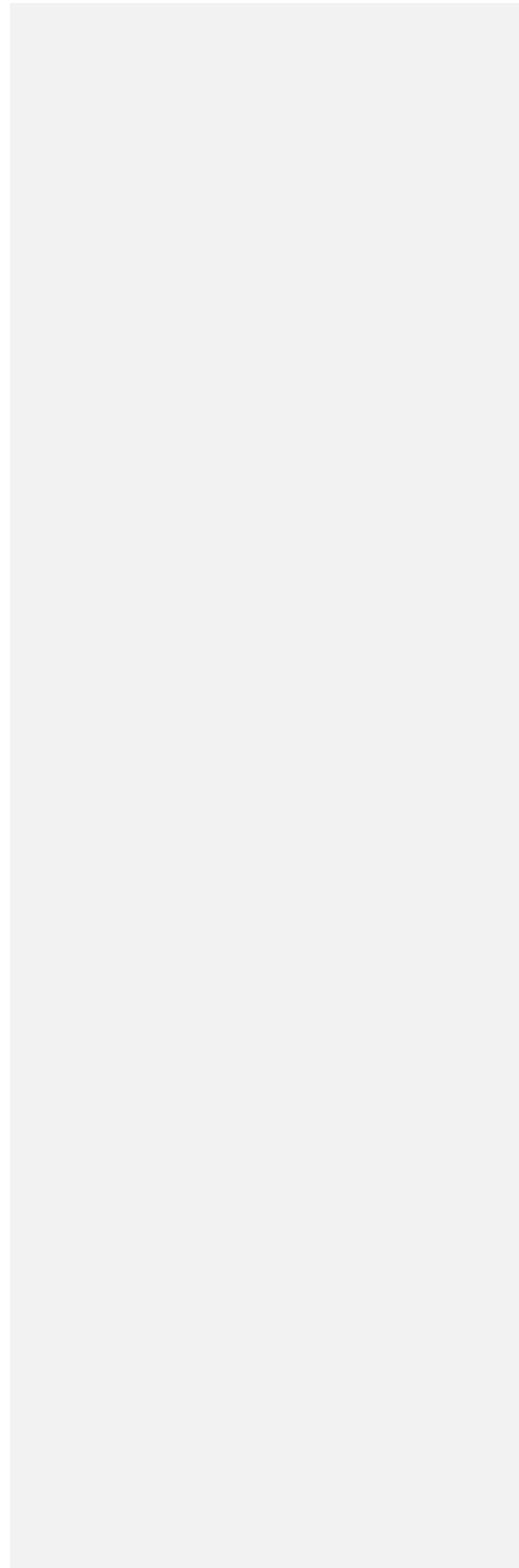
I have known sincere Christians who have thought God told them various things—which often only reflect their own theological or personal sentiments. I don't know whether that missionary heard God correctly, but good for him if he faithfully prayed as he believed God told him to pray.

However, I am not sure why Dr. Brown would say, "Well, we've seen one, we've seen two with constant battle, and little by little, we're seeing three." Dr. Brown may not have noticed, but the *diaspora* has not been regathered to the Land. A minority of the Jews live there, which has been the case for centuries. That group has grown, but it remains a minority, and much of the growth is not from migration, but from birth of two generations in the land. Jerusalem may be officially in Israeli hands, but the Temple Mount is not—which would be the most important part, if God has future intentions to make that city religiously significant (to Judaism, that is, not to Christianity).

As far as conversions of Jews to Christ go, this happens much more outside Israel than in it. World Jewry numbers about 15,000,000 souls. Of that number, something like 350,000 are Messianics (believers in Jesus). That is about 2.3% of the global Jewish population. By contrast, among Jews living in Israel (7 million) the number of Messianics is well under 30,000, making Jewish believers in Christ only .42% of Israeli Jews. This means that the density of followers of Christ in the Global Jewish population is more than five times greater than the percentage of Messianic converts in Israel (and many of those in Israel were converted elsewhere before moving there). This means that the chances of a Jew being converted to Christ in Israel are statistically far less than the chances of his or her

conversion elsewhere. How then, is it argued that migration of Jews to Israel is a positive development for a Jew who needs Jesus?

Of course, if the regathering of the *diaspora* to Israel is a prophetic necessity (which is the point under dispute), and their conversion to Christ in Israel is somewhere predicted, then percentages and chances are irrelevant. However, if the prophets do not predict this, then from the Christian point of view, moving to Israel would seem to be, statistically, the most harmful thing we could wish for a Jew needing to find the Messiah to do. Many Christian Zionists also (mis)read Zechariah 13:8 to predict that antichrist will massacre 2/3 of all future Jews living in Israel. This means that any encouragement of Jews in the *diaspora* to return there to their doom would be the greatest expression of anti-Semitism.



Document 5

The Appeal of Replacement Theology

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

All right, Replacement Theology is technically known as Supersessionism. The idea that the Church superseded Israel in the salvific plan of God. The idea that the Church in some way replaced Israel, or that the Church is now Israel, or that somehow promises that were once given to Israel have transferred to the Church and no longer belong specifically to Israel. Some call it, "Fulfillment Theology," or "Inclusion Theology." Those are some of the names that folks use today to say, "No, no, we're not Replacement Theology, we're fulfillment, we are inclusion theology." Dr. Isaac who I debated in Bethlehem said that he doesn't hold to Replacement Theology, but there is some redefinition. My point would be the end results are the same.

Response:

If the end result is that salvation is only in Christ and that believing Jews and Gentiles are one Body while Jews and Gentiles rejecting Christ are lost, then the theology is good regardless who labels it or what label they use. No special labels should be required at all since it is simply the unadorned and unambiguous teaching of the Gospel.

However, if someone tells you that "Replacement Theology" is an inappropriate and misleading label for what they actually believe, you might trust them on that and begin to use a term that actually describes their views. If you can find someone whose views can be accurately called "Replacement Theology," then fine! However, if you use that term to misrepresent what someone believes, then you are disingenuous and debating against a straw man.

For example, the definition given by Dr. Brown is a common one used by opponents of *Supersessionism*: "the Church superseded Israel in the salvific plan of God," misses the point entirely. *Supersessionism*, like all Christian theology, does affirm that certain replacements have occurred. For example, compliance with the Old Testament which always defined the constituency of the *ekklesia*, has been superseded by the New Covenant, faithfulness to which defines its constituency now.

The unbelieving branches of the olive tree (Israel), having been broken off, are replaced by believing branches from other ethnicities. Such statements cannot be regarded as controversial among Christians.

However, the Church did not replace Israel. Israel is the *ekklesia* in the Old Testament, and it was with the faithful element in that entity that a New Covenant has been cut. Thus, the New Covenant Jewish community continued to be (did not "replace") the *ekklesia* after Pentecost. The fact that Jews of this *ekklesia* have been joined by believing Gentiles is, in principle, no different from the fact that the Old Testament *ekklesia* also included believing Gentiles. The olive tree (Israel) has never been replaced. Some of the constituent branches have, however, been removed and replaced by new ones—but then, this was also the case throughout the Old Testament.

To acknowledge these points should be the easiest thing for any Christian to do. However, to do so would stick in the throat of many dispensationalists, because this acknowledgement (unavoidable to a biblical exegete) would seem to give up the farm to the dreaded supersessionists! But why should any Christian wish to avoid embracing the teaching of the scriptures and, essentially, of the whole Church prior to the nineteenth century? This seems a bizarre recalcitrance.

2. Dr. Brown:

So let's make it real simple. Here is a car lot, all right, new car lot. And you take me into this car lot, there are a hundred cars in there. And you say to me, "Hey, this car is for you." You pick it out. It's a really nice car, brand new. You pick it out, and you put my name on it. All right. And you say, "Hey, listen, whenever you come back, a year from now—five, ten—doesn't matter, that car is sitting there, that's your car. And it's always going to be your car. And when it gets too old, you just replace it with the newest model, that's your car, period, signed Dr. Michael Brown. There it is! that's your car."

Now slice the cake however you want. Call the theology whatever you want. If when I come back to get the car ten years later, all right, or fifty years later, I'm going to get the newest model of that car.

If you say to me, "Oh, that car now belongs to a lot of other people. You can have it too, but it belongs to a lot of other people." Or you say to me, "Well, we are all Dr. Michael Brown now, or Sam Smith over here, he is now Michael Brown."

The car that was mine in my name is no longer mine. That would be the effect of Replacement Theology.

Response:

This analogy demonstrates Dr. Brown's misunderstanding of what *Supersessionism* teaches. In his illustration, the promised item remains the same, but the recipients are replaced. A specific car is promised to one person, but ultimately given to someone else. *Supersessionism* does not teach that God promised something to one person and gave that same thing to another person instead.

The biblical view is that God promised one thing to a group of people, and replaced the thing itself with something far superior—giving it to the same people. The people, in every case, are the covenant-keeping remnant of Israel. None but they could claim the Old Covenant promises (Ex.19:5-6; Ps.50:16-17), and none but they can claim the "better promises" (Heb.8:6) of the New Testament. Those of the faithful remnant were once rewarded in terms of an inferior promise. The same group (the faithful—who includes all believers in Christ) in the New Covenant have received an incredibly generous upgrade in the promises.

Under the Old Covenant, nothing was offered to anybody, except for temporal, worldly blessings, which can be enjoyed only during this fleeting lifetime. Under the New Covenant, what is offered to the same people are "spiritual (eternal) blessings in the heavenlies" (Eph.1:3). Anyone who would not view this as an upgrade can hardly be described as one having a Christian, or spiritual, value system (Matt.6:19-21; Col.3:1-2)!

Nothing in Dr. Brown's illustration parallels anything taught in *Supersessionism*. Since I understand the system as an insider, who has held and taught it for more than 40 years, I believe I can provide a more apt analogy than Dr. Brown's:

Suppose I am a car dealer, and I tell my five children, "If you learn to drive, get a driver's license and finish high school, I will give you each a used Rambler station wagon. If you obey, I will someday substitute a much better promise for one."

Now let us say that three of my children do none of those things set as conditions, whereas only two of them comply. The first three never learn to drive, nor get driver's licenses, and they drop out of high school. The other two children comply with my conditions, and each receives a used Rambler station wagon.

Eventually, the Ramblers get old, outlive their usefulness, and end up being donated to "Kars 4 Kids." After this, I make a new promise to all my children: "If you remain loyal to me, and not to

my competitor, I will give you each a brand new BMW, and you will all jointly inherit my car dealership with all its stock.”

This is a much better illustration, for several reasons:

- Because the promise of a Rambler (analogous to the promises of the Old Covenant) was forfeited by each of the disobedient children, while the obedient children did receive the very thing promised. Likewise, the Old Covenant promises were forfeited by Israel’s non-compliant rebels while the righteous remnant did receive them;
- Because a new BMW is a far more valuable car than is a used Rambler—and the dealership may include many pre-owned Ramblers, if the kids prefer them, just as the New Covenant includes far “better promises” than the Old Covenant (Heb.8:6)—including the inheriting of the whole world (Matt.5:5; Rom.4:13).
- Because the new promise remains open to the children to whom the original promise was made, just as the New Covenant includes Jews as well as Gentile respondents. The new promise, however, replaces the older promise.
- Both promises (like the two covenants) are made to obedient children and withheld from the disobedient ones. If the children who forfeited the first promise, due to disobedience, should repent and become loyal, they can be included as well. However, if they do so, they can’t now come and claim the used Rambler promised upon the former terms. That promise has been superseded by a better one. Only the new promise can be claimed.

3. Dr. Brown:

Now when I had a dialogue, debate with Dr. Gary DeMar about this, he said, “Look, this whole idea of replacements is wrong, let’s debunk it to start.” And he said, for example, his main argument to start was “let’s look at the word ekklesia, translated church in most of our New Testament. It refers to an assembly, a congregation of people.”

He said, “Let’s go through the Septuagint. Let’s look in the Old Testament translated into Greek. And Israel, the nation of Israel was called the ekklesia, the congregation, the Assembly of Israel. And now you get into the New Testament, and the same term is used, the first Jewish believers and so on and then it’s everybody. So nothing replaced. It’s just the ekklesia, which was almost all Israelite at the beginning is now Israelite and Gentile.”

Okay, I appreciate that, and I agree with the terminology. The problem is, God gave Israel specifically certain promises, not the ekklesia in general, but specific promises to Israel. If those promises no longer end up being given to Israel, for example, the land of Canaan if it no longer belongs to Israel, then that is one way or another Replacement Theology. Either the people got replaced, or the object of the promise got replaced or whatever. Are you with me so far?

Response:

“Something is replaced” is not a sufficient definition of what Dr. Brown and others have in mind when speaking of “Replacement Theology.” When he was shown by Gary DeMar to be mistaken in what he mistakenly thinks the view affirms, he simply found a way to sound like he wasn’t wrong, by saying, “Well, something was replaced, wasn’t it? That qualifies it to be called “Replacement Theology.”

Certainly Dr. Brown also believes “something” has been replaced. For example, the exodus generation to whom the promises were originally made have all died off and been “replaced” by later generations. The Sinaitic Covenant has been “replaced” by the New Covenant. The unbelieving branches broken off the olive tree in Paul’s day were “replaced” with believing Gentile branches on the same tree. The temple sacrifices have been “replaced” by the sacrifice of Christ. The evil tenants of the vineyard who killed Christ and the prophets have been “replaced” by new tenants who will render to God the fruit in its season. Must I go on? Everybody, including Dr. Brown, believes that some things have been replaced—and by Dr. Brown’s definition (“something is replaced”) this makes his beliefs every bit as worthy of the label “Replacement Theology” as those of Gary DeMar! But believing that “something was replaced” does not distinguish one allegedly holding to “Replacement Theology.” If it does, then everyone holds to a Replacement Theology.

The admission that, in scripture, the word *ekklesia* is equated with Israel (which Dr. Brown acknowledges) renders it impossible to say that the promises made to Israel were not made to the *ekklesia*. Suppose one were to say, “When I speak of my children, I mean my sons and daughters. However, the inheritance I leave to my children will not be given to my sons and daughters,” we would rightly think his logical thinking has gone off the rails. Thus, if the *ekklesia* is Israel, then promises made to Israel are clearly promises to the *ekklesia*. How is there any rational way around this?

A tendency to idolize the Land and the race tends to blind the logical faculties of otherwise rational people. Consider this seamless logical progression:

1) Gary DeMar pointed out that the word *ekklesia* is equivalent to “Israel” in the Old Testament—and Dr. Brown agreed to this.

2) The *ekklesia* in Jerusalem was also regarded to be “the Israel of God,” composed of the sum of all faithful Israelites (Dr. Brown also approves of this terminology). In the age of the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel (see Mark 1:15), the identity of “Israel” was, as the prophets foretold, trimmed back to only include those faithful to the Messiah. This body was still Israel and the *ekklesia*.

3) Gentiles came to be drawn into this covenant community, and grafted into this existing *ekklesia*, or “Israel,” just as covenant-embracing Gentiles (e.g., Rahab and Ruth), became part of Israel, the *ekklesia*, in Old Testament times.

Where, then, is the “replacement”? The entity that was always called Israel and the *ekklesia* continues without interruption. All that has changed is the covenant (no longer the Old, but now the New) which defines “Israel” and the *ekklesia*. There is no change of constituents, except in the sense of newer generations replacing older generations. The only difference between the old *ekklesia* and the new *ekklesia* is not racial, but is in the respective covenants and their related promises.

Paul compares this change in covenants to a woman in two serial marriages (Rom.7:1-4). In her first covenant relationship, her submission to her husband involved certain obligations and benefits defined by that husband. After his death, she remarries. Her new obligations and benefits are defined by the second husband, not the old one—but she is the same woman. She was never replaced by another woman in that transaction. She was once married to the Law, but is now married to “Him who was raised from the dead” (Rom.7:4).

Let us say that her old husband was poor and lacking in personality and character. Her second husband is wealthy, charming and virtuous. The new marriage is definitely a great improvement. But suppose, in her second marriage, she says, “I want to go and live in my former neighborhood, in the

trailer park where I lived with my first husband.” Her second husband will say, “I have a much better mansion here for you. The old trailer is now inhabited by other people.” Can she then argue, “But that was my home with my first husband, and I want it back”?

What Dr. Brown does not seem to acknowledge is that the New Covenant has new (better) promises and privileges, and under it one cannot claim the specific promises of the Old Covenant (e.g., those in Deut.28:1-14). The New Covenant has a much larger “land promise”—the inheritance of the whole world (which obviously includes the former “Promised Land”). Why would any faithful Jew complain that this arrangement has somehow deprived him of something? As for the Christ-rejecting Jew, why should we be concerned with his complaints? He never qualified for benefits under any covenant.

The reason Dr. Brown and Zionists complain about this is that they want the Land to belong to the unfaithful Jews, who reject and hate the Messiah (on the unsupported assumption that those apostates will someday embrace Christ). Sorry, the land was never promised to the unfaithful (Gen.18:19; Lev.18:26-28). No covenant promises belong to the apostates (Ps.50:16-17)—and only those promises and blessings of the present covenant can be claimed by the faithful.

4. Dr. Brown:

Now, what are some of the appeals of Replacement Theology? Why do many believers say, “Well, we are the new Israel, we are the Israel of God, we are the spiritual Jews”? Why do many say that it's not a matter of a land promise anymore, it's a promise of the whole world, we inherit the whole world? “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,” right, Matthew 5, the Beatitudes, quoting from Psalm 37. Why do people gravitate in this direction?

Response:

Since Zionist Christians do not share the view, they are continually speculating as to the motives of those who do accept *Supersessionism*. For the irrational among them it is easiest just claim it is due to anti-Semitism. Those who know better than to make such a groundless accusation look for other “quirks” in the people who disagree with them that might explain this peculiar disagreement.

It is rarely suggested by any of them that those who disagree with them have no motive other than to be faithful to the teachings of Christ and the apostles. After all, everything asserted by supersessionists is explicitly stated to be true in the scriptures. I, for one, left *Dispensationalism* and Zionism because I am simply not willing to deny what the Bible affirms or affirm what Bible does not. Mystery solved!

The remaining mystery is why someone of Dr. Brown’s persuasion does wish to deny (or simply ignore) what the Bible affirms on these matters. Since he is a Jewish believer, one might assume that it is this fact that blinds him to the biblical teachings about Israel—but there are many Gentile Christians who seem to want to wear that same veil that Paul says is taken away in Christ. Mystery not solved.

5. Dr. Brown:

Again, I want to put the best construction on it. I want to look at it in the best possible way.

Well, one reason is that there's a deep sense of identification that a Gentile Christian has today with the people of Israel and the history of Israel, that the whole Bible becomes your book. It's not just the

book of the Jewish people, it's your book as well. And you can look back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and in a spiritual way, those are your fathers as well.

Now they're my fathers, physically and spiritually. They're your fathers spiritually, and we have that deep sense of connection. And a verse like Galatians 3:29 that tells us if we belong to Messiah, then we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

So many of the ways that Israel was described in the Old Testament, this is now applied to all believers today. And we have that priestly role in the earth to be teaching the world about God and to be shining like lights.

Response:

Yes. That certainly is a major part of it. In other words, we wish to affirm what Dr. Brown acknowledges to be the statements of scripture. The main difference seems to be that we are not averse to taking the scriptural affirmations to their logical conclusions.

6. Dr. Brown:

So, in many ways descriptions given to Israel in the Old Testament, now apply to all believers today, that's positive, that's wonderful. And in the Messiah, we are equals. I'm no better than you, you're no better than me.

A man is no better than a woman, a woman is no better than a man. We are equals in Jesus, the Messiah, that's what it means. There's neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither male nor female, there's neither slave nor free.

Does Paul imagine now that gender, sex differences don't exist? Does Paul imagine now that there are no such categories as male and female in the world? Of course not, how many times does he address husbands, fathers, men, women, mothers, wives, of course, there are differences. In fact, gender distinctions are beautiful, and given by God, we should rejoice in that.

But in the Messiah, there's no caste system or class system. We are equal. So many times, people take hold of that equality, but in a way that now forgets the promises that were given specifically to Israel.

Response:

Dr. Brown says, "But in the Messiah, there's no caste system or class system. We are equal," but fails to see Paul's reasoning for that statement: It is because we are all one entity (Gal.3:26-28), a new People of God (1 Pet.2:9-10). Dr. Brown wants there to be two "Peoples of God." There is the one People of God, who reject God and hate His Son, and there is another People of God, comprised of Jews and Gentiles who are faithful and in Christ. The only problem is that there never was a people of God of the first description. National Israel, when apostate, was described by God as "*not my people*" (Hos.1:9). To the wicked in Israel, God says, "You have no part in my covenant" (accurately paraphrased from Psalm 50:16-17). God does not maintain two covenants simultaneously. The second renders the first obsolete (Heb.8:13).

Dr. Brown thinks the supersessionist "forgets the promises that were given specifically to Israel." But Dr. Brown, apparently, forgets that the promises made to Israel were made under the Old Covenant, which is declared to be "obsolete." More importantly, Dr. Brown forgets that the Abrahamic Covenant promises were not made to Israel alone, but to all the families of the earth, and that all who are Christ's are "*the heirs according to the [Abrahamic] promise*" (Gal.3:29).

So, if the heirs of the promises made to Abraham are those who are in Christ, and the promises made to Israel, hundreds of years later were part of a conditional covenant, which Israel shamelessly trashed like a wanton wife against her husband (Ezek.16; 23)—bringing about her divorce (Jer.3:8)—then who, exactly, is this other, unrepentant “People of God” existing with covenant promises apart from the Church? And where does the Bible identify or speak of them?

7. Dr. Brown:

Many believers are drawn to Replacement Theology because they say, “It’s all about Jesus. It’s not about a land, it’s not about people, it’s not about race. God’s not a racist. God’s not ethnocentric. Everything is summed up in Jesus.”

Of course, everything is summed up in Jesus. But I have a question for you, does Jesus the Messiah of Israel, cancel God’s promises to Israel or confirm God’s promises to Israel?

Response:

That one is easy! In His teachings we do not find Him confirming the continuance of the Old Covenant (or its promises), but He did say He came to “fulfill” them, which would result in their “passing away” (Matt.5:17-18). If Jesus did not fulfill the Old Testament prophets and expectations expressed in the Torah (as Zionist Christians claim He did not), then He failed in His stated mission. Strange, then, that He would claim at the end of His ministry: “*I have finished the work which you [God] have given me to do*” (John 17:4).

When you are sent on a mission (to fulfill the Law and the Prophets), and you report back to headquarters, “Mission accomplished!”—then only those who wish to call you a liar will say you did not fulfill the Law and the Prophets. This is what dispensationalists and Zionists claim about Christ, namely, that He didn’t fulfill the promises of the Old Covenant, though He claimed to have done so.

Did Jesus come to cancel those unfulfilled promises? Well, once they have been fulfilled there is no longer possible to regard them as unfulfilled promises, if that is what Dr. Brown is asking.

8. Dr. Brown:

Paul says in Romans 15:8 and 9 that the Messiah confirms the promises to the patriarchs.

Response:

We would reasonably assume that Paul is referring to the promises that had not already been fulfilled *before* Jesus came. The land promise, for example, had been fulfilled centuries before Jesus came (Josh.21:43-45; 1 Kings 4:21; Neh.9:7-8). There remained no promises about that for Him to confirm. It was historically fulfilled.

Jesus did, however, confirm the Old Testament threats of the Jews losing the Land (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24). I suppose that threats can be classified as “promises” of a sort. God definitely promised in the Old Covenant that Jewish disobedience would result in the curse, rather than blessing, abiding upon their nation “*forever*” (Deut.28:45-46). He also promised the loss of the land (Lev.18:24-28), and His seeking another “people” to fill the spot they abandoned (Deut. 30:32:21). I guess Jesus did confirm those promises, when He said, “*The kingdom of God is taken from you, and given to a people (or nation: Gr. ethnos) bearing the fruits of it*” (Matt.21:43).

My assumption, though, is that Paul is referring primarily to the promise of the Messiah’s coming. That, at least, seems to be what the priest Zacharias referred to as “the promises made to the fathers” when he prophesied:

*“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who have been since the world began,
That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.”
(Luke 1:68-75)*

The Messiah was predicted to “confirm the covenant with many for one week” which Jesus apparently was doing until He was “cut off” by the Jewish conspiracy to have Him killed, “in the midst of the week,” which ended the existing covenant, and resulted in the sacrifice and offerings ceasing (Dan.9:26-27). At that point, Jesus confirmed another of the promises, which was that God would make with Israel a “new covenant” unlike the old one (Jer.31:31-34; Matt.26:28).

9. Dr. Brown:

So, the Jewish Messiah coming into the world does not nullify and abolish and cancel promises that God gave to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and the found sheep of the house of Israel. He doesn't cancel those. He confirms them.

Response:

Because I do not know Dr. Brown personally, I do not know what he thinks about the New Covenant. Some dispensationalists actually believe that the New Covenant has not yet come, and will be realized in the future salvation of the Jewish race. This, of course, contradicts everything the New Testament says on this subject—and even delegitimizes our calling these twenty-seven books “the New Testament” (meaning “New Covenant”). If the New Covenant has not yet come, then all these books are still part of the Old Testament.

Jesus would be thought, in that case, to have jumped the gun when He ratified the New Covenant in His blood at the Last Supper (Mat.26:28). Paul, who called himself a minister of the New Covenant (2 Cor.3:6), did not realize that his timing was at least 2,000 years off. The writer of Hebrews mistakenly thought Jesus was the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb.8:6), inaugurating a new priesthood (proving the Torah had been “changed”—Heb.7:12). If Jesus and the New Testament writers were so mistaken on this matter, what Bible is it that the dispensationalists consult to reach their more-enlightened position? Dr. Brown is, allegedly, not a dispensationalist, so he probably is not so far off-track on that point.

I also don't know what Dr. Brown believes the impact of the New Covenant was upon the Old Covenant. Jeremiah seemed to imply that it replaced the old one, since it was “not like” it (31:31). The writer of Hebrews was certain that the coming of the new had made the old obsolete (8:13).

The above statement, that Jesus did not alter or cancel the promises of the Old Covenant would suggest that Dr. Brown either does not believe that Jesus actually established New Covenant, or else that He did so, without impacting the continuing relevance of the Old Covenant. In either case, he has the whole of scripture standing stoutly against his assumptions.

10. Dr. Brown:

It's not about a matter of racism, not a matter of ethnocentrism. In fact, being "called" has cost the people of Israel, the Jewish people dearly. Through our history, we have been severely judged by God. Through our history, Satan and others have tried to wipe us out. This has been very costly. This has nothing to do with ethnocentrism, and it has nothing to do with racism. "Zionism is racism." It's as false as it is pithy.

Response:

Not to be rude or insensitive, but what is racism? Is it not the view that one race should be privileged above another, not on the basis of the merit of individuals, but on the basis of racial identity alone? Just wondering. Is there another official definition somewhere?

11. Dr. Brown:

The fact of the matter is, God keeps his promises. Is that so hard for people understand? God keeps his promises, nothing to do with favoritism, but if he gives a promise, he keeps it. It's that simple. It's beautiful. It's wonderful, and it is simple.

Response:

Well, not quite that simple. The promises God made were indeed to a certain nation. This nation was not racially homogenous, so this was not racism, but nationalism. He did in fact show considerable favoritism to them during their tenure as a holy nation unto Him defined by covenant (not race). *"He has not dealt thus with any [other] nation"* (Psalm 147:20). Gentiles could become proselytes and be part of Israel, but, whereas the Gentiles had to make a choice to join, the Jews had the privilege of being born under that star and enjoyed a default favoritism until they apostatized. God had every right to choose His own friends and family, and this he did on the terms of covenant obedience. This is how things stood in the Old Covenant.

The problem today is with those who do not recognize that the Old Covenant has passed. They want to perpetuate the same terms of privilege today that they once enjoyed before they demolished their covenant, which had favored them. There is currently no divine covenant in force that favors them. For anyone to try to say, "Well, they lost their land because of disobedience, but God should give it back to them now, and they will behave themselves," resembles the time when the exodus generation was told they had lost access to the promise by their faithlessness, but they decided they would take it belatedly anyway (Num.14).

That turned out disastrously for them. They sought to seize that outdated promise which God had withdrawn from them, and God slapped them down. God promised to give Israel the land but threatened to withdraw His promise if they rebelled. Both things happened. No subsequent promise of the land to Israel has been made since the time of their permanent covenantal expulsion in A.D.70. The modern claim to the Land has zero biblical basis, and nothing to do with God keeping His promises. When Jesus said they would be expelled in that generation, He never said that would

someday be reversed—nor did any biblical writer. We should accept God’s verdict, rather than rebel against it.

12. Dr. Brown:

So again, many Christians are drawn to that which is heavenly, that which is spiritual and say that that transcends the earthly. And I agree it transcends the earthly, and we live out our lives in this earth in light of eternity and in light of spiritual realities.

But let me ask you a question, what if I said to you, “Well, why are you making a big fuss about justice in your community?” You go to a funeral, where everybody’s mourning. If somebody’s kid is raped and killed, some horrible thing like that, and people are at the funeral mourning, and you say, “What are you getting all upset about? We’re seated in heavenly places and Jesus.” That would be a travesty. Would you say to a man dying of hunger, “Hey, Jesus is the bread of life, that’s all you need”?

Well, in the same way, when you tell the Jewish refugee fleeing from persecution to the Land of Israel after the Holocaust, and you say, “No, no, Jesus has now become the Land of Israel,” it’s just as insulting, just as irrelevant, and just as wrong. You’re with me so far.

Response:

I have never made any argument that our only concerns are with purely spiritual realities. The Church is to be passionate, as Christ is, for justice on earth. The prophet predicts that Jesus will not fail or be discouraged until He has established justice among the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:4), and we are to pray “Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth.”

Nor would any decent person wish to deny a Jewish refugee from the Nazis, or from the pogroms, a haven and a secure home. However, though Dr. Brown said this was about God’s keeping His promises, and “it’s that simple,” it now appears there are other complications—like justice and concern for displaced refugees. When these concerns are applied to the modern State of Israel, this is not uncomplicated.

So, is this about God keeping His promises (if so, which ones, exactly?), or is it about justice (in which case, Israel’s position is not unambiguous)? Are we to support Zionism out of loyalty to God’s promises, or out of pity for refugees? If the latter, then perhaps we should have more interest in the Uighurs in China right now, rather than the Jews. The flight of the latter from Nazi persecution is primarily behind us, historically.

13. Dr. Brown:

I’ve heard it over and over and over again: “Today’s Jews are not really Jews.” Today’s Jews are just Ashkenazi, they’re converts of the Khazar Kingdom, they’re European. They’re not really Jews. And the real Jews are either Africans, or the real Jews are Christians because God’s done with natural Israel. Well, what is this based on?

Some of it is based on just the latest misinformation, and internet myths and things like that. Some of it is based on the good research that traces back Jewish origins and recognizes that there’s been Jewish intermarriage over the centuries, that’s why we come in so many different colors and shapes and forms.

But this idea that today’s Jews aren’t really Jews, or that even if Ashkenazi Jews, or other Jews are ethnically Jewish that they’re not Jews in God’s sight, it’s based on a misreading of Romans 9:6.

Response:

The claim about Khazars has nothing to do with Romans 9:6, and no one I have ever met believes that this verse calls into question the ethnic purity of the Jewish race. The verse is more in keeping with the entire teaching of the New Testament, namely, that race means nothing in God's estimation of any man.

We do know that Jews have often intermarried freely with other races, and we do not think this to be a moral breach. Since race means nothing to God, there is no reason to object to the mixing of races through intermarriage—just as God defended Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian woman. I believe that there may still be a small portion of Jewish people whose ancestors never married Gentiles, but who cares? Only someone who thinks race essentially distinguishes one man from another. In other words, only a racist (in its classical definition) would care.

14. Dr. Brown:

Paul is writing in Romans, and look at what he says in Romans 9:6: "But it is not as though the Word of God has failed, for not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, not all who are of Israel are Israel."

What was the point that Paul was making?

He spoke from Romans 9:1 to 5 of the anguish that he carried in his heart, the constant pain and anguish that he carried in his heart for the lost sheep of the house of Israel to whom the promises of God remain.

He says theirs are, not were, but theirs are the promises, all right. But he says, well, it's not as though the Word of God failed, because the Messiah came, and the promised nation didn't follow. Does that mean the Word of God failed because God made these promises to Israel?

And his first response is, no, not everyone descended from Israel is Israel. He's not talking about the Church as a whole. He's not talking about the Gentile world. He's not talking about everyone else. He's saying that there is a remnant within the nation, just as he says in Romans 11:1.

Response:

Why is there such eagerness to distinguish this remnant from the Church? The faithful remnant of Israel are the Jews who received the Messiah. Paul identified himself as one of these, in Romans 11:1. So, was he part of the remnant of Israel—or part of the Church? Only one blinded by an artificial and stubborn paradigm would argue that Paul would make the slightest difference between these two categories. Paul said he regarded his whole racial and religious heritage as a Jew to be worth no more than "dung" (Phil.3:8). Should any modern Jew make more of these things than Paul did? He had more to "boast" of, in this regard, than has any modern Jew.

The whole Church was the remnant of Israel before Gentiles were added. According to Paul, in Romans 11:16ff, when those Gentiles were added, they were like foreign branches being added to the Israel tree (which tree was comprised only of the remnant, after the unbelieving natural branches were removed). That means, Paul saw the Gentile additions to the Church as additions to the remnant, to whom the promises to Israel were fulfilled.

15. Dr. Brown:

He responds to that again, he points out, "Hey, I'm an Israelite. I'm part of the remnant." So he's saying within the nation, there is an Israel...

I want to say this for maybe the ten thousandth time or hundred thousandth time in my life, Jews need Jesus in order to be saved. There's only one way to get right with God for Jew or Gentile, and that is through the Messiah.

So, to say promises remain for Israel, doesn't mean that any Jewish person is automatically saved. And Paul makes it plain in Romans 2:6 through 11 that blessing comes first for the Jew and also the Gentile, and judgment comes first for the Jew and also for the Gentile. With great privilege comes, great responsibility.

So again, many Christians are drawn to Replacement Theology because they say, "Hey, look, it's all about Jesus, we're not preaching a people or place. Yeah, we preach Jesus. It's Jesus."

Response:

It's not just a vague "Yay, Jesus!" attitude that informs our beliefs. It is the specific things that scripture tells us about Jesus—namely, that He, along with all who are in Him, is now the recipient of all the titles once belonging to the nation Israel, and of all the promises made to Abraham. It's pretty much all that the New Testament talks about—which never mentions any promises to the Jews who reject Jesus and includes the Jews who receive Him in the Church, where all such distinctions become irrelevant.

16. Dr. Brown:

So how does it work out today? Bottom line is that if you hold to any form of Replacement Theology, God did not bring the Jewish people back to the land.

Response:

That is a *non sequitur*. So-called "Replacement Theology" does not tell us what God does or does not do in moving people around the globe. I can say with conviction that the Bible made no predictions about the founding of America, without denying that God may have guided Christopher Columbus and other European settlers to the New World. Belief in God's sovereignty tells us that God may be behind any historical development and may have His reasons for shuffling things around on the chess board. Ultimately, it is God who determines the boundaries of human habitation (Acts 17:26). As for the land of Israel, He once gave it to the Canaanites, then to Israel, then to various Gentile tribes and nations, then to Israel again—next, who knows? To the Chinese, maybe?

The acknowledgement that God puts people in various lands tells us nothing of God's assessment of the various people or nations that He shuffles around the surface of the earth—far less, whether their various migrations and conquests fulfill any grand redemptive purpose. They may, but what Dr. Brown calls "Replacement Theology" would not necessarily predict for any political opinions about geopolitics. I am a generally pro-Israel supersessionist. That means, I don't object to where Jews are living—nor would I care if they lived elsewhere. I consider that where another man lives is no business of mine. It does mean, however, that I care about the justice or injustice of their land acquisition (rather than the prophetic inevitability of it), their behavior toward their neighbors, and the justice of their political system. But then, I have those same concerns regarding every nation. I do not see any divine mandate that any ethnic group must live permanently in any geographical region.

17. Dr. Brown:

See, there are always tangible consequences to the theology. And the end result here would be that God made these promises and then transferred them to somebody else or spiritualize them or redefined them.

To use my car lot analogy, I go back to the car. And you say, actually, cars have now been redefined as air. So all the air is yours, breathe it in. Yeah, I mean, it would be just as ridiculous to say, well, now the whole world, it's been reinterpreted for the whole world.

"Well, hang on, Jewish people will get this tiny, tiny little slice in the Middle East, they won't get that?"

"Well, no, they get the whole world."

"Oh, how? So, you have no problem with the Jewish people coming back to the land."

"Oh, no, no, we don't believe that's now."

Again, you end up with the same end result that the Jewish people do not get what was promised.

Response:

I don't understand most of that argument (if that is what it was), but, according to scripture, the Jewish people have gotten precisely what was promised (Lev.26; Deut.28). It's just that most of them will not acknowledge it. It is particularly sad that some Christians refuse to acknowledge it. They say that supersessionists compromise the faithfulness of God's promises. Yet it is the supersessionists that affirm God's fulfillment of His promises, and the Zionists who deny this, and can only speculate about some future possible fulfillment.

In any case, I have no idea why Dr. Brown would think that an apt analogy to expanding an inheritance of one little bit of land to become the whole world would be like the reinterpreting of "car" as "air." Would it not be more sensible to use the analogy of "car" being modified to become "the whole inventory of the car dealership"? Should someone who had been promised the former feel cheated to learn that he was to receive the latter?

18. Dr. Brown:

And either you're saying that everybody gets to inhabit the promised land...So, do you mean, however, many Christians are in the world today, a billion whatever the number of real believers is, we all inherit that little—no. So in the future, everybody inherits the whole earth. Okay, great, but what about right now. God gave promises in this world. What about right now, what happens to those promises?

Response:

The only promises that apply to "right now" would be those of salvation in Christ. If Dr. Brown is suggesting that all Israel will be gathered into an undisputed possession of the old Promised Land, then that certainly does not apply to the situation "right now," where more than half of the Jews live elsewhere throughout the world, and do not appear to be making plans to relocate. Perhaps Dr. Brown is confident that they will move—in which case, he knows something about their plans that they do not yet know. In any case, that is the situation "right now" and if God promised something different for "right now" then the thing He promised has failed to materialize. Better is the biblical position that affirms God's promises to Israel have faithfully been fulfilled.

Commented [DG3]:

19. Dr. Brown:

We go to Redding, California. Robert, welcome to the Line of Fire.

Robert:

Okay, I've been studying it. I definitely believe that Replacement Theology is a false doctrine. I've said it for years and years. And in talking to replacement theologians, the biggest problem that I found is there is an amazing, unbelievable amount of pride Christians have towards the Jewish people, and it's based on pride. They want to feel superior to the Jewish people or whatever it is.

Response:

Pride about what? Would it not be equally likely that the Jew would be accused of "pride" if he thinks his people are special to God due only to their race (Dr. Brown continually affirms that they are not better people than others, and that only their race makes them special)? I know that Calvinists sometimes seem proud because they believe that they alone are the elect. Calvinists say that Arminians are proud for believing that they have free will. The shockingly common habit of calling others "proud," whom one is apparently incapable of refuting rationally, is pervasive among people who think themselves to be Christ's disciples. Under Torah, those who bear false witness against brethren were condemned to the penalties that they thought should come on those whom they slandered.

I would sooner assume that people hold their positions due to conviction and their persuasion from scripture (or at least from teachers of scripture whom they trust), than to say this all comes from pride. It seems uncommonly bold to accuse millions of Christians, whom one has not personally met, many of whom died as martyrs in the first three centuries, of the sin of pride. Where is the evidence for this damning indictment?

I know that to me, saying "all races are equal before God" does not particularly feed any pride in me, and I do not see how it would do so in anyone else. I suppose those who make the above accusation of pride know their own hearts only too well, and assume others are like them. To know the penalty for slanderers, one might wish to consult Ps.140:11.

20. Dr. Brown:

And also, there's this misconception that when a lot of Gentiles read the Bible, they automatically think that they read all the stuff about the Jews, they think, "Oh, well, God loves the Jews more. And so in order for me to be loved by God equally, I have to become a part of Israel," and that's the total misconception.

Response:

Wow! Are there actually people who think in this convoluted way? I have never heard this expressed, and I doubt if I have ever met anyone who has this thought process. Yet Dr. Brown affirms that this is what is going on in many people's heads. How could he possibly know what is happening in another's head—especially when nothing they say suggests such things?

21. Dr. Brown:

You can be French, Russian, Japanese, whatever, and God loves you just as much. Okay. Now, God has a unique role for the Jewish people, and that the Messiah will come through the Jews. Well, he already has come through the Jewish people, and all these things, but God loves everybody just as much. So Christians need to stop this feeling of needing to become Jewish.

Response:

I keep hearing Christian Zionists and Messianics speak of the “unique role” that God has for the Jewish people. Apart from bringing Messiah into the world (mission accomplished!), I can find no biblical information about this unique role. No one has ever explained what, exactly, God’s role is for the Jews, as distinguished from His role for the Church. Is it unfair of me to ask those who keep repeating this talking point to identify something in scripture that says what they are saying? Please? Anybody? Reveal this mystery.

What is the special role God has in mind for Israel to perform in the future? At least dispensationalists can claim that, after the rapture, the Jews will evangelize the world. However, Dr. Brown (to his credit) does not believe in a pre-trib rapture, meaning the Church will be here as long as Israel is. When is it that the Jews will step up to doing this special thing that is different from what the Church does? And what is that thing?

22. Dr. Brown:

But there's the other side, which is the insecurity. The other side which says, "Well, if God still has promises for Israel, then if I'm a Gentile believer, what am I, a chopped liver, or a second class or second rate?" And again, most everyone says this [is] secure in their own homeland.

Response:

I know many Jewish intellectuals pursue careers in psychology. It is, perhaps, a good thing that Dr. Brown did not go that route. He does not seem to be very gifted in reading other people’s minds or hearts. It would be less embarrassing and shameful if he were to stop pretending that he has this ability. Every time he has tried to psychoanalyze Christians who hold to historic (that is, non-Zionist) Christianity, he has guessed incorrectly.

23. Dr. Brown:

Then we say, "Well, don't the Jewish people get their homeland?" and people are up in arms about it. Why be up in arms over it?

Response:

Don't the Palestinians get their homeland? They seem to be the ones who are “up in arms” over it. Were they asked if they minded before a European tribunal gave away their homeland to foreigners? If the Japanese gave your home town and your house away to the Nigerians without consulting you, would you be bothered?

24. Dr. Brown:

Look, the fact of the matter is, what Paul says in Romans 11 to the Gentile believers is, "Look at how you have benefited, look at the mercy that's been shown to you. Now you show mercy back to Israel," and tragically that hasn't happened.

So, the reason we make such a big deal about Replacement Theology is the fruit of it has led to the destruction of Jewish people through the centuries, and paved the way for the Holocaust without question. And today, it fuels the fires of those who say that Israel does not have a right to the land today or that God has not brought the Jewish people back to the land.

Response:

So-called "Replacement Theology" has not fueled one violent act against Jews, for the simple reason that it says nothing negative about Jews. Dr. Brown is again confusing *Supersessionism* with Jew-hatred. The two are not philosophically related, though there are some people have been known to possess both—just as people (e.g., some southern Christians) have been known to hold to *Dispensationalism* along with racism against blacks. No sensible person would say that *Dispensationalism* fuels or opens the door to hatred of blacks. What Dr. Brown mislabels as "Replacement Theology" is a theological position held by most Christians throughout history. By contrast, Jew-hatred is a sinful character defect in certain defective people, not endorsed or called for by any biblical theological system.

Technically, a person might be a Zionist by conviction, but a Jew-hater by disposition. In fact, dispensational eschatology would seemingly please haters of Jews, since that theology teaches that two-thirds of the Jews, having returned to the land, will be slaughtered there. Yet they are keen to move as many Jews as possible back into this perceived danger zone. Whatever they may say to the contrary with their mouths, it is hard to imagine a darker expression of Jew-hatred than this.

Things will go a lot smoother in the promotion of Christian unity when both sides give up on the *ad hominem*s and the genetic fallacies in their argumentation, and just stick with exegesis of texts.

25. Dr. Brown:

So, yes, in many cases, there's an insecurity, there's a competition. And look, when you do well, and you get commended for it, "Hey, Robert, great job! Really proud of you!" and then maybe your best friend does well too. Like you win your race in high school and he wins his race, and you're both all excited, and everybody's happy. But if he wins his race, and you lose your race. "Oh, you always win". You know people give bad attitude. So, a lot of it does stem from insecurity,

Response:

One might urge Dr. Brown to speak only for himself, since he certainly does not speak knowledgeably about the motives of others. Let me ask any thinking person which person is more likely to choose his theology due to personal insecurity:

- a) A Jew, whose race has been historically persecuted, choosing to believe that someday God will vindicate his race against all their enemies, or
- b) A Christian choosing to believe that no race is any different from any other?

Which scenario looks more like an insecure person choosing a theology to alleviate his fears?

26. Dr. Brown:

But Paul addresses it explicitly, head-on in Romans the 11th chapter. He addresses it head-on, and there he says, I don't want you to be ignorant, lest you become arrogant.

So, what's the ignorance? The ignorance is: "God is finished with Israel. We're the new Israel. God has kicked them out, and taken us in." That ignorance leads then to that obvious arrogance, and that brings judgment. So to the extent, the Church has fallen into that, it has fallen away from grace, and fallen away from favor, and blessing.

Response:

I don't think ignorance has much to do with this matter. I am not ignorant of the claim of some that there is a future purpose for Israel as a nation. What I am ignorant of is any passage of scripture

that declares such a future. Certainly Romans 11:26 does not claim this (nor so much as mention national Israel).

Dr. Brown cannot disprove the actual belief of the supersessionists. He first must create a caricature to mock. I have never believed that God kicked out Israel and stuck someone else in there. What I believe (which the Bible teaches from beginning to end) is that rebels against God have no claim to His promises (Deut.28:15ff; Ps.50:16-17), and followers of God are His people, to whom the promises apply (Ex.19:5-6; Gal.3:29; 4:30-31). How is the holding of such a view a symptom of arrogance, jealousy, insecurity or inferiority? Please show me the connection between such a belief and any of these motivations.

27. Dr. Brown:

So, Robert, yeah, often I've seen the very same thing. I wanted to put the best construction on things earlier and to say that people can hold to this wrong theology for spiritual reasons, but they can also hold to it for unspiritual reasons.

Response:

Why not mention the third (and correct) alternative: They hold their theology for exegetical reasons?

28. Dr. Brown:

[With reference to a debate between Dr. Brown and Dr. Isaak] If he was saying, "Hey, if I believe in the God of Israel then I'm Israel, I'm part of Israel." Yeah, and I said, "Well, then are you circumcised?" In other words, if you want to be the physical part of Israel.

Response:

I don't see any supersessionists wanting "to be the physical part of Israel." It is inherent in *Supersessionism* to believe that physical race matters nothing. Why would one wish to become part of the physical Israel? As for being circumcised, according to Paul believers are indeed circumcised in the only sense that matters. We are "*the circumcision*" (Phil.3:3). We have the circumcision of the heart (Rom.2:28). Our circumcision is not with hands, but by Christ (Col.2:12)—so what could we possibly gain by becoming physically part of Israel? Paul said that a circumcised man's disobedience to God will be counted to him as uncircumcision (Rom.2:25). Most of those who are physically part of World Jewry (and especially those living in Israel) are, tragically, lost to Christ and, statistically, most will die that way. I find nothing about that of which to be envious.

29. Dr. Brown:

And Replacement Theology was ugly and wrong and destructive because it took away the spiritual promises from Israel or took away the distinct peoplehood of Israel or whatever else it might be.

Response:

So, Paul's glorious "mystery" of God's joining Jew and Gentile into one Body, breaking down the middle wall of partition between them in Christ, was an "ugly, wrong and destructive" doctrine? Is there some objective evidence that Paul's doctrine exhibited any such characteristics—or is this simply an anti-Christian assertion? I am not talking about anti-Semitism—we all agree that anti-Semitism, like all racism, is always ugly. But how is that related to the supersessionist view whose only racial implication is that no race is either superior or inferior, by definition, to other races?

30. Dr. Brown:

And the question comes up, "Okay, so do two million professing Christians inherit the physical land of Israel?"

And he was saying "No, no, I'm not saying that." And I said, "Well, you keep wanting this land." And he goes, "I'm saying this as a Palestinian" (he is a Palestinian Christian). So, there was that aspect of "What about us Palestinians?"

And in sympathy to Dr. Isaak, they see Christians supporting Israel, they feel Israel is oppressing them, and mistreating them, they are the Christians, Israel is not a believing nation. Why are the Christians and the rest of the world standing with Israel, neglecting them? And that's where they feel that certain tension.

Response:

This is the burning question, isn't it? It is not hard to answer. Is it not that teachers like Dr. Brown are telling Christians to support apostate Israel's claims over their Christian neighbors' claims?

Commented [DG4]:

31. Dr. Brown:

And in my talk, which you can see online, it's called "A Loving Challenge to My Palestinian Christian Friends." One of the points I made was "You're not going to have the sympathy of many Christians in the West if you hold to any form of Replacement Theology."

Response:

I'm pretty sure that this reality is in the process of changing (at least among the Christians I know), as the errors of *Dispensationalism* are increasingly exposed, and greater biblical literacy prevails. Unbiblical Zionism seems to be receding, rather than increasing, in the Christian Church. This is probably why dispensationalists and Zionists are becoming so desperate and careless of accuracy in so many of their statements. In the mid-twentieth century, they had the ignorant dispensational masses as a reliable army of uncritical supporters. Today, the hoards are waking up and studying their Bibles without the imposition of the dispensational filter.

32. Dr. Brown:

Because we know that the God who scattered the Jewish people is the God who brought the Jewish people back, and there's no two ways about it. If he scattered us in his judgment, the nations of the world don't have the power to regather us, the UN doesn't have the power to regather us, the British Mandate doesn't have the power to regather us, the Balfour Declaration doesn't have the power to regather us, the Peel Commission doesn't have the power to regather us, doesn't matter who, the United Nations, Russian, nobody has the power to regather us if God scattered us. So, he brought us back,

Response:

I address this favorite argument in several documents in this collection [4:16-17; 5:32; 6:14-16; 9:4, 17; 16:6; 18:9; 19:21]. However, maybe Dr. Brown should be reminded that the Jews have not been restored as a nation in their land. The majority of the world's Jews are not in Israel, and many have no intentions of going there. How is it that they have for so long successfully resisted "God's gathering" (since it is claimed that people cannot resist His scattering or gathering)?

There is no analogue between the biblical nation of Israel, established by God as a covenantal, Torah-observant, idol-intolerant, theocracy, on the one hand, and the modern, secular, pluralistic

democracy now sitting on the same plot of real estate, on the other. All you have is the land renamed with the ancient name under the control of a government resembling nothing in the Davidic monarchy. This is not what God promised through the pre-exilic and exilic prophets, nor what He established post-exile when He fulfilled those prophecies. In what sense is modern Israel unlike any other man-created democratic nation? No objective observer can seriously regard this as the restoration, nor the modern-day equivalent, of biblical Israel established in terms of Exodus 19:5-6.

33. Dr. Brown:

...and for those who say, "but you can only return, you can only come back with repentance," yeah, that's according to the Sinai covenant, but the promise to Abraham was given centuries earlier. Paul says, in Galatians 3:17, the law which comes later can't nullify the promise. So God brought us back in unbelief because he's merciful because it's his reputation involved because he has a plan. We all fail and fall short under the law, but we will find mercy and grace.

Response:

This Galatians passage is, apparently, a favorite one for Dr. Brown to misinterpret [See: 3:24, 26, 31; 5:32; 6:2; 10:36; 15:14; 16:3; 18:8]. Paul says that the promise, which the law could not nullify, was the Abrahamic promise. This promise was not made to Israel, but to Abraham's Seed. We have two ways of understanding Abraham's "seed." We can refer to the multitude of physical descendants of Abraham, including Israelites, Ishmaelites, Midianites, Shuahites, Edomites, and many others—who all qualify by natural heredity as Abraham's seed "*according to the flesh*," or we can see it as the New Testament sees it—the Seed "*according to promise*," which is Christ and all who are in Him (Gal.3:16, 29). Might as well go with the second, since Paul affirms that the Jewish children of the flesh will not inherit the Abrahamic blessings, any more than Ishmael did, because promises are only for the children of the promise (Rom.9:8; Gal.4:21-31).

If we want to have the promises apply to the children of the flesh, but to exclude the Ishmaelites, Edomites, et al., then we have to look to Sinai. It is there, and there alone, that God promised the Abrahamic blessings (conditionally) to the newly formed nation Israel. Yet this is the covenant Dr. Brown suddenly wants to ignore.

One cannot have it both ways. If Israel after the flesh ever had these things promised, in contrast to all of the other nations descended from Abraham after the flesh (which would include the Palestinians, by the way), then the Sinaitic Covenant is their only basis. However, they botched that covenant and it was replaced by the New Covenant which has nothing specific to do with racial connections to Abraham or anyone else. It is a non-rationally based covenant. As always, God's promises are to the faithful. God runs a merit-based, not race-based system of rewards (Rom.2:5-10; 1 Pet.1:17). He is not Woke.

If the promises are to all racial Israel, what about all the Jews who have died over the last 2,000 years in exile and unbelief? Which promises belonged to them? If the promise is offered on a racial basis, they should have a piece of it, even though they rejected Messiah. If unbelieving Jews have died and did not have a claim to the alleged promises due them, on what basis can it be thought that unbelieving Jews who have not yet died have any such claim? The promise is not racially based, and never was. But if it is not racially based, then one is left with what Dr. Brown uncharitably labels "Replacement Theology."

This radio talk was entitled the "*Appeal of Replacement Theology*." It seems a fool's errand for one unfamiliar with the sentiments of those whom he thus labels to set out to explain their motivations.

Every motivation he identified as being a factor was a sheer fabrication unrelated to reality. The only true motive for embracing this view is *exegetical necessity*. Dr. Brown would do less harm, divide the Body of Christ less, and bring less occasion for embarrassment upon himself were he to never speak on subjects about which he seemingly knows nothing—like what could possibly motivate someone to disagree with his viewpoint.

Document 6

Variations of Replacement Theology (Part 1)

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

I've often addressed the issue of what's called Replacement Theology or Supersessionism. The idea that the Church has replaced Israel in the purposes and promises of God, or that the Church has superseded Israel.

Now when I had a friendly dialogue with Dr. Gary DeMar about this, he said, 'look at the word ekklesia. It just means congregation, assembly, and it was used for the Assembly of Israel in the Old Testament, and for all believers in the New Testament. So there's no such thing as Replacement Theology'.

Well, I appreciated the point he was making. The larger issue is this, if when your theology is all said and done, you have a viewpoint whereby, there are no national promises that remain for the Jewish people. It is Replacement Theology.

Response:

Dr. Brown seems consistently resistant to abandoning the term "*Replacement Theology*" even though he knows that those who hold to the doctrines he is referencing object to the term on the grounds that it does not correctly represent their system, whose features they obviously understand better than he does. He has mentioned that adherents prefer to call it "*Fulfillment Theology*" or "*Inclusion Theology*," and I would add a third: "*Remnant Theology*." Those who hold these views insist that "*Replacement Theology*" is terminology that obscures, rather than represents, their views.

Dr. Brown knows this, but prefers to keep calling it "*Replacement Theology*." It is as if someone began calling Dr. Brown's own theology "*Hebrew Supremist Theology*," or "*Palestinian Subjugation Theology*," and kept doing so after Dr. Brown objected and explained that these terms do not represent valid descriptions of his views. What, other than rudeness and hostility, would lead anyone to keep using these terms over the objections of those whose theology is being mislabeled thus?

In his paragraph, above, Dr. Brown says: "when your theology is all said and done, you have a viewpoint whereby, there are no national promises that remain for the Jewish people. It is Replacement Theology." In other words, over against the preferred labels for this view, he is giving a reason for continuing to use the inaccurate term. One might expect to hear "when your theology is all said and done, you have a viewpoint whereby the Church *replaces* Israel, it is *Replacement Theology*." This would be a reasonable explanation for continuing to use the objectionable terms. It would be parallel to my saying, "when your theology is all said and done, you have a viewpoint whereby, some people are given special consideration based upon nothing but their racial background, it is *Racist Theology*."

It makes no sense to conclude that *Replacement Theology* is a fitting name for a view that teaches that all the promises God has made to Israel have either 1) been fulfilled historically, or 2) been forfeited by Israel's failure to keep the stated conditions for their fulfillment, or 3) have their fulfillment to Israel's remnant in the Messiah, somehow justifies the label "*Replacement Theology*" makes no sense at all. Where does any concept of "replacement" appear in such a belief?

Dr. Brown knows well enough that supersessionists have repeatedly denied that they believe "the Church replaces Israel." Which means, there is no basis for retaining the terminology of "replacement" at all—unless it is referring to the replacement of the Old Covenant with the New

Covenant. That is the only thing replaced in supersessionism—but does Dr. Brown himself object to the idea of the Old Covenant being replaced by the New? If so, on what basis?

I think the only reason Dr. Brown ignores the explanations of those who actually hold this theology, and who know what it is that they believe, is that a more accurate label, like *“Fulfillment Theology”* does not carry any negative connotations, whereas, *“Replacement Theology”* has attained a historically negative association in the minds of everyone who uses the term. By the use of a term that is never used positively (since only its opponents call it that), Dr. Brown can count on demonizing the view in the sight of an ignorant audience merely by deceptive labeling, without actually letting them know what is taught in the view. This approach will score rhetorical points with an ignorant audience—even if it compromises the presenter’s own integrity.

2. Dr. Brown:

You have taken promises that were explicitly given to the people, to the nation,

- *Say the promise of the land, which God reiterates in Psalm 105 was a promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long before there was a Sinai covenant.*
- *And Paul tells us in Galatians 3 that the law which is 400 years after the promise cannot annul the promise.*

Response:

I have pointed out several times, in previous documents [3:24, 26, 31; 5:32; 6:2; 10:36; 15:14; 16:3; 18:8], that Galatians 3:17 is not helpful to Dr. Brown’s position. The promises spoken to Abraham are not specifically applied to the nation of Israel but to Abraham’s “seed.” This term can refer to many things—including multiple ancient Middle Eastern nations. Yet, according to scripture, the promises belong specifically to Christ and to all who are in Him (Gal.3:16, 29), making them the *“heirs according to the promise.”* These heirs are both Jewish and Gentile believers. They are contrasted with the *“children according to the flesh”*—the natural, unbelieving Jews—who will not be heirs with the children of promise (Rom.9:8; Gal.4:21-31).

The Sinaitic Covenant, and its Law, were added 400 years later, and represented the first time the Abrahamic promises were applied to any nation (Israel) on a strictly conditional basis. The Abrahamic promises still apply to the Seed of Abraham, but not to the nation that trashed the covenant by which those promises could have been theirs. If Paul was not saying this, then he was incompetent to communicate in writing.

3. Dr. Brown:

So, the promise that God would give the land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which you can identify as the ones who were scattered, the ones who were judged, the ones who have been all over the world, the ones who’ve been brought back, all right.

And DNA tests would largely confirm the ultimate origins, and where we come from. But aside from that, aside from that, it’s easy enough to trace history, it’s scattered here, scattered there, literature written there, and then regathered here, regathered there, it’s easy enough to trace these things back.

But bottom line is this. If you end up with the theology that says that those promises that were given to physical national Israel, promises about rebuilding of Jerusalem, the prayers that Jerusalem will be the praise of all the earth in Isaiah 62, that that now means the Church, that means something spiritual, that means something heavenly, it is Replacement Theology, and it is to be rejected.

Response:

Call me dull, but I still cannot find anything justifying the word or concept of “replacement” in any of the above paragraphs. According to the above rant, what exactly has replaced something else?

4. Dr. Brown:

A question was asked on YouTube when Paul is so emphatically clear at the end of Romans the 11th chapter, that even though Jewish people, for now maybe enemies of the gospel, they are loved for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

And that's why Paul promises that there'll be a national turning with the return of the Messiah and that all Israel will be saved. Speaking about, not just the remnant, certainly, not speaking about Gentile believers there, whom he refers to elsewhere as Gentiles, and references the fullness of the Gentiles, but speaking of those who are now hardened that they will turn at the end of the age.

Response:

In Romans 11, there is no reference to those Jews who have been hardened turning at the end of the age, since,

- 1) Paul does not mention any generation of unbelieving Jews other than his own (he mentions only branches that, in his day, had been broken off for their unbelief).
- 2) None of those Jews to whom he refers lived to see what Dr. Brown refers to as “the end of the age”—nor does Paul make any reference to the end of the age in the passage.
- 3) There is no prediction that any of the unbelieving Jews of whom he speaks would ever turn back to God.
- 4) If they were to do so, Paul says, they could be grafted in as branches—though this would be individually experienced, just as was their being broken off. There is no hint of a national turning.

The verses cited in the last paragraph have been answered more than completely in my previous responses.

5. Dr. Brown:

How can replacement theologians be so secure in their position when Paul so blatantly is clear? It's a mystery to me. I understand the arguments. I tried to go that way many years ago, but couldn't successfully because of the clear testimony of Scripture, and the clear action of God in history along with that.

Response:

If Dr. Brown really does understand the argument, he never reveals this in any of his responses. The fact that he still speaks of “replacement” is a pretty good indicator that he neither understands the argument, nor the position itself. If he is going to talk about it so frequently, he might want to learn something about the view so as not to be guilty of such misrepresentations.

One thing that is very clear, once the dispensational glasses are removed, is that Romans 11 contains no future predictions at all. There are no chronological statements in vv.25-26, nor in vv.1, 12, 15, or elsewhere in the chapter. See my other responses to this point [3:27; 17:11].

6. Dr. Brown:

Some say, "No, no, we are into Fulfillment Theology, not replacement, but fulfillment. So all the promises of God are, yes and amen in Jesus. They're all fulfilled in Jesus. He didn't come to abolish the law, but to fulfill. And therefore, all the promises that God gave to Israel find their fulfillment in Jesus, the epitome of Israel, the one who accomplishes the goals of the nation of Israel. So Jews in Jesus receive the promises, but Jews outside of Jesus, do not."

Well, same end result, I agree with much of that, and of course, Jesus, Yeshua fulfills the destiny and purpose of Israel. Of course, I agree with that, absolutely. And yes, Jews outside of Jesus are lost. If a Jewish person dies rejecting Jesus, the Messiah, that person is like anyone else that dies rejecting Jesus, the Messiah, lost and under the judgment of God. There's one way of salvation for Jew and Gentile alike, and that's through the blood of Messiah, that's through his death and resurrection. It's that simple.

If you could be righteous by keeping the law, then the Messiah would not have died, all right. So very plainly, very clearly, no dispute here that we need to share the Gospel with everyone, to the Jew first, also to the Gentile, there's no salvation outside of Jesus, the Messiah. It's what I've lived for 46 plus years, and that's why I'm rejected by so many in the Jewish community.

That being said, God has still made promises that hold for the nation as a whole.

Response:

In the first paragraph (above) Dr. Brown gives a good summary of every distinctive claim of the view which he wants to call "Replacement Theology"—and, in the second paragraph, he claims that he believes all the same things! Elsewhere, he has argued that these beliefs incline toward anti-Semitism. How has he avoided becoming an anti-Semite while believing them?

Strikingly, nothing in his summary of points mentions anything about anything being "replaced," and, while he claims to believe these things himself, he still says that those who believe them are wrong! Dr. Brown is an intelligent man, but when he gets onto this subject, he seems to become muddled in his thinking.

It is amazing that anyone could agree (as he says he does) that Jesus fulfilled "all the Law and the Prophets," and then say, there are still some of the promises from the Law and the Prophets that have not been fulfilled. One should choose a lane. Either Jesus fulfilled all the Law and the Prophets (as He claimed) or else some of the Law and the Prophets are still unfulfilled. Both cannot simultaneously be affirmed.

7. Dr. Brown: [Listing promises God made concerning Israel:]

- *That he would scatter us in his anger, and he would regather us in his mercy. He has done that.*

Response:

Yes, He fulfilled this 500 years before Christ. No additional predictions of restoration, such as could be regarded as unfulfilled, were ever given after that.

8. Dr. Brown:

- *That he would sprinkle clean water on us, back in the land, he is doing that, that there will be a national turning at the end of the age. He will do that.*

Response:

The sprinkling of clean water refers to Ezekiel 36:25-27, which was fulfilled with the remnant at Pentecost. All the promises made to Israel were for the faithful remnant (Isa.10:22; Jer.23:3-6; Joel 2:32; Mic.2:12; 5:2-5). The wicked have no claim to the covenant or its promises (Ps.50:16-17). No prophecy can be found that mentions a national turning at the end of the age. Nor does anything currently happening in Israel justify Dr. Brown's statement, "he is doing that."

9. Dr. Brown:

Once you take passages like Zechariah 12 to physical, literal Israel, and say, "Well, no, that has another explanation or another fulfillment," now it is a form of Replacement Theology. So, you can call it Replacement Theology, you can call it Fulfillment Theology, you can call it whatever else, it is all the same.

Response:

Actually, it's not even a little bit the same. The prophecies of Zechariah 9-14 were fulfilled in the first century, as an abundance of New Testament citations consistently point out. To affirm what the Bible affirms about these verses is not to introduce any concept of replacement (what is said to be replaced?), but of fulfillment in Christ. So why is it "all the same" if we take a theology that says nothing about replacement, and everything about fulfillment, and call it "Replacement Theology" rather than "Fulfillment Theology"—even over the protests of those who actually believe and understand their own position (which Dr. Brown apparently does not)?

Is it "all the same" if I call Dr. Brown's theology "Racist Theology" since it holds out privileges to certain people strictly based on their racial identity? I doubt if he would think so. How would that be different from what he is doing? Why does he list a bunch of statements that have nothing to do with anything being "replaced," and say, "that's why it is okay to call it Replacement Theology"? His reasoning is opaque to me.

10. Dr. Brown:

Let me also say this, it is this theological error in Church history that opened wide the door to anti-Semitism and persecution of the Jewish people.

Response:

This old yarn again? Could anyone explain how a teaching that says, "All races are the same in the sight of God" somehow opens the door for one race to hate another? Until this can be demonstrated, perhaps it should stop being claimed by the critics who thereby declare themselves to be either ignorant or slanderers of other Christians whose views they have either refused to understand or to correctly represent.

Is the only way to prevent anti-Semitism to teach that one race (the Jews) is superior to others? Are those really the only two theological options? Either all races are the same, or one is superior to the rest. There is no third option. Must we claim the second in order to keep haters from hating? Do you think that will work? In fact, wasn't it the Jews' own belief in the second proposition that made many non-Jews resent them throughout history? It seems to me that teaching Jewish Supremism (why not call it that, since Dr. Brown insists on using unsanctioned labels for the other view?) would contribute more to actual anti-Semitism—just like the Black Lives Matter Movement created more resentment toward black people than had existed in this country since the 1960s. It was a great move for people wanting to create racial resentment where there previously was none.

11. Dr. Brown:

There are people who hold to these theologies today, who are not anti-Semitic. They don't have an anti-Semitic bone in their body, but they are convinced by Scripture that all of these promises now apply to the body of Christ as a whole, or to anyone in Jesus, and no longer to Israel as a nation, and that's what they're convinced of.

I'm just telling you that historically, historically, it is the doctrine of Replacement Theology that opened wide the doors of anti-Semitism and Jew-hatred in the Church, which is a principal reason that Jews don't turn to Jesus because the Church did such a good job of pushing them away through the centuries.

Response:

This libelous claim should never be stated again until someone has shown how anti-Semitism has been, or could ever be, justified by the actual teachings of *Supersessionism*. It is a completely false accusation. Anti-Semites have their own personal reasons for being haters, which have nothing to do with Christian theology. Supersessionists have their exegetical reasons for their theology that have nothing to do with anti-Semitism. I challenge Dr. Brown to identify one point in this doctrine that would incline the believer toward anti-Semitism. This is a sincere challenge, and I would like either to have it answered or else to have the absurd charge never repeated.

In fact, it is the very view that the Jews are special in God's sight (Dr. Brown's understanding on Romans 11:28) that has caused many Jews (e.g., the Pharisees) to despise uncircumcised Gentiles. That was the direct effect of such a view that Paul confronted in Romans 2:17ff. The cause-and-effect relationship between ideas of Jewish superiority and the Jews' despising of Gentiles would be much easier connection to prove than to find such between the "all races are equal before God" view and anti-Semitism.

If one wished to say that anti-Semites have historically justified their racism by the claim that the Jews killed Jesus and therefore Gentiles should hate them, they are not representing a supersessionist position, but are using a historical fact to justify a hysterical reaction. Peter and Paul both blamed Jewish people for killing Jesus (Acts 2:23, 36; 1 Thess.2:14-15)—yet neither of them was anti-Semitic. They were only acknowledging the historical reality. They did not irrationally conclude that other Jews who were not directly involved in the death of Jesus should be blamed for what some Jews did.

This is often the rationale for racism—namely, to assume that a few bad apples spoil the whole bunch. A few bad experiences with blacks, whites, Jews, Asians, Hispanics, or any other race sometimes irrationally sours a person toward that race in general, causing him or her to negatively judge everyone of that race. This is sinful and is not justified by any Christian theology that I have ever encountered. It certainly bears no relation to *Supersessionism*.

Ironically, writing a book about some alleged "Christians" who mistreated Jews, and claiming that all Christians' hands are therefore stained with blood is the exact same error. God does not judge people by what race they were born into (this is the practice of Leftists and SJWs, who advocate "identity politics"). God, and rational people, know that every person—whether black or white, Jew or Gentile—must be judged by his own deeds (Rom.2:6-10). Only racists assess others by who their ancestors were. God pays no attention to irrelevant factors resulting from accidents of birth.

It is the failure to follow Christ (both on the part of the Jews and those who hate them) that opened the door to anti-Jewish racism. Since *Supersessionism* has nothing negative to say about the Jewish race, *per se*, it plays no role in endorsing anti-Semitism. *Supersessionism* is merely historic, biblical, Christian theology—which commands all believers to love all people.

My request to Dr. Brown, as a brother in Christ, is simply this: Please stop lying about a doctrine with which you disagree, and which you apparently do not understand. Whenever one must misrepresent a position in order to refute it, one misses the target entirely, and gives the impression that the doctrine, when correctly represented, cannot be refuted. It would seem that such lies actually have no intended object other than to divide the Body of Christ. God, who is love, says He hates those who do that (Prov.6:16-19).

12. Dr. Brown:

And when Paul writes in Galatians 3 that the promise of the seed, that the seed was Christ, he also knows that the Hebrew word seed, 'Zera', is only used in the singular if it's referring to physical seeds, like planting seeds. So you have singular and plural.

Otherwise, you never use the plural, just like the word 'offsprings'. Do we use offsprings? No, offspring, offspring is collective. Paul knew it was collective. He was making a polemical point that the fulfillment comes through the Messiah. But he is emphatic, he is clear, he is definite that God gave promises to the nation that remained. You have to take it up with Paul, it's not my view.

Response:

This is a bizarre exegesis of Galatians 3. It is also bizarre to suggest that Paul believed in unfulfilled promises owed to the Jews. In all his recorded sermons in Acts, and in 13 written epistles, Paul never once mentions a belief in the existence of such unfulfilled promises. How does Dr. Brown know that Paul believed something that he never mentioned, and which goes directly contrary to what he actually wrote?

What Paul does say is that those who are only Abraham's children according to the flesh do not have any inheritance in the Abrahamic promises (Gal.4:30-31), and that all those who are in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, do have them (Gal.3:29). Dr. Brown seems to skirt these statements entirely in his dealing with Paul's argument—even when discussing Galatians 3:16, which he skips over with a cavalier dismissal. But what else can he do (beside change his mind, I mean)? The passages in Galatians 3 and 4 absolutely destroy his doctrine on this point.

13. Dr. Brown:

That's why the Jewish people remain to this day, that's why, although we've been scattered, we have been regathered by God.

Response:

Really? The Jews have been regathered? Where? In New York City? In Miami? In Los Angeles? Where are most of the Jews? Fifty-one percent are in the United States. Thirty percent or so are in Israel.

Over half of the Jews are still in the *diaspora*, just as most of them have been since 586 B.C. How can one claim they have been gathered? Is Dr. Brown one of them? Has he been gathered back to Israel?

The percentage of world Jewry in Israel in the time of Christ was probably not much smaller than is the case now. Yet, the Jews were even then longing for the gathering of the *diaspora*, which means they did not think this percentage of Jews being in Palestine constituted any kind of "regathering." How is it different today—apart from the fact that the modern democracy in the Israel today is in no sense a restoration of the covenantal theocracy which was biblical Israel? Israel today is no more the

holy nation of Yahweh than it was when God dispersed them in A.D.70. In fact, today (unlike then) a large number of Israelis are atheists (20%, in one survey, 2019; down from 65% in 2015 Gallup Survey).

14. Dr. Brown:

Look, I've put out something very simple for years now. I've put it out in academic debates. I've put it out on radio, I've put it out on social media, I've put it out in writing, I've put it out on video, not one coherent biblically based response have I ever received to this. So, I'm going to throw it out again, then I'm going to go to the phones.

We know that when God blesses, no one can curse. When he curses, no one can bless. When he opens a door, no one can shut it. When he shuts a door, no one can open it. We know these things. We know that when he scatters, no one can regather, when he regathered, no one can scatter. These are principles that we see based in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Scriptures.

So, a very simple question for you, if God in his wrath destroyed the temple, which we know he did, and scattered the Jewish people around the world, who regathered us? How is it there are more than 6 million Jews living in Israel today? Who regathered us?

Response:

This is Dr. Brown's favorite argument because he says that it has never been answered. I have answered this argument, which appears a number of times in these documents [see: 4:16-17; 5:32; 6:14-16; 9:4, 17; 16:6; 18:9; 19:21], though Dr. Brown has not yet had a chance to read them. Every premise in this argument is without validity. Where does the Bible say that, if God scatters a people none of them can ever migrate back to their ancestral lands without His intervention? People, the Jews included, are pretty much free to travel the world and settle where they wish.

However, this has nothing to do with God's curses on nations. People must live somewhere, and there is no reason for God to favor one place above another. The whole world is the Lord's, and His true people live in every nation (see Rev.7:9-10).

The fact is, no matter where they live, people are under God's curse if they reject Christ. Paul was emphatic about that (1 Cor.16:22). Therefore, wherever they may live, the unsaved Jews (over 97% of that race) have not in any sense revoked or escaped the curse God pronounced upon unbelievers generally, and upon disobedient Israel in particular. It is very premature to be saying that the Jews have been regathered—and irrelevant to the purposes of God, unless we define God's purpose as being that unbelieving people should go to hell from their homes in the Middle East rather than from Poland or New York City.

15. Dr. Brown:

You say, "Well, people just did it." Well, so they overpowered God, they overpowered God's will? "Well, Satan did." Oh, Satan is now stronger than God? If he scattered us in his wrath, the only way we're back is because he regathered us. It's very simple.

Response:

People do many things contrary to the will of God, though He has not indicated what His will may be with reference to the place any given Jewish person should live. If He wants them all to be gathered to Israel, then over half of them (including Dr. Brown) have, indeed, thwarted His will by not moving there. On the other hand, if God does not want the Jews to be there, then almost half of them have successfully thwarted His will in this matter.

We don't know where God wants anyone to live, but we do know His will is that all would repent and trust in Christ. In this respect, 97% of all Jews have indeed proven themselves capable of resisting His will for themselves (as we are told that the Pharisees did—Luke 7:30).

If God destroyed the theocratic nation of Israel, can man restore it? Not legitimately, but it is at this time a moot point. Nothing remotely like that has materialized since A.D.70. No Jew or government edict has ever done this. So, in what sense does Dr. Brown think that the judgment of God on Israel has in any respect been reversed by modern geopolitical realities?

16. Dr. Brown:

And for those that are very strong in your belief in the sovereignty of God, then you have to say that God has sovereignly raised up the nation again.

Response:

If He did so, He still has not removed the curse arising from their unbelief—which is the only curse that matters.

17. Dr. Brown:

And by the way, I'm not a dispensationalist, I don't believe in a pre-trib rapture, all right. Professor Craig Keener and I are just finishing our book now, which comes out next year. Yeah, I think it comes out next year, on "Not Afraid of the Antichrist—Why We Don't Believe in a Pre-trib Rapture." I'm not a dispensationalist, all right.

Listen, I can take you back to the Puritans, who were expecting the regathering of Israel and the salvation of Israel. They weren't dispensationalists. I can take you to Charles Spurgeon, I can take you to Bishop J.C. Ryle, great Christian leaders in the 1800s and Robert Murray McCheyne and Horatius Bonar with their tremendous vision, and burden for the salvation of the Jewish people, and the regathering of the Jewish people.

And Bishop Ryle said that, again, these are Calvinist preachers and leaders and Presbyterian pastors and Baptist pastors and leaders and luminaries and great thinkers and theologians. Bishop Ryle said that as he understood Scriptures, the Jews will be regathered back to the land in unbelief first, and then will come to faith. This has nothing to do with dispensational beliefs, all right. To me, it's just being scriptural, plain, and simple.

Response:

I am aware and pleased that Dr. Brown is not a dispensationalist—and equally glad that he is not a Calvinist, a Cessationist, nor a Progressive Christian. I assume he would regard himself as a *Historic Premillennialist* (I don't know). If we were discussing the question of the millennium, he might be inclined to cite men like Polycarp, Tertullian, Justin, Papias, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus. I would point out, however, that these historic premillennialists in the first three centuries were Supersessionists. The greatness of their reputations would not incline Dr. Brown to embrace their doctrine on this point.

Spurgeon, Ryle, McCheyne and the Puritans were all fine Christians—and so have been many dispensationalists and Calvinists—like my personal hero, George Müller. However, neither Dr. Brown

nor I agree with the Calvinism of these great men. If neither of us is impressed with their views on meticulous providence or election, what argument could possibly be made that we should follow their views on Israeology or eschatology (the Puritans were mostly amilliennial and postmillennial)? I reserve the right to disagree with great men (including Dr. Brown, whom I have long admired) upon matters of exegesis—and apparently Dr. Brown reserves to himself that right, as well. Therefore, the counting of noses of those who share his opinion on one point contributes nothing to the questions of exegesis or truth.

Document 7
Variations of Replacement Theology (Part 2)

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Let's go to Ian in Fort Worth, Texas. Thanks for calling the Line of Fire.

Ian:

Hey, Dr. Brown, real quick, before my question, I just wanted to thank you for a comment that you made. I'm Reformed, and I do believe that Israel coming back to their land is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. And it's something that I've always found inconsistent among, what I've noticed a lot of Presbyterians is that they don't believe that. But you had said, shouldn't they at least acknowledge that God's sovereignty has brought them back, because it wouldn't make any sense, like, oh, wow, it's just a coincidence.

Response:

This creates a false dichotomy: The nation of Israel is either: a) divinely mandated or b) a mere coincidence. Are there not other options? What if it is no coincidence, but a carefully planned and executed agenda—but not God's? It is at least a third option worthy of consideration.

2. Dr. Brown:

Yeah, why did God sovereignly do something that is the exact opposite of what you would expect him to do, if in fact Israel as a nation no longer has significance in the sight of God? Yeah, I think that's a fair point.

Response:

Not every political development, even in Israel, is necessarily God's doing. As God said (speaking of Israel): *"They set up kings, but not of me"* (Hos.8:4). As far as God's doing what Christians would not expect Him to do...in this matter, what came about was remarkably similar to what the increasing consensus of Western Christians fully expected to happen. In fact, nothing like it began to occur during the time that few Christians expected it. In fact, even the Zionist movement among Jews, where the idea of finding a homeland for Jews began to be seriously proposed was not founded until Theodor Hertzl's First Zionist Congress in 1897. The idea of a return of the *diaspora* began to take hold broadly among Christians before Hertzl's conference, through the huge influence of William Blackstone's 1878 book, *"Jesus is Coming"* (the *"Late, Great Planet Earth"* of the late 19th century), which was massively distributed to evangelical pastors.

Jerry Klinger, President of The Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation, said of Rev. Blackstone: "His book, the veritable reference source of American dispensationalist thought, sold millions of copies. It was translated into 48 languages. Blackstone clearly laid out the Biblical justifications for the return of the Jews and the reestablishment of the Jewish state as a pre-condition of the second coming of Jesus. His efforts influenced countless millions of Christians to identify as Christian Zionists."

In 1891 (still before the founding of secular Zionism) Rev. Blackstone assembled a document, signed by many of the most wealthy and influential Americans of the time (including John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, and Cyrus McCormick), calling for President Benjamin Harrison's support for the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He presented similar documents to later

U.S. Presidents. It was only after half a century of dispensationalists' pressuring a series of U.S. Presidents that Harry Truman pushed for the U.N. to grant statehood to Israel.

Nathan Straus, assistant to SCOTUS Justice, Louis Brandeis (the Jewish leader of Zionism in America in his day), wrote to Rev. Blackstone, May 8, 1916:

"Mr. Brandeis is perfectly infatuated with the work that you have done along the lines of Zionism. It would have done your heart good to have heard him assert what a valuable contribution to the cause your document is. In fact, he agrees with me that you are the Father of Zionism, as your work antedates Herzl".

At the American Zionist Conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles in 1919 and 1920, Reverend Blackstone was singled out for special honor and recognition for his outstanding contribution to the Zionist movement.

The establishment of the modern State of Israel, whether done by God or not, was anything but unexpected when it occurred.

3. Dr. Brown:

I look back to some of the great Presbyterian leaders that inspired my own life. I mentioned a number of them and the Puritans from whom I've learned so much, and so many of them had a tremendous heart for Israel.

Samuel Rutherford, who's writing Spurgeon deeply prized as among the most spiritual writings in existence. According to Rutherford, he would put off going to heaven and being with Jesus if he could be here to see the Jewish people and Jesus the Messiah reconciled, that's how much he loved Israel and the Jewish people. But yeah, great. Ask your question, sir.

Response:

Dr. Brown and I both reject these men's Calvinism, but we are supposed to assume they are correct about Israel? What is the rule about such men from which we are obliged to adopt theological paradigms?

Like Rutherford (and Paul), I would love to see the Jewish people and Jesus reconciled to one another. Of course, many Jewish people have been reconciled to Jesus over the past two-thousand years, which is indeed wonderful. However, neither Paul, nor any biblical writer, predicted that they will all come to Christ—and no New Testament writer ever expressed any expectation that they would return to their Land.

4. Ian:

My question was, now I do believe, like I said that the Bible predicts the Jews coming back to the land, but I've heard interpretations of Isaiah 11:11, where it says that he will gather them a second time.

- *Some people say that that's him talking about first time was in Egypt,*
- *second time was the Babylonian captivity and bringing them back.*

And then the other side that the first is Babylonian captivity, and then the second is what happened here recently.

5. Dr. Brown:

Right, right. We do know there are other passages such as Jeremiah 16, where it says that with the regathering that's going to happen in the future, initially speaking of the Babylonian exile, that it's going to be so great that you'll forget about the return from Egypt, right.

The difference there is that the scattering it speaks of, from all around the world, was greater than the Babylonian exile. So, the Babylonian exile only fulfills these types of passages in part.

Response:

It seems as if Dr. Brown sees the return of the exiles from Babylon as only the beginning of a continuous and ongoing return from the diaspora that has been smoothly continuing until today. If so, he has a strange grasp of Jewish history. The return of the remnant from the exile was viewed as essentially having been fulfilled in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9:8-9).

Then, half a millennium later, those who had returned were again scattered, in A.D.70, and for nearly 2,000 years, there was no significant number of Jews returning until recently. To see the present migration of Jews to Israel as a continuation of the fulfillment of the prophecies of return from Babylon is to ignore the most significant scattering in history, in A.D.70, which took place after the return from exile.

The "second time" of God's gathering His people (Isaiah 11:11) does allude to the return from Babylon (as a type of spiritual salvation, as testified by the New Testament writers). The "first time" was certainly the exodus from Egypt, which is rather unambiguously stated in v.16: *"like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."* The return of exiles with Zerubbabel, and following, was a repeat of the Mosaic exodus. But both were types foreshadowing salvation in the Messiah.

It is most reasonable to assume that Jeremiah 16's gathering, which was to eclipse the exodus in importance, was not simply the release from captivity effected by Cyrus, nor any modern migration. Neither of these involved a large percentage of Jews returning geographically to Palestine. The Exodus and the return from Babylon were almost exactly like each other in import—i.e., Israel's nation had been non-existent, with its people in exile, but was re-created from nothing, as a political entity, by a miraculous divine intervention.

Both events, being historic examples of the same phenomenon (redemption through Yahweh), serve in the later scriptures as types of the salvation we have in Christ, eclipsing the original Exodus (Jer.16:14-15). This is why it is so common for the prophets to be speaking of the return from Babylon, in one sentence, and then to morph into a prophecy of the Messianic salvation. In this very chapter, the return from exile, as a type (e.g. Jer.16:16-18) suddenly morphs into salvation of Gentiles turning from idols—a salvation celebrated in Christ in the New Covenant (vv.19-20; cf., 1 Thess.1:9; 1 Peter 4:3).

The shift from the return in 538 B.C. to the salvation of the New Covenant can be seen in very many passages, e.g., Isa. 40:1-11; 48:20-49:6; 49:19-23; 52:7; 52:11-54:3; 59:15-60:5; Jer.3:14-19; 31:15-34; Ezek.34:13-13-25; 37:21-28; Mic.4:10 w/ 5:2-4; 7:15-20; Zech.2:7-11; 8:18-23; etc. The portions that refer to New Testament salvation are unmistakably identified by their references to the incoming Gentiles, and by their citation to this effect in the New Testament. See more detail in my response to the next segment.

It is this latter (Messianic) deliverance that Jeremiah predicts as eclipsing the Exodus. This is why Jesus (fulfilling Jeremiah 16:14-15) changed the Passover formula at the Last Supper. No longer is it

celebrated as a memorial of the Exodus, but as a memorial of Christ, and of the new “*exodus*” that He “*accomplished in Jerusalem,*” which even Moses and Elijah acknowledged on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:31).

6. Dr. Brown:

And here, “In that day, there shall be a root of Jesse,” verse 10, “who shall stand as a banner to the people for the Gentiles. So, seek Him, and his resting place shall be glorious.”

Well, this all happens way after the Babylonian exile, right? It shall come to pass in that day. So, these are the days of the Messianic era. These are the days in which the Gentiles are looking to the Messiah. So it can't be referring to Babylonian exile only.

“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of his people, who are left from Assyria and Egypt from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, and Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”

So that full scattering had not happened, the islands of the sea, and all these distant coastlines, that did not happen in the Babylonian exile.

So, it is either referring to

- *the Babylonian exile and the future, or*
- *if it's Egypt, and then the Babylonian exile, is the beginning of the world exile. There's this massive exile, which has continued through the centuries because there was never a full regathering from Babylon, only partial.*

Response:

As mentioned, above, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some Minor Prophets, predictions of the return of exiles from Babylon suddenly morph into Messianic Age prophecies. There are at least two reasons for this:

1. Because the return of the exiles, according to these prophets, includes the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Isa.32:15; Ezek.36:27; 37:12-14; Zech.12:10; 14:8 [cf., John 7:37-39])—as its second phase of restoration. For example, Ezekiel predicts, first, the assembly of the dry bones (the reorganization of the nation in Israel with Zerubbabel, after the Babylonian exile); and second, the “breath” or “Spirit” returning to the assembled nation—which came at Pentecost (Ezek.37:12, 14).
2. Because the return of the Babylonian exiles (the second regathering), like the Exodus from Egypt (the first ingathering) both serve in history as types of Messianic salvation. This is why prophecies about the former are blended with prophecies of the latter. As Hosea 11:1 describes the Exodus but Matthew applies it to the experience of the infant Jesus, inaugurating the Messianic Age, and Moses, along with Elijah, discussed with Christ the “*exodus*” he was about to accomplish, so also, the “second” *exodus* (i.e., from Babylon) also is a type of Christ’s salvation. Consider the following:
 - **Escape from Babylon** (Isa.48:20-21; 50:2; Jer.23:7-8) and **NT salvation** are compared with Exodus from Egypt (Isa.11:16; Hos.11:1; Micah 7:15, 19—Matt.2:15; Luke 9:31; 1 Cor.5:7; 10:1-6).

- **“The remnant” refers to those returned from captivity** (Isaiah 10:20-22; eph.2:7, 9; Hag.1:12, 14; 2:2; Zech.8:6, 11) becomes **the faithful remnant coming to Messiah** (Isa.11:11, 16; Jer.23:3-6; Joel 2:28-32; Mic.2:12; 4:7; 5:3-4, 7-8; 7:18; Zeph.3:12-13; Rom.9:27), which Paul identified with his own time (Rom. 11:5).
- Ezekiel 34 and 37 both speak of God bringing God’s sheep **back to their land**, but both mix this with the **coming of the Good Shepherd** (Ezek.34:23-24; 37:24-25; cf. Isa.40:11). Jesus is the Shepherd (John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:4) who came fulfilling this second aspect.
- **Returning exiles on a highway** (Isa.40:3; 43:19; Jer.31:21) which is a type of **Messiah “the Way”** (Isa.40:3; 11:16; 19:23; 35:8; 42:16; 62:10)
- Jeremiah 11:16 refers to Jewish “branches” cut off as being **Jews in Babylon as captives**. Rom. 11:16ff uses this image for **Jews unsaved**, due to rejecting Christ.
- Ezekiel 37 also sees restoration of exiles in two phases: 1) return from Babylon to Israel (vv.4-8, 11-12), and 2) the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (vv.9-10, 14).
- Isaiah spoke of God’s scattered children being **gathered from the east, west, north and south** (Isa.43:5-6; 49:12). Jesus used this terminology to speak of Gentiles being gathered to Him in His kingdom (Luke 13:29; Matt.8:11), which speaks of **salvation in Christ** and faith like that of the believing centurion.
- Isaiah sees the Land as barren wilderness with **Jews in exile** (Isa.5:5-6; 32:12-14; 34:13-17; 42:15; Jer.12:10; 22:6; Ezek.6:14; 19:12-14; Hos.2:3), but **fruitful when God has brought them back**, and **pours out His Spirit** (rivers) upon them (Isa.32:2, 15-16; 35:1-7; 41:18-19; 43:19-20; 51:3; 55:13; Ezek.47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Zech.8:12; 14:8; Acts 2:16ff).

The river (above) represents the Holy Spirit (Isa.32:15; John 7:37-39) and the fruitfulness is a type of the spiritual fruit of New Covenant salvation (Isa.27:6; Ezek.36:35; Hos.14:8 w/ John 15:1-5; Matt.13:23; 21:43; John 15:8, 16; Rom.6:22; 7:4; 2 Cor.9:10; Gal.5:22-23; Phil.1:11; Col.1:6, 10; Heb.12:11; James 3:17-18; 5:7; Jude 12). According to Isaiah, Israel failed in its mission to produce this fruit (Isa.5:1-7; 26:18; 42:19). Jesus assigned that fruit-bearing function to another “*ethnos*” (Mat.21:43), who are His disciples (John 15:1-6), consisting of the faithful remnant of Israel—eventually joined by faithful Gentiles.

7. Dr. Brown:

So, the full regathering is still something we were watching happen, and then we’ll come to its conclusion when the Messiah returns.

Otherwise, the passages are exaggerated by the prophets because the Jewish people were not that scattered at the time of the Babylonian exile, but they have been that scattered through history.

And therefore, to me, the only legitimate view is that there is still a regathering that is future.

Look at the promises, for example, in Ezekiel 36, and ask, “Were these fulfilled with the return of Jews from Babylon?” No, they weren’t. Therefore, that promise remains to be fulfilled.

Response:

Since the physical return of exiles is a type of the spiritual return of those (including Gentiles) who have been spiritually exiled, and of their salvation in Christ, the geographical indicators are not exaggerated.

Isaiah 11, in particular, should not be applied to the end times, because it clearly applies to the first coming of Christ. How do we know this? Because:

- Verse 1 speaks of His coming from the root of Jesse. This speaks of His birth from David's line, 2,000 years ago. When He returns, He will not again spring from David's root;
- Verse 2 speaks of His ministry through the Holy Spirit—so does Isaiah 61:1, which Jesus said was fulfilled in His earthly ministry (Luke 4:18-21);
- Verse 4 coincides with His teaching priorities, especially seen in the beatitudes. His “striking” and “slaying” the wicked with His word is the same non-literal imagery as Hosea uses of the prophets' words “hewing” and “slaying” the people (Hos.6:5);
- Verses 6-7 speak of the reconciliation of the Gentiles and Jews in Christ (Eph.2:11-16), employing the standard Old Testament imagery of the Jews as the domestic, clean animals of God's flock (e.g., Ps.23; Isa.40:11; Ezek.34; Mal.4:2); and the equally standard image of the Gentiles as predatory, unclean beasts (e.g., Dan.7:1ff; Ezek.34:28; Jer.4:7).
- Verses 8-9 speak of the authority over serpents and scorpions given by Christ to His disciples (at this present time, not after His return), and Christ's words “*nothing shall by any means hurt you*” (Luke 10:19) sound like a deliberate echo of “*they shall not hurt nor destroy...*” (Isa.11:9).
- Verse 10 is quoted by Paul as being fulfilled in his time, through his own outreach activities to the Gentiles—thus, it is not a reference to eschatology (Rom.15:10).
- Verses 11-14 speak of God gathering His remnant (which speaks of salvation in Christ—comp. Isa.10:22 w/ Rom.9:27) and conquering the Gentiles (using the names of nations long-since extinct now as representative of Gentiles in general). This conquest is the conversion of the Gentiles, as Paul has already implied by his citation of verse 10.
- Verses 15-16 tell us that the first gathering of God's people was at the Exodus and speaks of the salvation of the Jews from exile (an image of Messianic salvation) in terms of that historical deliverance. The salvation and coming of the Spirit, again, are the second phase of the saving of the exiles.
- Verse 16 uses the “highway” motif that is a common Isaianic image of the road traveled by Christ and followers—“*the highway of holiness*”—originally prepared by John the Baptist (e.g., Isa.19:23; 35:8; 40:3).

This is the exegetical case for Isaiah 11 referring to Christ's first coming and its effects. Where is the comparable case for seeing it as a description of the Second Coming?

Document 8

Neither Jew nor Gentile in Jesus

Date: 13th March 2020

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Well, can we just open that verse [Gal.3:28] up together, all right?

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Messiah Jesus, belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise."

Let's focus on verse 28, all right. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus..."

I want us to be consistent in this verse. We agree that what matters is not being male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile. What matters more than anything is being in Jesus. Outside of him, we are lost. In him, we have eternal life.

But when Paul writes, there's neither male nor female, does he mean that biological distinctions vanish when you get saved. That anybody can marry anybody because there's neither male nor female, is that what he means?

Does he mean that at your church building that you don't have men's rooms and women's rooms, that you don't have men's meetings and women's meetings, is that what Paul means? Does it mean that if you're a teacher and said "Boys and girls, be quiet," because if they're in a Christian school, there's neither male nor female. Does that mean that the people declaring radical war on gender are right because gender is whatever you perceive it to be?

Obviously, that's not what Paul is saying...

So, when it comes to salvation, when it comes to being accepted by God, when it comes to how we get right with God, when it comes to what it means to be born again, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. We're all saved the same ultimate way. It's the same blood, it's the same cross, it's the same Savior, it's the same Redeemer, it's the same Redemption...

When he's saying there's neither male nor female, he doesn't mean that males and females no longer exist. And throughout his letters, he teaches husbands a certain thing, husbands do this, wives do this, and do this, women do this, he makes distinctions, right. There are differences in authority and function, etcetera, right...

Paul writes certain things to men and certain things to women. Yes, that's called being distinct, that's called being unique, that's called each one being special, and each one having unique strengths and weaknesses.

So are there still males and females in Jesus? Yes, but there's no distinction between the two. We are one in him, equals, equals. There's no slave nor free in Jesus, but are there still people who are slaves, and still people who are free in different parts the world? Yes, and has it been true in history?

It's the same with Jew and Gentile.

Response:

Dr. Brown affirms that Paul is discussing equality, not bland homogeneity, nor necessarily interchangeability. People differ in race, economic status, and sex. The differences in social functions

between various categories are not on his mind here, as they sometimes are elsewhere. Paul is saying all are of the same status in the sight of God, as Dr. Brown concedes.

That there are different functions between men and women, slaves and free men, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers is irrelevant to the point he is affirming. Paul addresses other concerns in other discussions, where he acknowledges some of these functional differences. However, the fact that there are functional differences between men and women and between slaves and free men, parents and children, leaders and citizens, etc., does not mean that Paul would see any functional difference between blacks and whites, or Jews and Gentiles. At least, if he did believe in such racial roles, he never identified what they might be.

Suppose one were to say, with respect to constitutional rights of Americans, “There is no distinction between black, Hispanic, Asian and whites, between children and parents, between bosses and employees.” Now suppose someone would respond, “But children and parents play different roles in the home, as do bosses and their employees in their business—therefore, blacks, Hispanics, Asians and whites also must be acknowledged to have distinctive roles to play in society.”

Wouldn't it be obvious that the second statement is making a category error? The original comment was with reference to constitutional protections. The entirely different subject of individual roles in various social institutions is not under consideration. To acknowledge that differences exist in one category does not obligate one to affirm that they exist in the other.

In the original statement about constitutional protections, recognition of different household functions for children and parents could not then be extended to the affirming of different societal roles for different racial groups. How off-topic would it be for someone to say, “Listen, there are still men, women, children, adults, blacks and whites—so we must acknowledge that there are role differences within each of these categories”? Such would not be a true statement—but even if it was, it would be totally unrelated to the original comment.

In Galatians 3:28, Paul erases all racial, gender or class distinctions in terms of status or spiritual privilege in the Body of Christ. Yet, Dr. Brown is asking us to believe that distinct roles exist for Jews as opposed to Gentiles—just as they do for men and women. He has not told us what he is referring to when speaking of these alleged distinct roles. I don't think he is recommending separate church restrooms for Jews and Gentiles, as for men and women—so, what difference is he in fact affirming?

According to Dr. Brown, Paul recognizes one race of people who possess unique, divine promises and privileges that are possessed by no Gentile man, woman, slave, or freeman. Since this latter assumption is entirely counterintuitive, in view of Paul's affirmation in this verse, it is shocking that Paul would not provide a caveat to that effect—lest the reader should mistakenly think he intended for them to take his actual words seriously. What is striking is that Paul not only failed to mention there is still a significant distinction between Jew and Gentile here, but he, and the other apostles, also failed to reveal any knowledge of such a distinction in any of their writings. Peter once acted as if he believed there to be such distinctions, but Paul sternly rebuked him for it, and Peter received the correction (Gal.2:11ff; Acts 15:7-11).

Paul is saying that, when it comes to matters of divine favor and spiritual privilege, all such categories vanish. All groups of people are alike to God—even those whom society might judge differently, and who might fulfill distinctive social roles. Slaves and freemen, males and females had distinctive practical roles describing their earthly functioning within their respective social institutions, concerning which Paul gave each group its own proper and separate instructions

elsewhere. In terms of the fulfilling of God's global purposes, however, it matters little whether one is a slave or free, a male or female.

The real question on the table is whether this is also true of Jews and Gentile? In what context do Jews and Gentiles in Christ differ from one another in God's overarching plan? What functional difference does Paul acknowledge to exist between these races, and where do we find Paul's special instructions to believing Jews as a category that would not apply equally to believing Gentiles?

As Dr. Brown often points out when discussing this verse, there are still men's and women's restrooms and dressing rooms. So, ought there to be, for the sake of conceptual parity, Jewish restrooms segregated from Gentile restrooms? If not, then what is the relevance of pointing out this distinction between men and women in this connection? Isn't this merely a diversionary tactic intended to make us doubt our first impression (the impression Paul desires to communicate) in reading Galatians 3:28.

Dr. Brown wants us to note that Paul's statement is not true in every sense (that is, not in any sense that Paul was not addressing in the passage) and to forget that it is nonetheless true in the sense that he intended. Since we acknowledge functional differences between men and women, are we being asked to assume that there are also functional differences between Jews and Gentiles as well? Did Paul as a Jewish Christian see himself as having functions that he could not have performed had he been a Gentile believer? Do Jews have a missionary calling different from that assigned to Gentiles? Jesus gave the Great Commission to Jewish believers. Did He reserve a separate commission for Gentile believers? Where might we discover that?

If Jewish Christians still have a unique function, and special covenant blessings and promises that do not belong to all Christians, as Dr. Brown suggests, then Paul was making a very inaccurate statement in Galatians 3:28—because, in that case, Jews have a very special set of privileges in Christ that are not shared by any Gentiles, whether men, women, bond or free.

2. Dr. Brown:

Yes, I'm a Jew, just like I'm a male. I'm free and a follower of Jesus, but I'm no better than a Gentile follower of Jesus. I'm no higher. I'm no lower. We're brothers, we're sisters, we're equals. I'm still a Jew. No, I don't practice Judaism, but I'm still a Jew.

Response:

Correct. And I am Anglo-Irish (and less than one-percent Jewish, according to "23 and Me")—but why is that worth mentioning if it does not distinguish me from other races before God? Race is an involuntary and immutable condition, like height and eye-color, determined by what we call an "accident of birth" (not that I believe such things are entirely accidental from the standpoint of God's sovereignty). My race neither endears me to God nor offends Him. Being Jewish is not more significant than being black or Hispanic—unless we are imagining some difference in God's evaluation between men on the basis of race alone.

But would that be distinguishable from the true definition of "racism" on God's part? Some people used to think that the black races were cursed by God in the curse uttered against Canaan by Noah. They had as much reason, according to their flawed exegesis, to view all blacks as doomed to servility as Dr. Brown, in his exegesis, has for seeing Jews as specially blessed. Both racist views have been justified by their adherents from scripture. Both, I believe, have misunderstood the scriptures upon which they base their racial views, but, in terms of the definition of the word, it is hard to know how one of these views would be regarded as more "racist" than the other.

Dr. Brown does believe that such a difference exists, because he believes that the Jews (uniquely) are “*beloved for the sake of the fathers*” (based upon his interpretation of Rom.11:28). So, all protests to the contrary notwithstanding, Dr. Brown believes the Jewish race is more special and beloved to God than others. Why deny this? If it is what scripture teaches, why not revel in it? It is because saying this out loud suddenly removes any alleged validity from Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:28—rendering it impossible to avoid the charge of “racism” in its classic definition.

Of course, people of Dr. Brown’s persuasion believe that the Jews have special privileges and exemptions that the rest of the races of the world do not have. For example, what other race would be justified in their taking over another people’s ancestral home against the will of the owners? When Ahab coveted his neighbor’s vineyard, and took it by force, he was denounced by Elijah. Where are the Jewish prophets denouncing the confiscation of Palestinian lands, seized on the authority of a foreign political body’s gift and (of course) the assumption of unique divinely-conferred racial privilege?

I love my Jewish friends and neighbors, and do not begrudge them a home in Israel, or elsewhere. However, it seems inconsistent for a Christian to say, on the one hand, “Jews are on the same level with all other races,” and, on the other, to say, “Jews have an exemption from ordinary rules of justice in the seizure of land belonging to others.” Of course, Joshua had an actual mandate from God, providing just such an exemption. However, after forfeiting the land (as God said they would if they disobeyed), whence came a new divine mandate allowing apostate Jews to take another people’s possessions and homes (many of the dispossessed being Christians)?

3. Dr. Brown:

Being a Jew is not just practicing Judaism. Jew is being part of the people of Israel ethnically. By calling, I'm following the Messiah of Israel. By calling, I'm being a faithful and loyal Jew by following the Jewish Messiah.

“No, no, no, you've now converted to Christianity! That is an unbiblical way of thinking.” Yeah, I'm a Christian if you understand what that means as a born-again follower of Jesus. Yes, I'm a Christian with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, with all my strength, and I'm a Jewish Christian. I'm a male Christian. I'm an American Christian. I'm a free Christian.

And someone else is a Gentile Christian, a Chinese Christian. Someone else is in slavery, they are Christian, and here's a female Christian, yeah, but we are one in Jesus. So unless you're going to tell me that there's no more male or female that exists within the Church, all right, then you can't tell me there's no more Jew or Gentile that exists within the Church.

Response:

Would anyone support a proposition that a black or Chinese Christian is different from other Christians in terms of racial privilege? I presume that a Zionist Christian believes that Messianic Jews, including Dr. Brown, have some divine, racial claim on the Land of Israel as their inheritance, which a Gentile (e.g., Palestinian) Christian does not possess. This seems like a very distinct case of Jewish favoritism on God’s part. Of course, none should question whether God is within His rights to show such favoritism, but where is this affirmed in scripture, and how does it jibe with Galatians 3:28?

4. Dr. Brown:

That's why Paul addresses the different groups and has words of counsel and wisdom for each. I'm just being true to the Scriptures, but it's all about Jesus.

Response:

I truly believe that Dr. Brown is a good man who is attempting to be true to scriptures, but it is scary the degree to which a passion for Zionism can muddle one's understanding of plain scriptural statements. Paul gave separate words of counsel to men, women, slaves and masters, it is true. We now await Dr. Brown's pointing out the separate instructions that Paul (or anyone) gave to Christian Jews *vis-à-vis* Christian Gentiles.

5. Dr. Brown:

Okay, back to Galatians 6, so Paul continues, and says this, in verse 13: "For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.."

So, these other groups, these Judaizers if you want to call it, these legalists, they don't even keep the law themselves. Verses 14-15:

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Let me stop there.

When it comes to salvation, when it comes to being in a right relationship with God, when it comes to the condition of your inner being, circumcision, uncircumcision, it does not matter. It has no effect. It has no impact. You can be 100 percent saved and uncircumcised, and 100 percent lost circumcised.

You can be circumcised and obey the law of Moses to your best ability, and you are lost because you reject the cross. And you can receive Jesus as your Savior and not even know who Moses is and yet be born again and seek to follow the Lord. And that's what Paul's point is there. When it comes to salvation, it is utterly meaningless.

Elsewhere, in Romans, he explains yes, circumcision is of value for this reason or for that, but not for salvation. And he makes the same point in 1 Corinthians 7, not for salvation, not to come into right relationship with God, absolute.

All right, now here, Galatians 6:16, this is where he goes, "Now as many as lived by this rule, Shalom, peace, and mercy on them, and on the Israel of God. From now on, let no one make trouble for me, for I bear on my body the scars of Yeshua, grace on our Lord, Yeshua, the Messiah be with your spirit, brothers, and sisters, Amen" (Reading from the Tree of Life version).

So, Galatians 6:16, is sometimes quoted.

A couple weeks ago, a caller quoted it to say that Paul calls the church, the Israel of God. It's really a misnomer.

And I'm going to look at a bunch of translations here for Galatians 6:16 but let me explain something to you. Many commentators have pointed out that Paul has spent this whole letter telling these Galatians, you do not need to obey the law of Moses to be saved. You do not need to be circumcised to be saved.

You can be Gentiles, you can be in Jesus, and it's perfectly fine. It would be utterly confusing at the end of this to now call them the Israel of God. It's like, oh, so we are Israel. I thought you said there's neither Jew nor Gentile, now you're telling us we are Israel.

And it would be even odder that Paul writing to the Gentile believers in Rome, in Romans 11, says now I'm writing to Gentiles, and as much as I'm the apostle to the Gentiles. Why does he still call them

Gentiles, why didn't he call them Jews or Israel? Because now he says, I'm writing to you Gentiles because I want you to provoke Israel to jealousy. Interesting.

So, there are still Gentiles, and there are still Jews, but in Jesus we are one, we are equal. No caste system, no class system, as I've said repeatedly, and said enough in the last segment as clearly as I know how to say it.

Response:

The questions posed above are very strange. That is, it is strange that a scholar like Dr. Brown would not know their answers! It is not difficult to follow Paul's train of thought. Paul is making it clear (e.g., in his olive tree illustration) that the word "Israel" speaks of an entity comprised of Jewish and Gentile individuals. This was also true in the Old Testament. Rahab and Ruth, and many other proselytes whose names are not recorded, were Gentiles who had become part of Israel. They were still, racially, Gentiles and would always be (since race and DNA are impossible to change), but, they were covenantally in Israel.

In fact, there was never a moment when the covenant nation Israel did not include any Gentiles, since the covenant which created the nation was made with those who had come out of Egypt together—which was a racially "mixed multitude" (Ex.12:38). Being a national Israelite was not determined by race, but by faithfulness to the covenant (Ex.19:5-6). There were racial Hebrews and racial Gentiles—but all were part of the nation Israel formed at Sinai.

Those who embraced the Sinaitic covenant (whether Jew or Gentile) were "Israel." Those who rejected or abandoned the covenant (whether Jew or Gentile) were excluded from Israel. Thus, when talking about the racial composition of Israel, whether under the Old Covenant or the New Covenant, one could speak of racial Israel (Jews) and racial Gentiles separately, if there was occasion to do so—though all were in the covenant people Israel.

That Dr. Brown would find this simple concept perplexing (that is, if he is not merely pretending to find it so) is shocking. A child could understand it—unless, of course, that child has been brainwashed to see through a strange lens that deliberately distorts plain biblical teaching.

Let me make it simple. If I speak of Africans, I am aware that there are black and white Africans. Both races live in the African continent. If I were to say, "We should send aid to the Africans," I might be referring to anyone living on that continent, because all of them are "Africans." On the other hand, in certain discussions, I might make a distinction between the Dutch settlers and indigenous tribal Africans. In that case, the word "Africans" would be recognized by all to mean the black, tribal races—because I am distinguishing them from European colonizers. Would someone think it weird, or hard to understand, if I was talking about the continent of Africa, and sometimes used the word "Africans" to mean the population of the continent, without regard for race, and then, when specifically wishing to distinguish between the two racial groups, began to talk about differences between whites and blacks, referring to the former as "Europeans," and to the latter as "the Africans"?

Would it seem to any rational person that I had introduced confusion into my conversation by saying, "White Europeans have become one nation with the indigenous African people in South Africa—and all Africans should have equal human rights"? Would not my first reference to African people be instantly distinguished in meaning from my second reference to Africans? A ten-year-old could understand my meaning. Why could a PhD Christian scholar not grasp Paul's making the same distinctions in his use of "Israel"? Many with no formal education have no problem following Paul's train of thought. I suppose one's presuppositions would be the determining factor.

Paul's olive tree illustration makes the same point with reference to the New Covenant in Christ. The tree is Israel (Jer.11:16). The branches of the tree are Jewish and Gentile believers. Just as, in the Old Covenant, a Jew could be "*cut off from the people*" by breach of the covenant, so today, Jews who reject the New Covenant in Christ are "*broken off*" the tree and excluded from Israel. Thus, unbelieving Jews and Gentiles are not part of Israel, while believing Jews and Gentiles are part of Israel. "*In this way, all Israel [the Jewish and the Gentile branches] shall be saved*" (Rom.11:26). What could be clearer in the context?

So why does Paul speak of Jews and Gentiles separately in Romans and Galatians? Simply because there were racial misunderstandings and prejudices between the two groups. The Jews tended to think that the uncircumcised were not an equal part of the covenant nation. God sees no difference between the races, but some of his readers did, and were making something of it that Paul was seeking to correct.

Paul makes it clear that the believer, whether Jew or Gentile, is the true "circumcision" (Rom.2:26; Phil.3:3). There exists, of course, a racial Israel, comprised of the physically circumcised descendants from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but racial distinctions have no value in the true Israel—just as they did not in the original nation Israel founded at Sinai.

When Paul says, "*They are not all Israel who are of Israel,*" he is distinguishing between racial Israel, and covenant Israel (the latter being comprised of all the branches attached to the olive tree), to whom the promises apply. Elsewhere, he distinguishes these two *Israels* as children of Abraham "*according to the flesh,*" and children of Abraham "*according to the promise,*" respectively (Rom.9:8; Gal.4:21-31). The former are the racial Jews. The latter includes racial Jews and racial Gentiles (like the Gentile Galatians) who are now in Christ.

The distinction between the two *Israels* in Romans 9:6 corresponds exactly to the distinction between the two groups called "*children of Abraham*"—i.e., those children according to the flesh and those who are children according to the promise. Thus, Paul uses the idea of "*Israel*" interchangeably with the idea of "*children of Abraham.*" Whichever of the terms we prefer, Paul sees each term, depending upon context, as applying sometimes to a group defined by race, and each term as sometimes applying a group defined by faith. The former category is considered insignificant, while the latter is the "Israel" or the "circumcision," or the "children of Abraham," to whom all the covenant promises apply, and to whom all promises have been fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor.1:20).

It would seem no more confusing to the Gentile Galatian Christians to hear Paul refer to them as the "*Israel of God*" (6:16) than it would be to hear him refer to them as "*Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise*" (3:29). Since he had used this latter designation earlier in his epistle, what could possibly render his later use of the former term confusing?

6. Dr. Brown:

So, it would be exceedingly odd that he ends his letter and says oh, by the way, you're the Israel of God. It is like "We are Israel?" Should we be circumcised, should we keep the law? No, that's the last thing he's saying.

Response:

Truly it is the last thing he would say. However, what he does say is crystal clear in the context of the letter. It seems that Dr. Brown enjoys creating straw men to ridicule, when straightforward biblical exegesis cannot serve his purpose.

Dr. Brown's position is that *"those who walk according to this rule"* refers the Gentile believers in Galatia, while *"the Israel of God"* refers the Jewish believers in the Church. Besides the awkward implication that Jewish Christians, unlike the Gentile Christians, do not "walk according to this rule" (by what different rule do they walk?), this suggestion puts the verse at odds with the verse before it.

How bizarre it would be for Paul to say, in Galatians 6:15, that circumcision and uncircumcision (that is, racial Jewishness and racial non-Jewishness) have no significance at all in defining God's people, and then, in the following verse, to give special greetings and attention to the circumcised (racially Jewish) portion of the church, as if they were a significant sub-group in the fellowship. He had previously spoken of the whole Church as the "children" and "heirs" of the Abrahamic promises, and the *"children according to the promise."* What would be more natural than to also refer to them as the *"Israel of God"*—since, in Paul's discussions of such matters, he uses all these different labels interchangeably?

7. Dr. Brown:

However, he has been so hard against the Judaizers, he has been so hard against the hypocrites, he has been so hard against this idea that you have to keep the law of Moses to be saved that you might think, well, are you saying that as Jews, it's wrong for us to follow the biblical calendar, as Jewish followers of Jesus we should abandon the Sabbath, is that what you're saying Paul ?

He is saying, "No, no, no, if you're a Jew who rightly understands what it means to be in Jesus, that's great," and that's how many commentators understand this.

Response:

It is interesting how much light the Bible sheds upon the commentators. If someone has a doctrine they wish to prove, there is a very strong temptation to fabricate something in the text that will support one's view. All we must do is create from scratch a hypothetical context, or an imaginary concern in the biblical author, of which there is no indication in the text. There is not the slightest reason to think that the reason behind Paul's words in Galatians 6:16 have anything to do with Paul's wish to "walk back" his harsh words against the Judaizers. Nor is there any reason to think that Jewish believers who walk by the same rule as do the Gentile believers would feel themselves identified with the Judaizers, or feel condemned by what Paul had said against the latter. Paul has said nothing against or about the Jews in the Galatian church, except to say there is nothing special to distinguish them from any other demographical group in the Church. There is nothing in this concept to make them feel bad, and to need reaffirmation.

Dr. Brown is saying that Paul has spent a whole epistle demolishing any distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, and just before finishing, decides to undermine his whole thesis of the previous six chapters. Why? Because Paul fears he may have been too severe against the heretics, thus discouraging the Jewish believers? Yet He has said nothing in the least negative about Jewish believers. He has spoken harshly about the Judaizers, whom he regards to be false brethren (2:4). I seriously doubt that he suddenly had a change of heart in the end and wanted to reaffirm those whom he so recently wished to see castrated (5:12).

Dr. Brown says that Paul is affirming the liberty of Jewish Christians to circumcise, keep the festivals, etc. Paul shows no interest in affirming any such things. Nor, after castigating the readers as "fallen from grace" for doing these very things, would his use of the term "Israel of God" have any impact in removing the stigma he had placed on such actions.

8. Dr. Brown:

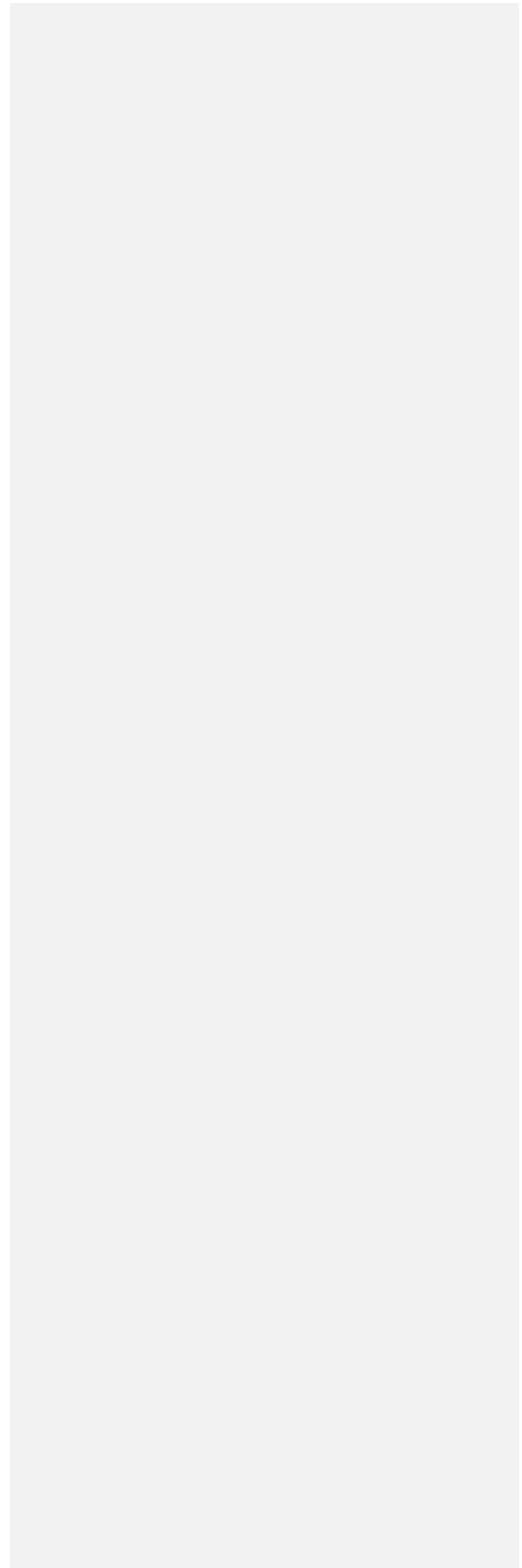
So, no, the Church as a whole is not the Israel of God, nor is the church the spiritual Jacob.

But Paul refers to Israel in the New Testament as Jacob, and Jacob is going to turn and believe. So, friends, our identity, what matters, what ultimately matters is not being male-female, Jew-Gentile, slave-free, but being in Jesus.

Response:

The names Jacob and Israel are used interchangeably in the Old Testament as belonging to the same man, to the same race, and to the same nation. Israel and Jacob are one-hundred percent synonymous terms. Therefore, if Paul could refer to the believers as "Israel" there is no way to say he would not equally call them "Jacob." There would not be a dime's worth of difference between speaking of "the Israel of God" and "the Jacob of God." The two names are in every way identical. Paul does use the word "Jacob" (quoting from Isaiah 59:20-21) when describing the ones whom Christ has redeemed—obviously believers (Rom.11:26-27). The context suggests the olive tree, which is the multi-racial "Israel" Paul has just described as comprised of the believing members of the Jewish race, along with the fullness of the Gentiles who have joined them as part of the tree (Rom.11:16-25).

Since Dr. Brown thinks the "Israel of God" means "Jewish believers," we must assume that the Jerusalem Church, for the first several years after Pentecost would have fit this designation. This means that, by Dr. Brown's reckoning, for many years, the Church was "the Israel of God," as Paul uses the term in Galatians. Apparently, we are to assume this label fell away when Gentiles began to be included in the Church (even though Old Testament Israel did not cease to be Israel when Gentile proselytes joined them). Jewish believers then became "the Israel of God" as an entity distinct from "the Gentiles of God." I would hate to find myself standing before Paul and seeking to defend this picture to him. I have a feeling I would receive such an angry response as Peter received in Antioch when he sought to recognize such a distinction (Gal.2:11ff).



Document 9

Is It a Sin to Divide the Land of Israel?

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

My question for you based on Scripture, is it a sin to divide the Land of Israel for the sake of peace?

In other words, to have a two-state solution for the sake of peace, is that sinful in God's sight, or is peace and justice the higher calling. Or are we misinterpreting the verse that speaks about dividing the land, one verse in particular in the book of Joel? We will talk about that today.

Response:

It is in a case like this that the habit of seeing land as sacrosanct becomes dangerous. Christians (and, presumably, Jews) would, in general, believe that peace is to be sought as a high priority. Unless, of course, peace can only be had at the compromise of something that is morally non-negotiable. If there is no peace, hundreds of innocent people continue to be killed unnecessarily. Such is a great injustice, and this is a strong argument for seeking peace, whenever possible.

On the other hand, if we believe God has determined that Israel is to have the whole land—and none is to be left to the Palestinians—then the potential solution of dividing the Land between the two groups cannot be on the table. Therefore, continued war and injustice continue for the sake of a religious ideal—one that is not necessarily a valid one.

Suppose we actually agree that prophecies exist that cause us to expect God to restore the ancient borders of the promised land to modern people, who may be descended from the Jews that formerly brought the judgment of God upon the place and lost it. I do not see this anywhere in scripture, but if we allow the premise for the sake of argument, we still would have to answer separate questions:

- 1) If this is supposed to happen miraculously (more miraculously than the Exodus, according to some people's interpretation of Jeremiah 16:14-15, and their misapplication of Ezekiel 37 to the end times), then how does it become the task of Jews, Christians, or foreign states to strive to bring it to pass—especially at the cost of ethical compromise? Instead of aiming at a goal which only God could bring about, would it not be the task of the godly, in the meantime, to pursue peace and justice for every person? Cannot God do what He is supposed to do while we are doing what He commanded us to do (Rom.12:18; Heb.12:14)? Do we have to ignore God's moral instructions in order to forward (without any mandate from God) what we imagine to be God's eventual outcome?
- 2) How do we know that we are living in the times when all of this is supposed to happen? The Bible provides no calendar dates attached to the alleged predictions. The state of Israel has been in existence for nearly three generations, and less than half of the Jews have relocated to that region. Maybe our expectations are running far ahead of God's. How do we know that it will not be another century before God brings the people back, if that is what He plans to do? In three-quarters of a century, only one-third of world Jewry has returned to the Land. At this rate, another century or more may not be an unrealistic calculation. In the meantime, might it not be desirable to have peace and security for those living in the region?
- 3) Nothing in scripture indicates that property rights should be a higher priority to the godly than promoting the well-being of one's neighbor.

2. Dr. Brown:

Before we look at a key text in the book of Joel and talk about this, let's talk about the peace process on a larger level. Is there hope of a real and lasting peace in the Middle East before Yeshua returns, before Jesus returns?

In my mind, in my opinion, the answer is "no," because it seems that the Scriptures that speak of end-time peace, 1 Thessalonians 5, for example, when everyone is saying peace and safety, that's when sudden destruction comes. Or say Ezekiel 38:39, the people of Israel and Judah living in unwalled cities, living safe, and secure, and then a great invasion and war comes. It seems to me that if there is to be a peace, it will only be temporary.

Response:

We have already seen a token of the peace that God desires to occur between Jews and Palestinians (as well as all other Gentiles) in that which is often seen in churches where Jews and Palestinians who have embraced Jesus love and fellowship with each other. As the prophet predicted, those who have come to Him have beaten their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and have taken to the spiritual task of cultivating, not fighting. Suppose a greater percentage of Jews and Palestinians were to embrace Christ. Would not this phenomenon increase the degree of peace experienced among these two groups? Dr. Brown already believes that the Jews will turn to Christ in large numbers. Does he doubt that the same may occur among the Palestinians? After all, over 70% of those in Israel who have come to Christ are Arabs. Should we hope that the trend may continue, as Jesus predicted in the parable of the leaven? It is certainly premature to give up hope and to act as if such things are impossible for God to accomplish.

If we believe that the end is upon us, and that Bible prophecy requires eschatological wars to the end of time, then the pursuit of peace will always seem a vain errand. It will cause us to believe it impossible for Jesus to accomplish His prophesied goal of bringing justice to the Gentile world (Isa.42:1-4), and peace to the nations (Zech.9:10). I would note that both of the prophecies just referenced are in the context of the first coming of Christ, not the second. Unbelief will cause us to throw up our hands and say, "What is the point of improving things for our neighbors (as the Good Samaritan did), if any efforts in bringing about a more just order (which is prophesied) can only result in abysmal failure?"

This is one of the ill effects that comes of believing: 1) that we are living at the very end of history, and 2) that the Bible prophesies only chaos and war in the last days. This is, of course, the legacy of *Dispensationalism*. It has always tended to discourage any efforts aimed at "polishing the brass on a sinking ship." But what if we have miscalculated the rapidity with which the ship is sinking, and we have been given a stewardship of caring for it and repairing its damage while it is still afloat? And is the promotion of a greater justice to all the oppressed of the world as frivolous a matter as is polishing brass on a ship?

What a tragedy it would be if God had to allow the modern state of Israel to be defeated and removed by someone like Iran, only because we Christians had become so enamored with "*times and seasons that the Father has put in His own authority*" as to neglect the very assignment we have been given. If secular Israel's presence in the Middle East is the thing that takes God's true people off-mission, perhaps God will decide that its presence there at this time has become a deterrent to the Great Commission.

Dispensationalists (and non-dispensationalists, like Dr. Brown, who are only dispensationalists concerning Israel in the last days) believe that God promised to bring Israel back in the end times. But they also believe that God's bringing them back from Babylon was not the ultimate return, because they were driven out again in A.D.70 (permanently, according to Jesus). If there is going to be a restoration ultimately, this apparently does not rule-out "false alarm" returns (like the return from Babylon). If so, might not the 1948 events represent another "false alarm"—another 538 B.C.—to be followed by yet another expulsion—another A.D.70—lasting until the "real" last days centuries from now? How would we know otherwise?

Dr. Brown has ruled-out the return from Babylon as the actual fulfillment of the predictions of regathering, on the grounds that not everything prophesied happened in that regathering. Would not the fact that not everything predicted has happened since 1948 give equal grounds for doubting that this is the actual fulfillment of the prophecies? Maybe the "real" fulfillment is another 500 years off, and yet another expulsion may intervene. The fact that less than 1% of Jewish Israelis are believers after 75+ years raises serious occasion to doubt that we are seeing anything like the fulfillment of the prophecies about restoration in which the spiritual revival of Israel features prominently.

3. Dr. Brown:

But this much I can say for sure, and I plan to shout this out as loudly as I can at the "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference in Bethlehem, God willing, in late May.

I believe God's sending me with a message, and that's why I'm going. And one thing I want to shout out to them is, "You will never have the fullness of God's blessing, and you will never have the full sympathy of God's people until you embrace the fact that God himself has brought the Jewish people back to the land."

Response:

Given the opportunity to speak at such a conference, it is a shame that Dr. Brown, as a Christian, intends to give a message entirely unrelated to any of the teachings of Christ or the New Testament message.

4. Dr. Brown:

Whether they are good neighbors or bad neighbors, God brought them back to the land. Whether it's making life better for you or worse for you, God brought them back to the land.

That does not sanction everything they do, that does not validate everything they do, but it does say that:

- *God Almighty is the one who scattered, and only God can regather.*
- *And that the kingdom, one day, when Jesus returns will be restored to Israel, and*
- *the Twelve Apostles will sit on twelve thrones ruling over the 12 tribes of Israel, texts like Acts 1 and Matthew 19 that I'm referencing here. These things will happen.*
- *And Jesus will return to a Jewish Jerusalem as we see from the end of Matthew 23 and Zechariah 12. These things are as sure as God is sure, so it's certain.*

Response:

When espousing a doctrine not taught plainly in any New Testament passage and which believers have generally not believed for 1800 years, one might refrain from saying that one's novel interpretation is "as sure as God is sure"! Might not one become guilty of taking God's name in vain if

one insists that God is no more faithful than is one's own controversial viewpoint? Harold Camping was sure he was right about the date of Christ's return, and said, "If Jesus doesn't come on that date, then the Bible is not true." This illustrates the folly of linking the faithfulness of God and His word to the accuracy of our fallible predictions and interpretations.

I would be happy to discuss with Dr. Brown the legitimacy of alternative interpretations of all the scriptures he cites. After all, his interpretation has not been unanimously held by all qualified Bible scholars—many of whom seem to "*tremble at His word*" more than do Zionists when canonizing their own unscriptural interpretations.

5. Dr. Brown:

But getting back to the question, what about the land, what about dividing the land for the sake of peace? Let's take a look in Joel. Joel 3, and I want to read to you there.

Joel 3:1-3, "For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land. They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy as payment for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink."

It's the first time I really looked into this In-depth, and the question I was asked to address, "Is it a sin to divide the land of Israel?" And when I really dove into things, when I really looked at things, this key text probably means that the nations were guilty of dividing up the land between themselves. In other words, that judgment was coming on them because they exiled the people of Israel and the people of Judah, and they divided up the land, meaning they divided it up for themselves. And God was angry with them for doing that, that was part of their mistreating of his people.

As to whether it's a sin to divide the land itself, in other words, this part is for the Jewish people, this part is for the Arabs, for the Palestinians, and that's how you divide it up. If that is what the text is saying, if that is what the text is implying, it's certainly not direct.

Response:

I sincerely commend Dr. Brown for recognizing this fact. I could wish he would apply equal objectivity in analyzing other dispensational proof texts as he did with this one.

6. Dr. Brown:

The big thing that strikes me as I dove into the subject is God repeatedly calls the land "my land, my land, my land". So it is imperative that the nations of the world not act in a cavalier way when it comes to the one place on the planet. God owns the whole world. The whole earth is his, and yet of Israel, he says "my land, my inheritance", that's what we need to take away. Don't mess with it.

Response:

It is also emphasized by God that the land was "His" and not "theirs" when warning them of their misuse of it: "*The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me*" (Lev.25:23). The Jews, when in unbelief were not "His" people (Hos.1:9). They were squatters on His land, while obedient. They were warned that they would lose their lease if they violated His covenant (Lev.18:24-28; Deut.28:15, 63-64).

There can be no greater breach of covenant on their part than that of rejecting the Messiah. The Land (like the rest of the earth) is God's perpetually and unconditionally. The Land was offered to them provisionally, but they violated the covenant and lost their land rights, just as God's faithful word warned them that they would. The Jews in Israel today are as persistent in their rejection of Messiah as they were when God drove them out in A.D.70. On the basis of *what covenant* could one possibly suggest they possess rights to that land today? Why did they not have the same rights to it at the time of their expulsion by God two-thousand years ago? Has another land-covenant been made since then that scripture knows nothing about?

7. Dr. Brown:

Let me read some Scriptures to you regarding how God looks at the Land of Israel. Now please understand, he does not show favoritism. All human beings must come the same way, the way of the Cross.

A Jewish person does not have an in-road to God, and a Gentile is cast out. No, God's love is for all, redemption-salvation is for all.

But just as he calls different individuals to different places of service, in other words, he may call one person to be a custodian, and another person to be the President of the United States. He may call one person to be single, and another person to be the mother of eight. There are many different callings. He may call one person to labor in prayer privately, and another person to speak publicly. He has different places of service for us, the same with the nations.

And Israel plays a particular role in his plan as does the land of Israel.

Response:

I have no problem with God calling different individuals to do different things—nor of God calling Israel, if He wished, to some special task in the end times. My problem is with claiming such is the case without the slightest biblical warrant. I know of no passage in the New Testament that suggests that God calls one ethnic nation to do things uniquely which others are not to do. Vocational differences exist among individual members of the Body of Christ, but the Bible knows of no race of people in the Body of Christ who are all called to perform one task from which those of other races are excluded.

If Dr. Brown believes that this is so, then it is more than fair for doubters, like me, to ask: 1) What is this unique role of modern Jews or Israel? and 2) Where is it found in the teachings of Christ or the apostles? Am I to believe they held views of which they never spoke, and which they seemed to deny every time they discussed the Jew-Gentile dichotomy?

8. Dr. Brown:

So, the question is, is it wrong for nations, for Israel, Palestinian negotiators to sit down together, and talk about dividing up the land? Is that a sin?

Certainly, in Joel 3:2, where it says, "The nations divided up the land," the sin there is that they divided it between themselves. That's clearly what is being spoken against, dividing the land up between themselves, kicking Israel out, and dividing the land up.

But listen to these verses,

Jeremiah 2:7, "I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits, and it's good things, but you came, and you defiled my land." He is speaking to Israel, "and my heritage, you made an abomination."

Jeremiah 16:18, he speaks of "my land" and "my inheritance."

Response:

Right! God, as always, emphasizes that it is His—not theirs! It is an excellent point—but not helpful to Dr. Brown's position.

9. Dr. Brown:

Ezekiel 36:5, "I have spoken in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave my land to themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy."

Ezekiel 38:16, "You will come up against my people, Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days, I will bring you against my land that the nations may know me. When through you O, Gog, I've indicated my holiness before their eyes."

Isaiah 14:25, "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him underfoot."

Joel 1:6, "For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number, its teeth are lion's teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness."

So what do we get from this?

Leviticus 25:23, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. You are strangers and sojourners with me."

Response:

What we ought to get from this is what it says. God is the true owner of the land. Various entities have sought to seize it and claim it for themselves. The entities that have done this, mentioned in the passages cited, are Edom, Gog, Assyria, a plague of locusts, and Israel. The repeated mention of "MY land" suggests a slap-down of any nation that seeks to own it against His will, including Israel.

This seems to answer Dr. Brown's repeated challenge: If God is not today giving Israel the land, how could they possibly have done so on their own? The above passages indicate that Edom, Gog, Assyria and locusts could intrude into, and occupy, the Land without it being an indication that God is giving it to them as a settled possession. Why not assume the same about unbelieving Israel? God has allowed many groups that He rejects to have a crack at owning His land. There is no indication that any of them has a permanent place in it nor that God has deeded the Land to them.

10. Dr. Brown:

What we need to bear in mind is this, you don't play games with God's land like it's any other part of the world. There must be a certain respect and recognition.

Response:

Does this fact apply to everyone except the Jews? Is their claiming for themselves something that God said they had forfeited not a case of "playing games" with the Land?

11. Dr. Brown:

I don't expect the nations of the world to have that understanding. I don't expect say, Saudi Arabia to have that understanding, or Jordan to have that understanding, or leaders in the Palestinian authority to have that understanding, I don't expect that.

But what I do expect is that Christians praying for the land, believers in Jesus who are involved, who have influence in government, I expect them to recognize that, because it is biblical truth. So handle with care. Got that.

Response:

Once again, please provide the passages where this “biblical truth” is mentioned.

12. Dr. Brown:

We'll go to Woodstock, Georgia. Eric, welcome to the Line of Fire.

Eric:

As far as the division of the land during the millennial reign of the Messiah, what are your thoughts on that because I mean, this shouldn't be a confusion for me at all, but I've kind of been meditating on this for a couple days. That God specifically told Abraham, I'm going to give this land to your descendants from the river Euphrates to the Nile River, and to the Great Sea in the Mediterranean.

But then when you read in Ezekiel about the division of the land that God gives amongst the 12 tribes that are restored back to the land, it doesn't seem to quite cover that range. So, I was just wondering if you could probably just give me some...

13. Dr. Brown:

Eric, don't be too hard on yourself, don't berate yourself. You say it should be clear and simple, and it's not totally. No, listen, that's the way it is with future prophecy that is not unfolded. There are certain things to me that are clear as day that I'm dogmatic about, that I feel strongly about, and others that I have questions about.

Response:

It is always safe to keep such matters in mind. The scriptures are infallible, but our understanding is not, and should be subject to correction. I appreciate Dr. Brown's saying this. I would like to encourage him to look with similar uncertainty upon his eschatological program, since there is so much biblical data calling it into question.

14. Dr. Brown:

Look in Ezekiel 40 through 48, there's a new temple, right, and of course, the immediate application of that was Ezekiel was to show the plans to the exiles in Babylon, the Jewish exile in Babylon. And they would be ashamed when they saw it, knowing here we are in exile when we're supposed to be back in the land, building this temple.

But rabbinic scholars looking at this, many centuries ago realized that the dimensions of Ezekiel's temple don't line up with the dimensions of Solomon's Temple, or going back to the original dimensions that were given for the tabernacle that Moses built.

So, the Talmud states that there was one rabbi who spent many, many, many, many nights up working through the night, burning the midnight oil, the midnight candle, and he reconciled everything, he reconciled the data, but his records are lost. In other words, we don't know exactly how everything plays out.

For a traditional Jew, they have no problem of the future vision with Israel in the center, and the word of the Lord going out from Jerusalem to the nations, and all the nations reverencing Israel, and the God of Israel, and a future temple with future sacrifices. That works perfectly fine with their views.

The problem is the text doesn't line up perfectly. There are still questions that remain because the dimensions are different, and in their mind, the Torah is eternal, and the Torah is not going to change.

So when you're looking at it, trying to work out the exact promises that God gave Abraham. And will it work out exactly like this, or will it be slightly different than the Millennial Kingdom?

Response:

My views on Ezekiel's temple have been explained in my article on the subject in the Christian Research Journal, at this link: <https://www.equip.org/article/making-sense-ezekiels-temple-vision/>

15. Dr. Brown:

Just looking at some YouTube comments about no such thing as a Palestinian. They have no language, no culture, no history other than what they created, that's something that I've often emphasized as well. I want to give another side to that.

On the one hand, it is true that there was no such thing as a Palestinian state through history. There was no such thing as a Palestinian consciousness through history. There was no such thing as a Palestinian patriotism through history. There was no Palestinian flag. There was no Palestinian currency. There was no Palestinian Empire or any such thing. Rather, there were Arabs living in the land of what used to be Israel, and then the Romans renamed it Palestine.

They were living there. They were living under various rule. Once the rise of Islam took place, they were living under the Ottoman Turkish rule. They were living under Christian rule at different times with battles of the Crusades and things like that. But they were considered to be part of Greater Syria and Assyria, being ancient and having its own history, the children of Greater Syria,

And you didn't have statehood. A lot of the nations that exist today were brought into existence in the 20th century. There had just been various tribal affiliations. You didn't have Saudi Arabia in terms of a distinct country as much as a kingdom with tribal affiliation, Yemen, these different things. Some of these nations carved out in new ways.

But the fact is you did have people living there for centuries. You had people that did consider it their homeland, and there has been disruption for many of them with the rise of the modern State of Israel. With the seven surrounding Muslim Arab nations, saying we're going to drive the Jews into the sea.

The war that caused the exiling of maybe six hundred thousand of the Arabs who were living there, and of course some them had to flee because there was war, some of them were now in conflict with their Jewish neighbors.

But if not for the surrounding nations declaring war, there could have been a two-state solution in 1947-1948. That's a fact, all right.

So, on the one hand, there is no Palestinian history, and as said many times, the Palestinian Orchestra 80-90 years ago was consisting all of Jews. And The Palestine Post is now The Jerusalem Post. It is a Jewish publication. So, Jews had more of a Palestinian identity than the Arabs did.

One former Muslim made this statement that before the six-day war he was a Jordanian in 1967. And then after the six-day war, he was a Palestinian. So, there was now a concerted effort to say, we are a Palestinian people. And that much is false, that is another of the falsehoods.

Response:

The question should not be, "What were these people formerly called?" but "Where did they live—and on what terms were they displaced?" One could also argue that, prior to 1776, there were no Americans and no American state, flag, or identity. This would be technically true, but before 1776, there were European settlers whose families had been here for over two-hundred years, and who thought the incursion of British mandates were unjust to them as residents. Arabs living in Palestine were in a similar position, except for the fact that their families had been in the land for thirteen centuries rather than two centuries.

16. Dr. Brown:

On the flip side, there are those that lived in the land for generations that said this is our homeland, who felt dispossessed by the Jewish people. Yes, that's true. So, there is the human element, which we need to take seriously, and have compassion in the midst of that, and then there is the historical fabrication.

You say, "Well, why do you refer to Palestinians and don't just say Arabs?" Because this is a way that they are self-identifying, and to the extent that they have a history, whether it's for two generations or for ten generations of living in the land before the Jewish people received their statehood, it's a fair identification.

It's misleading on the one hand, because it gives the idea that there was this historic Palestinian people, and they were looking for statehood and all this. That's not true.

And then there were people living there in the land of Palestine, who say, "Hey, that was our homeland, and we were pushed out because of war, and we want to go back." So, there is that part of the narrative which is true. So, from the humanity viewpoint, we always want to bear that in mind.

Response:

Thank you. This is a fairly balanced statement of the Palestinian problem.

17. Dr. Brown:

Is the modern State of Israel the reconstituted Israel of the Bible, according to God's promise to bring them back to their land?

Yes, but not fully. What do I mean?

Number one, as I've stated over and over again, if God scattered the Jewish people in judgment, we do not have the power to regather ourselves. When he blesses, no one can curse. When he curses, no one can bless. When he smites, no one can heal. When he heals, no one can smite. When he opens the door, no one can close it. When he closes the door, no one can open it. When he scatters in his wrath, no one can regather.

British Mandate can't regather, United Nations can't regather, America and Russia can't regather. It doesn't matter who tries to, the Jewish people don't have the power to regather themselves, the nations can't regather. If God scatters in his wrath, and now we have a modern nation of Israel with more than six million Jews living there, how did that happen? God did it.

Response:

Dr. Brown has repeated this argument a lot, and I have answered it a lot, in the previous documents of this collection [See: 4:16-17; 5:32; 6:14-16; 9:4; 16:6; 18:9; 19:21]. If I might summarize:

- First, the Bible does not say the things that Dr. Brown says in the paragraph beginning with the words, “Number one...” If they were true, it would be a good starting point for his argument, though insufficient to finish it. Dr. Brown repeatedly says these things, but, since he is not a Calvinist, there is no reason for him (nor us) to believe any of them. People do many things contrary to the will of God (Luke 7:30). Can God “gather” and the people resist being gathered? According to Jesus, the answer is “yes” (Matt.23:37). None of the affirmations in that particular paragraph are stated in scripture in any unqualified or universal way.
- Second, the Bible does not teach anywhere that people must have God’s blessing in order to obtain an airplane ticket or to migrate from one place to another. In fact, nothing in scripture suggests that living any place in particular is today more or less evidence of God’s blessing than is residing in any other place. Probably, most people around the world would see living in America as a greater blessing than living anywhere in the Middle East.
- Third, if God has cursed Israel for their rejection of Jesus, their moving to the land of Israel will in no sense reverse that curse. Those who are haters of Christ are under a curse, regardless to which land they may relocate themselves (1 Cor.16:22).
- Fourth, it is very premature for Dr. Brown to be building an argument on the assumption of a development that has not yet occurred. The regathering Dr. Brown celebrates has not yet occurred in history. Over half of the former Jewish *diaspora* are still the *diaspora* and have not been regathered to Israel, almost three generations after Israel’s establishment. The expectation that they someday will be relocated is merely a presumption which has no biblical warrant.

Dr. Brown’s appeal to this argument should be abandoned.

18. Dr. Brown:

You say, “But they haven't repented as a nation.”

Look at the precedent in Ezekiel 36, even though we were in sin and exile, God brought us out of Babylon, why, because we were righteous because we were good? No, because his own name was being blasphemed, that's why.

Ezekiel 36:16—25:

Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. Therefore, I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. So, I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when

they said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.' But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

"Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, ...

So, the same way God has brought the Jewish people back to land, not because of our goodness, but because of his goodness, not because of our resolve, but because of his resolve. This is his hand. Out of the ashes of the Holocaust, he regathered us.

Response:

Nowhere in Ezekiel, nor elsewhere in scripture, do we find the assertion that those who returned from Babylon (nor those returning in any imagined regathering after that time) were in unbelief. The conditions for the return from exile, according to Deut.30:10—"If you obey...If you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul..." Ezra 1:5 specifically says that those who returned with Zerubbabel were "all whose spirits God had moved." By what authority does any teacher claim that God brought them back from exile (whether in 538 B.C. or subsequently) while they were still in rebellion against God?

19. Dr. Brown:

So, it is absolutely part of what God has spoken of, and we even see the first fruits that so much of the land that was barren. So much of the land that was barren, that was undeveloped, which was the great majority of the land is thriving and verdant and producing multiple harvests every year.

Response:

I was raised under the impression that the Palestinians had not made the land productive, and that it was the Israelis, since 1948, who had transformed the land into a lush and productive agricultural region. This was apparently a misrepresentation, according to scholars and visitors to Palestine before 1948. For example:

"We abroad are used to believe the Eretz Yisrael is now almost totally desolate, a desert that is not sowed...But in truth that is not the case. Throughout the country it is difficult to find fields that are not sowed." (Ahad Ha'Am, a leading European Jewish essayist who visited Palestine in 1891 for three months, in Righteous Victims, p. 42)

[In Ottoman-controlled Palestine] "Farming in the plains and valleys produced a variety of products hungrily consumed in Europe—wheat, barley, and maize, for example—but the choice export item in Palestine was the juicy, thick-skinned, and easy to transport Jaffa orange." (Martin Bunton, The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6, 9

"The Holy Land, since the Crusader genocide, has been renowned for its olive groves and olive oil industry; and long before Zionist immigration began in 1920, Palestine was known as a citrus exporting country...records show that in 1912-13, the Arabs had exported 1,608,570 cases of

oranges to Europe. As regards the hill regions, the country is covered with olive orchards, vineyards and other deciduous fruit trees; while the lands in the South were used for the cultivation of grain, and those in the Jordan Valley for the production of vegetables and fruits. Every inch of fertile soil was used to full capacity..." (Refaat M. Loubani, "Palestine Before 1947" posted 11/7/01)

"I saw things which the Ministry of Tourism would just as soon I hadn't seen: hillsides which for centuries had been cultivated and terraced by Arabs, turned into desert since 1948. The Israelis had neither knowledge nor inclination to preserve the olive trees and I saw hundreds of acres of crumbling terraces, dried vines, dying trees. It would be impossible to cultivate these terraces by machine, and in modern Israel economically unsound to cultivate them in the ancient way." (Elisabeth Elliott Gren in "Furnace of the Lord")

The irony is in the fact that the scriptures do not predict that Israel will become fruitful in the agricultural sense, but that the "fruit" that God sought in vain from Israel in Isaiah 5:1-7—namely, *justice* and *righteousness*—will someday actually be produced through the Messianic mission when the Spirit was poured out (i.e., at Pentecost): *"The forts and towers will become lairs forever, A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks—Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field."* (Isa.32:14-16)

20. Dr. Brown:

And the nations coming to help Jewish people return to the Land. That's fulfillment of prophecy.

Response:

There are, indeed, many Gentile Christians (mostly dispensationalists working to facilitate a self-fulfilling prophecy) who are wasting Christian dollars (which should be devoted to fulfilling the Great Commission) to transport Jews from Europe to Israel. This strikes me as a particularly cruel act of anti-Semitism, since the same Christians expect Israel soon to become "Ground Zero" for the persecution by the antichrist, whom, they believe, will kill off two-thirds of the Jews who return to the land (Zech.13:8). This sounds to me like the true anti-Semitism in the Church.

21. Dr. Brown:

But there is more to happen still, and there is a miraculous element. And I don't believe that we will see the complete fulfillment of the promise to regather the Jewish people until the Messiah comes. That there will still be Jews scattered in different parts the world, as I understand the text. And the finality of the regathering will take place as he returns, once he returns, as I understand the Scriptures.

Response:

Which ones, exactly?

22. Dr. Brown: [responding to a YouTube comment:]

Let's see here. All right, "My understanding is that Orthodox Judaism is similar to other works-based faiths. The emphasis is on our obeying laws to be righteous in God's sight. Christianity recognizes the promises of Jesus Christ."

There's truth to that, but let's not exaggerate it. On the one hand, Judaism is a religion of law and commandments. Judaism does believe that this world can be sanctified by the keeping of commandments, that we can be sanctified by the keeping of commandments, that every commandment we keep, brings us closer to holiness, and that these are God's commandments reflecting the perfection of God. So yes, it is commandment based for sure.

And a traditional Jew from the moment he gets up in the morning to the moment he goes to sleep at night is constantly thinking of what he can do to please God, and how he can please him by keeping these commandments.

And when it comes to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the traditional Jew believes that his deeds are weighed in the balance, that if his good deeds outweigh his bad deeds, that his name will be written in the book of life for another year, that's true.

Response:

It seems to me (though I could be wrong) that the “traditional Jew” wants to please God in every way—unless it requires seriously considering that Jesus is the Messiah. Dr. Brown would be more familiar than I am with the attitude of unsaved Jews. However, a man is not virtuous who spends his whole life thinking, “God I want to please you in every way—unless you are expecting me to do such-and-such.” Those who put limits on what they will do to please God are, of course, not godly.

23. Dr. Brown:

On the other hand, a Jewish person prays for mercy every day. A Jewish person understands that he only lives, that she only lives, by the grace and mercy of God. A Jewish person understands that on their very best day, they still fall short of God's perfection and holiness.

So, when we read in John 1:17 that “the law was given by Moses, grace, and truth came by Jesus, the Messiah.” It doesn't mean there was no grace and no truth in Moses, nor does it mean there's no law in Jesus, the Messiah, but there's certainly a contrast.

It shouldn't be a 'but'. The Greek does not have 'but'. It's better to have a semicolon. “The law, the teaching of God, was given by Moses;” semicolon, “Grace and truth came by Jesus, the Messiah.”

So, God is doing something even greater than he did before, even more wonderful. It's not totally foreign to Judaism, but certainly, Judaism does not put that emphasis on grace to the degree that we have through the New Covenant, and of course I say, as laid out in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Response:

No comment needed.

24. Dr. Brown:

Let's see, if I really understand the question, do I think the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leadership wants the third temple built enough that it would work out some kind of arrangement to divide the land? If that's the question.

Number one, there's no real functioning Sanhedrin that is making decisions for Israel at this point. All right. There are different groupings, there have been assemblies of leading rabbis coming together as a modern Sanhedrin, but there is no governing body as such that is making decisions, that's one thing.

And secondly, is there a deal in place? I simply don't know. All I know is this, I've heard speculation about the third temple, and people focusing on it, and raising all kinds of questions for decades now. And I've not seen any change in the status quo on the ground right now.

I do not know how it could work out that the Dome of the rock, Al-Aqsa Mosque, will be destroyed so that the Third Temple, and everything needed could be built.

Joel Richardson suggests an Islamic Antichrist who barter an arrangement with the Jewish people to build the temple, and that's how they embrace him as a world leader. Hey, it's as good a theory as any, but I simply don't know how these things will unfold.

Response:

We must bear in mind that, since A.D.30 (and especially since A.D. 135), Judaism has been an explicitly anti-Christian world religion, like Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism. In fact, the Jewish position toward Jesus is more blasphemous and degraded than is that of Islam (which holds Jesus to have been the greatest prophet of all time), or Hinduism (in some varieties of which—notably that of Ramakrishna—Jesus is seen as an Avatar, a divine manifestation in human form).

Any future temple that the Jews may build will be an intentional slap in the face of Christian teaching—especially a denial of the value of Christ's atoning work since the temple only exists to provide an alternative atonement by animal sacrifices. For Christians to follow with enthusiasm any progress in the plans of Jews to build a third temple makes as much sense as our celebrating the construction of a new Muslim mosque in Iran.

Document 10

Is God Finished with Israel?

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

You know, it's so hard to understand with everything happening in Israel today, there are still Bible teachers who say God's finished with Israel. Let me read to you from Psalm 137 very famous words:

"By the Waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!"

O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!"

Response:

The first line expresses marvel that there are Bible teachers who still teach only from the Bible, rather than from current events. I hope always to be found in that number.

I think the verse in Psalm 137 was intended to focus on the writer's desire never to forget Jerusalem. Of course, the writer was taken from his home in Jerusalem into captivity in Babylon. He was homesick for the temple, which had been destroyed, with its associated festivities, and the other things that made Jerusalem his "home." Of course, he also saw the city as God's Holy City, so his religious sentiments also inspired his loyalty to the place. Now he was exiled in a faraway country. It is easy to relate with his depression in such a state.

Most modern diasporic Jews have never lived previously in Jerusalem. They may never have seen the place, and there may be nothing there for them to remember. God no longer lives there. His former house there has been desolate since He walked out of it for the last time, just prior to the crucifixion (Matt.23:38). The ark is gone and will never return (Jer.3:16). The temple is no more, and any rebuilding of it in the future would be an act of bold defiance against the Messiah and the final sacrifice He offered 2,000 years ago.

The dirt and the compass co-ordinates of the place have no special value in terms of the Kingdom of God. The apostles left the place, not by being taken against their will into exile, but in order to fulfill the new commission, the result of which is that *"men will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father"* (John 4:21). Rather, *"from the rising of the sun [that is, the East], even to its going down [the West], My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place [not specially in Jerusalem] incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations," says the Lord of hosts"* (Mal.1:11).

In the days when God's worship center required a geographical footprint, Jerusalem served well enough. Now that there is no worship center—other than the spiritual temple of God made with living stones—so far as God's eternal purposes are concerned Old Jerusalem is just another tourist attraction for sentimental Christians and Jews.

Until David's time, a thousand years before Christ, Jerusalem was just another pagan city-state in the desert. It was an ungodly Canaanite fortress until David decided that he wanted it to become his

capital city. Whether David was inspired by God to choose this place or not, we are not told. It was not the moving of David's capital to Jerusalem that made it a "holy city" (his previous capital of seven years, Hebron, had never been regarded as a "holy city," due to the presence of David's throne there). Jerusalem became the Holy City only when the ark was moved there by David—making it the latest place (after Shiloh and other sites) where the Lord chose "to put His name for His dwelling place" (Deut.12:5).

"Holy" means "set apart from all others for sacred purposes." The holiness of the city of Jerusalem (that is, what once set it apart from all other cities) was simply the presence of God (in the emblems of the ark and temple) there. Like Mary, who was only holy (set apart from other women) by the fact that Christ was, for a time, inside her (before and after which she was an ordinary faithful woman of Israel's remnant), so the city of Jerusalem, prior to God's being there and after His departure, is just an ordinary city.

There are those who perpetually venerate Mary because of Who was once within her, and there are those who perpetually venerate Jerusalem because of Who was once in it—but those who do so are making too much of the "earthen vessels" that once contained the "treasure."

Today, the place where the Lord chooses to put His name for a dwelling is not a geographical place (Acts 7:48), but a people (John 14:23; Eph.2:21-22). Today, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" is said to be "the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn" (Heb.12:22-23). This is the city that was "prepared" for Abraham, which does not reside in any "earthly country" (Heb.11:16).

God has revealed no future plans for the earthly city that once housed His ark. We know the ark of His presence will never be there again (Jer.3:16). Only misapplication of certain prophecies that have long since been fulfilled can lead to a contrary conclusion.

2. Dr. Brown:

I was looking at headlines, I was looking at many headlines, last night, this morning, about the moving of our embassy, about world reaction to that, about the deaths of the protesters, Israeli forces shooting down protesters trying to breach the security fence on Gaza Strip going into the mainland of Israel.

And you talk about controversy, you talk about Jerusalem being the city that stirs controversy around the world more than any other city on the planet just as you'd expect based on Scripture, just as you would expect look at this headline on CNN, all right.

This is about that piece from CNN senior international correspondent, Ben Wiedemann; The dream of peace in our time in the Middle East died on Monday.

Yeah, in other words, recognizing Jerusalem for what it is—the functioning capital of Israel—recognizing Jerusalem for what it is; the historic capital of Israel, recognizing Jerusalem for what it is; the heartbeat of the nation for all of these centuries in exile, talking about a physical location. Simply recognizing that and doing what we've had on the books to do for decades, over 20 years, on the books to do.

This is now going to crush any hope of peace in our time in the Middle East?? No, I say it makes much more realistic the chance for peace because up until now we were dealing with a fantasy that Jerusalem would not be the capital of Israel, or that everyone would just accept a divided Jerusalem.

And this is not a statement of oppression against Palestinians. It is not a statement of hatred against Palestinians. It is a statement of saying Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel, will be the capital of Israel.

Response:

Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital remains very controversial in the international community. I don't see how the decisions of the USA can determine realities in another country, though I grant the State of Israel every right to set up their political capital in any city within their territory—so I have no problem with the move. However, no biblical prophecy was fulfilled in Donald Trump's moving of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. He was not a new Cyrus.

3. Dr. Brown:

From a prophetic standpoint, the Bible tells us clearly that Jesus is returning to a Jewish Jerusalem. As I've said repeatedly, our moving the embassy is both the right and righteous thing to do. Every other nation on the planet should follow suit. They should. Yes, they should. It's the right and righteous thing to do. And then you work out a peaceful arrangement with those that don't want to kill you, simple. Oh, many complexities, massive complexities, but overall simple in terms of these are realities.

Response:

It seems to me that the idea that all nations should recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, for Dr. Brown, rests upon the stated belief that "Jesus is returning to a Jewish Jerusalem"—which is nowhere stated in any prophetic scriptures. There are prophetic references to Jerusalem, of course, but the best exegetical case (if we acknowledge Jesus and the apostles as the best interpreters of the Old Testament) would suggest that: 1) those scriptures were fulfilled no later than New Testament times, and 2) that the "Jerusalem" that Christ acknowledges as His home is not racially Jewish, nor geographically restricted. The geo-politics surrounding the Middle East are not a focus in New Testament concerns. The discipling of all nations, including Israel, is the Christian's focus (Matt.28:18-20).

4. Dr. Brown:

Now, will we see full and lasting peace before Jesus returns? I don't believe so, I don't believe so. Will we see temporary peace? Probably. Wherever there can be peace, great. My fear is there will be a false peace, which will then lead to a final explosion, and an Antichrist figure, etcetera.

But this much I know, we're called to pursue peace, and we're called to pursue justice, and we're called to recognize what God is doing in the world and stand with God. So to me, standing with Israel, doesn't just mean standing with prophetic Scriptures. It means standing with what is right and just in the Middle East, and then calling on Israel when it does not treat Palestinian brothers and sisters rightly, calling Israel to account.

Response:

Well spoken! These are true and admirable words. I stand with Dr. Brown in this conviction.

5. Chris [a caller]:

Hi, Dr. Brown. Really a quick question, what are your go-to passages, like your bulletproof passages that you believe tell of the Jew's future return to Israel?

Dr. Brown:

Yes, so all of the passages that spoke of the return from Babylonian exile that have not yet been fulfilled, which is basically all of them.

- *All the prophecies beginning in Isaiah the 40th Chapter,*
- *all the prophecies in books like Ezekiel 36,*
- *all the prophecies in Jeremiah about the return in chapters 30 through 33.*

Some of what was prophesied happened. The rest of it didn't, which we understand just like with the first and second coming of Jesus that you have the beginning, and then you have the fullness.

Response:

The striking thing about Dr. Brown's bulletproof passages concerning the future regathering of Israel is that all of them are either quoted, or describe events that occurred, in the New Testament. None of them is ever associated with the end times in the apostolic citations:

- Isaiah 40 begins with a prediction of John the Baptist's ministry (vv.4-6) and goes on to describe Christ's shepherding role (v.11; obviously in the present, John 10:1ff). The remaining 26 chapters, to the end of Isaiah are a treasure trove of testimonia cited dozens of times in the New Testament—as references to first-century events.
- Ezekiel 36 refers to God's putting a new heart and His own Spirit into His people, something Jesus predicted when speaking to the remnant of Israel in His day (John 7:37-39; 14:17), and which was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:4). This is essentially the same promise of the New Covenant, made by Jeremiah (31:31-34) and fulfilled in the upper room (Luke 22:20).
- Jeremiah's "little book of comfort" (chs.30-33) contains the prophecy of the New Covenant, which Christ ceremonially ratified at His Last Supper. It is the existence of this covenant that has made the Old Covenant obsolete (Heb.8:13). The only biblical reference to the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer.30:7) most reasonably, in context, would be seen as the Babylonian exile. Rachel's weeping (31:15) is identified in scripture as having occurred in Christ's infancy (Matt.2:18). Of course, the coming of the "New Covenant" (31:31-34) was fulfilled at the Last Supper, as mentioned earlier. The preservation of a remnant of the Jews (namely those who came to the Messiah) is promised in 31:27 and their continuation as a holy nation (fulfilled, 1 Pet.2:9-10) is promised in 31:36. Jeremiah's purchase of a field is an acted prophecy of restoration from the Babylonian exile (Jer. 32). Chapter 33 returns to the promise of the birth and saving ministry of Christ (vv.15-16). Nothing eschatological is found in these chapters.
- Dr. Brown did not mention Zechariah, chs.9-14, though I know he has sometimes referred to things in some of these chapters as applying to the future of Israel and Jerusalem in the last days. The problem here is the same as with the previous cases. Zechariah 9 through 14 are chapters in which we find many verses quoted by New Testament writers as being fulfilled in their own generation. We find no verses in this section quoted with reference to end times.

If these are the best prophecies for the future restoration of Israel, could someone point out which of them looks to any events beyond the beginnings of Christianity? Since the New Testament witness uniformly applies them to the first century, and not to a later one, on what basis are we asked to expect eschatological fulfillments for any of these prophecies?

Why not let the "veil" be removed from the heart (2 Cor.3:15-16) and trust those to whom Jesus "opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the scriptures" (Luke 24:45) to provide the authorized interpretations of all such passages for us? These writers were not silent about these

passages, but enthusiastically used them as part of their gospel message. Do we know more than they did what the scriptures are referring to?

6. Dr. Brown:

So just as Jesus came at the expected time, but not with the expected glory and scope, that was for an ongoing historical development and for his return. So also, the return from Babylonian exile:

- *did not only speak of the rebuilding of the temple, but the regathering of Jews from all over the world.*
- *And then of the great things that God would do in the land, and*
- *how the whole nation would turn to God and worship him with one heart as for example was prophesied in Jeremiah 24. That did not happen.*

Response:

Again, Dr. Brown alludes to alleged prophesied events, but does not demonstrate that any passage actually predicts such future things as he lists. Remarkably, he applies Jeremiah 24:6-7 to a last-days regathering of the Jews. However, that passage speaks about Jews (“figs”) who had already been carried away to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (v.5), specifically in 605 and 597 B.C. The identification with the Babylonian exile is impossible to miss in the passage. It is these very people whom God promises to regather. He does not regather them in unbelief, by the way. Those who would return from Babylon are said to be those who “return to me with their whole heart” (v.7). This is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30:10, to which it is a close verbal parallel.

Dispensationalists (and people who say they are not dispensationalists, but are, in every respect except for their rejection of pre-tribulationism) cite many passages that refer to the restoration of Jews from captivity. All of these passages refer to the returning from the Babylonian captivity—which was the last time global Jewry were actually in any kind of “captivity” requiring deliverance.

To such teachers, apparently, context need not be a consideration in exegesis. They can ignore context by appealing to the (extrabiblical) idea of “two mountaintops divided by an unseen valley.” When a prophecy has a near fulfillment, they say that this represents the nearer mountaintop, but they create *ex nihilo* a second fulfillment which they claim is a more distant mountaintop. No New Testament writer ever spoke of such mountaintops. Following Christ’s lead, they simply identified the fulfillment of all prophecy with the events of their generation (Matt.5:17-18; Luke 21:20-22; 24:44; Acts 3:24; 13:32-33).

7. Dr. Brown:

Isaiah 11, God speaks there about bringing the exiles back for a second time. So, some would say, “Well, that meant first the Exodus, and then secondly, Babylonian exile.” But the Exodus, this was not really exiles. It was the family of Jacob going into Egypt, and then being brought back out.

There’s the return from Babylon, and then the final end-time return.

Response:

How could it be said that the family of Jacob was not exiled in Egypt, when they were kept away from their homeland against their will with no power to return until they were divinely delivered? What is exile, if not that? In what feature was the Egyptian exile unlike the Babylonian one—except in secondary, non-defining incidentals? The “second time,” in Isaiah 11:11, is compared with the “first

time,” which was “As it was for Israel in the day he came up from the land of Egypt” (v.16). Sounds like a reference to the Exodus to me. What other time did Israel come out of the land of Egypt?

8. Dr. Brown:

A passage like Jeremiah 16 is one of the clearest. Beginning at verse 14, "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers."

So not just the Lord who brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, but from the north country, which, in context, would have been Babylon. Even though Babylon was not to the north of Israel, to get there, you would go up around the Euphrates, and then back down, so it was a northward journey. So here it's bringing the Jewish people back, the children of Israel from all countries where they've been scattered.

Response:

Yes, and Dr. Brown himself refers to that scattering as the Babylonian exile. Thus, the return predicted is the return of the remnant from that exile, occurring more than half a millennium prior to the birth of Christ. Hardly a reference to the end times. Why does Dr. Brown appeal to this? We must assume it to be because he believes there is nothing in scripture more suited to his point. In this belief we concur. There actually is nothing in scripture better for his point—and this passage provides nothing to his point.

Some dispensationalists claim (Dr. Brown does not do so here) that the reference to bringing the people “out of all the countries” must refer to a more extensive *diaspora* than simply that of the exiles in Babylon. However, this is a common way for God to speak of the Babylonian exile in Jeremiah. To those already in exile in Jeremiah's day, God speaks of “all the nations where I have driven them” (e.g., Jer.29:14, 18; 46:28). “All the nations” simply included all the Babylonian dominions, and the exiles were spoken of as already among “all the nations” at that time. To these exiles of Jeremiah's day, God also promises, as in chapter 16, “I will not make a complete end of you” (Jer.46:28). Clearly, Jeremiah 16 and 46 contain the same promise, having the same fulfillment.

9. Dr. Brown:

Ezekiel 36, an extended passage that says, at that time, back in the land, God will sprinkle clean water on them. As bishop J.C Ryle said, writing in the 1800s that he foresaw the return of the Jewish people to the land in unbelief. That's what he understood prophecy saying, and then back in the land, God would turn their hearts to the Messiah.

So basically, all the prophecies about the return of the Jewish people from exile in Babylon that were not completely fulfilled, still must be fulfilled because they were promises given by God.

Response:

There is no reference in Ezekiel 36 to anyone being regathered in a state of unbelief. In New Testament theology, the cleansing indicated by the sprinkling of clean water (Titus 3:5; Heb.10:22) occurs to those who have been regenerated (meaning, those who have believed). Likewise, also with those who receive the Spirit (Ezek.36:27; see John 7:39).

The citation of J.C. Ryle is no doubt intended to demonstrate that some held this expectation before the coming of dispensationalism. However, Ryle was a younger contemporary of Darby's. Both were ministers in the Anglican Church in the U.K. at about the same time. We would be unwise to claim Ryle had never heard of, or been influenced by, Darby. The return of the Jews in unbelief was rejected by early dispensationalists (no doubt due to the absence of any scriptures supporting the idea).

However, there were certain important non-dispensationalists, even before Darby, who believed in a future return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland. Most of these important people were also Calvinists, which means that we cannot endorse their opinions or the quality of their exegesis on any topic prior to examination. Let us see for ourselves the verses of scripture upon which they based their opinions, and then we can decide how wise it would be to adopt their conclusions.

The only relevant question for one who wishes to derive his or her doctrines from scripture is: "Did those who had this expectation have any scriptural texts that could be exegeted in support of their opinions?"

10. Dr. Brown:

And two, the emphasis here is the deep passionate connection that the people of Israel had with Jerusalem, and Isaiah 62 is a clear call to pray for Jerusalem, speaking about this physical city on the earth to give God no rest until he makes it the praise of all the earth.

Response:

Of course, when Jerusalem was the habitation of God containing the temple, it was a city like no other. Before its rejection, praying for its peace and prosperity was an understandable priority for the people of God. That was then. We should be talking about now. That which Jesus had earlier called "My Father's house," came to be later denounced by Him as "your [the Jews'] house." God did not live there anymore. The house and city were "desolate," "obsolete" and doomed to imminent destruction (Luke 19:41-44; Matt.24:1-2).

It is interesting that Jesus had no sentimental illusions of Jerusalem as being a "holy city," once the city's decision to reject Him was evident. His sardonic statement, "It cannot be that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33) agrees with His general attitude that Jerusalem was, in His view, the enemy of God, uniquely the murderess of the prophets, and guilty of all the righteous blood ever shed (Matt.23: 31-39). We might ask, "Has anything in this assessment changed in the past 2,000 years?"

11. Dr. Brown:

Jerusalem has a lot of beauty, and Jerusalem has a lot of spiritual darkness and other darkness. And therefore, Jerusalem needs the coming of the Messiah, the coming of her Redeemer. But emphatically, I want to shout this for the whole world to hear, God is not finished with Israel.

So, I tweeted out yesterday, Replacement Theology may not be dead, but it is dead wrong. As our embassies moved to Jerusalem today indicates, God's future purposes for Israel remain. In other words, the whole idea that God's finished with Israel, and here is Israel alive and well with a population of more than 6 million Jews, and then several million Arabs.

The fact that Jerusalem still is the most controversial city on the planet, it is obvious that God's purposes remain.

Response:

God's purposes in the earth may be controversial, but being controversial is not a sufficient reason for a thing being seen as part of God's purposes.

In the New Testament, the purposes of God are wrapped up in Christ, not in real estate. Paul speaks three times in Ephesians of God's great and eternal purpose—which is every time said to be accomplished in Christ, and never refers to anything purposed for the future of national Israel (Eph.1:9, 11; 3:11). The nation Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, today, have nothing to do with Christ, and therefore nothing to do with the eternal purpose of God.

Where does the New Testament support it? Our Christian Zionist brethren need to be reminded that we are now living in the New Testament Era. The only disgusting "Replacement Theology" worthy of that title, and of our condemnation, is that which displaces Christ from His central place as the fulfillment of all the purposes of God and replaces Him with an antichrist State of Israel as the focus. Even if "Replacement Theology" is falsely accused of replacing Israel with the Church, would such be as objectionable as is replacing Christ with antichrist? We should not demur from calling modern Israel "antichrist," since the only biblical definition for antichrist fits her like a glove (1 John 2:22).

12. Dr. Brown:

Friends, my heart goes out to the Palestinians, my heart goes out to them. They are under corrupt leadership with Hamas and with the Palestinian Authority. Pray that God would raise up righteous leaders for these Arab people's living in the Middle East and that with those righteous leaders, righteous agreements could be made between Israel and these leaders.

Response:

This is a reasonable enough request.

13. Dr. Brown:

I point to Romans 9:4, and Paul writing in the present tense about Jewish people that are non-believers for whom his heart breaks because they're separated from the Messiah. Jews need Jesus to be saved, just like Gentiles. Jews without Jesus are lost, just like Gentiles without Jesus are lost.

Romans 2:6 through 11, lays it out plainly, "There's no partiality in God. The gospel comes to the Jew first and also the Gentile. Judgment comes to the Jew first, and also, the Gentile."

Romans 9:4, Paul says, "They're Israelites, and to them belong," to them belong present tense, look it up in Greek, the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises, those still belong to Israel.

Response:

Dr. Brown suggests that looking it up in the Greek will confirm that the present, rather than the past, tense is used by Paul to speak of Israel's present privileges. May we call his bluff? Perhaps he may wish to look it up himself. There is no verb (either past or present tense) in the clause under consideration. It literally reads, "*whose the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises...*"(no verb in the sentence). Since the verb is missing, there can be no verb tense to tell us whether Paul is describing past or present privileges—but the contents of the verse can clarify this. Can we decide between Paul's *assumed* past or present tense here? We can if

we look at the items in his list. Were they in Israel's history, or in its present? This approach should clear things up, so let's look at them:

- "The adoption" no doubt refers to when God adopted Israel as His son. God first spoke of Israel in these terms in Exodus 4:22.
- The shekinah "glory" was (but no longer is) vouchsafed to them visibly above the tabernacle.
- The giving of the law is a past event, occurring 1,400 years before Paul wrote, not a present or ongoing reality. God gave the Law only once.
- The "covenants" given to Israel (F.F. Bruce says there is good textual evidence for the singular reading "covenant", i.e., Sinaitic) belong to the Old Order—although today's Jews, like the Gentiles, have every right to enter the New Covenant, if they wish to submit to the Messiah.
- The "service of worship" refers to the Levitical system—now defunct.
- The "promises" were given to Israel under the Old System, and now, having been fulfilled in Christ, are available to them, but they cannot receive them in unbelief (Heb.4:1-3, 11).

Therefore, all of those things Paul lists were given to Israel in the past—and most of them (e.g., the law, the tabernacle worship, the glory) became defunct in the death of Christ, or earlier. Paul could openly acknowledge these as things given to Israel in the past, but not continuing to be given to them. The choice between "is" and "were" as the implied verb would seem unmistakable. Paul is describing historical privileges, not present or future ones.

14. Dr. Brown:

What are some of those promises? How about Jeremiah 31:35 to 37, "Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name:

"If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever."

Thus, says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD."

Wow, God says, no matter what, I won't cast them off. I'll preserve them as a nation. You say, "Well, God's changed the identity, not all Israel is Israel." No, no, no, no, that's not what Paul was saying.

First, if God could just change the identity that makes him speaking double-talk here, there's no meaning. It's like I sign a contract with you, no matter what, the contract is binding, and then I just change who you are. I don't like you anymore, I say someone else is you now. No, God doesn't do that.

Response:

Jeremiah clearly identifies the ones to whom the promises are made as *the remnant* of Israel (e.g., Jer.23:3; 31:7; cf., Isa.10:22)—not the whole nation. He also is unambiguous in saying that any divine promise made to any nation will be defunct and revoked if that nation becomes disobedient (Jer.18:7-10). This has ramifications, as it was intended to, directly for Israel.

In the passage cited by Dr. Brown, it is the remnant who is promised to become a nation, as He clearly says He will not "*cast off all the offspring of Israel*"—that is, while He casts off most—namely, the apostate—of Israel, He will not cast off all (i.e., He will spare the remnant).

This is expounded by Paul in Romans 11, where he begins, in words echoing Jeremiah's in the above passage, "*Has God cast off His people? Certainly not!*" (v.1). Paul goes on to say God has not cast

off those *whom He foreknew* (v.2; cf., 8:29) which he soon identifies as the faithful remnant (v.5). God has certainly cast off the apostate in Israel, but has spared the remnant (as Jeremiah 31:37 promised).

Paul identifies himself as part of that remnant, which means he sees the remnant as the Church. Peter likewise points out that Israel (the remnant) has not ceased to be a nation (as Jer.31:35 promises), because those who are in Christ (like himself, part of the Jewish remnant) are now the *holy nation*—but then so are his believing Gentile readers (1 Peter 2:9-10).

In other words, the promise made in Jeremiah 31 remained true even after the rejection of apostate Israel. There has been no replacement or change of identity. The promise (like all Old Testament promises) pertained to the remnant of Israel, and it is that remnant that now belongs to Messiah in the Church. This does not preclude the permanent rejection of the apostate nation of Israel, because they were never all the true Israel in the first place (Rom.9:6).

15. Dr. Brown:

He's saying that there's a remnant within Israel that believes. Romans 9:6 and the verses following, there is an Israel within Israel, the remnant that believes, but then the rest of Romans 9, 10, 11, when he speaks of Israel, Israel, Israel, Israel, Israel, every time he's speaking of the nation as a whole. Count it. Ten times, just go through the verses as I've done, and written on it, and taught on it many a times.

In fact, F. F Bruce said this about Romans 11:26, "All Israel shall be saved." He said, it is impossible to entertain an exegesis which takes Israel here in a different sense from Israel in verse 25 "blindness in part happened to Israel."

In other words, the Israel that has been temporarily blinded is the Israel that will be saved, that was Bruce's point. And then he said this, temporarily alienated for the advantage of the Gentile, speaking to the Jewish people, they've been temporarily alienated for advantage of the Gentiles.

Response:

Like a swerving driver on the freeway, Dr. Brown needs to "choose a lane." On one hand, he points out that Israel is used two ways in verse 6, with the emphasis lying on that which refers to the remnant. But, from this point on, he ignores this fact, and arbitrarily claims that all other references in the chapter refer to "the nation as a whole." Huh? Which is it? Does Dr. Brown mean that Paul intended to introduce nothing to the discussion in writing verse 6? Was it merely an aside—a throw-away line—rather than a key point in his argument? Why would he introduce this point that only the remnant is the true Israel, and then never again call that fact to mind in discussing his Israelology?

To claim that all the references to Israel in Paul's discussion, after Romans 9:6, refer to "the nation as a whole" cannot be sustained by the facts of the case. Paul, after saying that there are indeed two *Israels* (9:6), speaks thereafter of each of them in different statements.

Thus, he often mentions Israel in contrast with Gentiles (10:20-21; 11:11, 25), referring to the ethnic Israel. But he also speaks of Israel, not in contrast to Gentiles, but in contrast to "the remnant"—which is not a different group, but a sub-group that is part of the larger nation. This sub-group he calls "*children of God*"(9:8), "*children of the promise*" (9:8), the "*vessel for honor*" (9:21), "*vessels of mercy*"(9:23), "*the [or "a"] remnant*" (9:27; 11:5), "*a seed*" (9:29), "*His people*" (11:1), "*the election*"(11:7, 28), "*holy branches*" (11:16), and "*Israel*" (9:6; 11:26). These titles all describe the same people—believing Jews—who were part of "Israel as a nation," but are also distinguished from it by their faith in Christ (9:21, 27; 11:7, 28).

F.F. Bruce (whom I greatly admire) is capable, like anyone else, of saying irresponsible things. To say it is impossible for Paul to use the word "Israel" two different ways in two successive verses, at the conclusion of a discussion which began with Paul's using the word Israel in two different ways, in a single verse, is a counterintuitive assertion requiring demonstration—which is not provided. Bruce remained associated with the Plymouth Brethren all his life. Though he escaped much of the dispensational darkness that arose within that movement, it is not impossible that their interpretation of a few important verses stayed with him to the end. If bits of dispensationalism can be retained in Dr. Brown's exegesis, it can also happen in Professor Bruce's—and in all of ours. This is why we must regularly check the grid through which we read scripture, to see if it has prevented our seeing what is being affirmed there.

It is more reasonable that, in the conclusion of his discussion about Israel, Paul returns to the controlling point he introduced at its beginning. Namely, that there is a faithful remnant "Israel" that is distinguished from merely ethnic "Israel." In chapter eleven, just prior to vv.25-26, Paul has described the true Israel as an olive tree, comprised only of believing Jews (the remnant of Israel) and the believing Gentiles who, as the prophets and Jesus predicted, have joined them in the same tree. This present demographic state of this tree has come about by the hardening and exclusion of unbelieving Jewish branches, and the addition of the full number of believing Gentiles. *"In this way,"* Paul says, *"all Israel (that is, the multi-ethnic tree of those faithful to the covenant, and not just ethnic Jews) will be saved"* (v.26). He has now fully developed his thesis of 9:6. Only the believing Jews are truly Israel, and they have been joined by Gentiles who have now been grafted in among them by the same faith. This is the truth that Paul elsewhere calls "the mystery" (Eph.3:3-6), as he also calls it here (Rom.11:25).

16. Dr. Brown:

They are eternally the object of God's electing love because his promises once made to the patriarchs will never be revoked. No, God is not finished with Israel.

Response:

Dr. Brown affirms (as proof for his otherwise scripturally unsupported affirmation that Israel "are eternally the object of God's electing love") that "his promises once made to the patriarchs will never be revoked." But has anyone ever claimed that the promises made to the patriarchs have been revoked? The closest thing to such a claim is that of the dispensationalists, who claim that these promises have indeed been indefinitely "postponed"—or revoked—for the time being.

Biblical theology teaches the opposite—namely, that the promises made to the patriarchs have faithfully been fulfilled, and continue as fulfilled, in Christ. This is stated so many times (including in Rom.9:6) that those who miss it are without excuse:

Mary said:

"He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." (Luke 1:54-55)

Zacharias said:

"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began,

That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant..."
(Luke 1:68-72)

Paul preached:

"And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus." (Acts 13:32-33)

Paul wrote:

"Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy..." (Romans 15:8-9)

The word "confirm" in the above citation is Gr. *bebaioo*. Dr. Brown thinks this means that Jesus "confirmed" that the promises would someday come true, as the Jews expected.

By contrast, Thayer says this word means, "to make good the promises by the event, i.e., fulfill them." Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich define it as to "prove the promises reliable, fulfill (them)"—providing thereafter several secular Greek examples of this meaning. Kittel explains this verse as speaking of "the validation of the promises of the Father through the ministry of Christ." If these lexical authorities are correct, then Paul is seeing the fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarchs in the ministry of Jesus—just as the other New Testament witnesses claim. Likewise, F.F. Bruce thinks the phrase "confirm the promises" should be paraphrased "'by making good his promises to the patriarchs' (NEB) — promises which were fulfilled in Christ."

Since the inspired writers of the New Testament interpreted Christ's coming as the fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarchs, on whose authority does anyone claim that they have not been fulfilled, and remain to be fulfilled in some future age?

17. Dr. Brown:

You know, before the Holocaust, or during the Holocaust, people might have said, well, God's finished with Israel. They're scattered among the nations. They've lost their peoplehood, their identity, they're just a small remnant, their numbers have not grown over the years like other nations have grown. And now, being so decimated, two out of three European Jews wiped out in the Holocaust, and many American Jews assimilating over the decades and losing their identity, and God's finished.

No, no, no, we've been miraculously preserved, and out of the ashes of the Holocaust the modern nation of Israel has been rebuilt. That alone should demolish the idea that God's finished with Israel.

Nonetheless, bad theology and bad ideas stick around so much that now that Israel has been in the land long enough, 70 years celebrated now, this week, now that that has happened, the critics say, well, God's finished with Israel. It is just another state.

No, Friends, no. Perish the thought! Read the article, "Is God finished with Israel?" Check out the volumes I recommend, including the new one. We'll be doing an interview, God willing, later next month on debunking Preterism. Yeah, important, debunking this idea that God stopped dealing with Israel in A.D. 70, that's when God forever cursed Israel, etcetera. No, no, no, no, no, a thousand times no, all of the Bible shouts "no" to that.

Response:

Dr. Brown, if I am reading him correctly, is trying to get across to us that God is not finished with Israel. He believes, apparently, that the affirmation that God is “done with Israel” is what Preterism is about. This may be one consequence of Preterism, but it is not what it is about.

Preterism (meaning “past”) is the view that certain prophecies have already been fulfilled in the past. Of course, all Christians are Preterists because all believe that some prophecies have previously been fulfilled. But all Christians are not usually called *Preterists*, and that label is usually reserved for those who see a past fulfillment of specific prophecies that others think remain to be fulfilled in the future.

If this labeling convention was followed by Orthodox Jews, then Dr. Brown would be called a “Preterist,” because there are many Messianic prophecies that he accepts as having been fulfilled in history, but which the Jews see as requiring fulfillment yet in the future. Among Christian Preterists are those who believe that much, or all, of the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation were fulfilled in A.D.70. This view (affirmed of the Olivet Discourse by the historian Eusebius) is not bizarre, since it is arrived at by the same process as our belief that Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Here is how we make such a determination: A thing is predicted, and then it occurs.

Sensible people, possessing no interfering theological agenda, will generally see the first subsequent occurrence as the fulfillment of the prediction. The identification of a past fulfillment is rendered the simpler in cases where the prophet said “This will occur in this generation,” or “This will happen soon”—and then the occurrence comes in the same generation as the prediction.

The same approach is taken when looking at Old Testament prophecies given before or during the Babylonian exile which speak of God bringing the remnant of the Jews back to Israel, and reestablishing Jerusalem, the temple, etc. When we see that God regathered the remnant to Jerusalem, and that they rebuilt the temple, etc., the most sensible thing is to identify the fulfillment with the prediction. We would not look beyond that for additional fulfillments, unless additional predictions came after the initial fulfillment (which did not happen, in this case). Recognizing the fulfillment is, in this case, rendered particularly easy by the fact that John the Baptist, Jesus and the inspired apostles all cited numerous examples of these predictions (frequently giving them a spiritual or metaphorical interpretation) and identified the fulfillment as being in their own day.

The prophets said God would bring the Jews back from “captivity” or “bondage.” The last time global Jewry were in captivity was in Babylon. For such prophecies to be relegated to a future fulfillment would require that the Jews must yet again return to bondage, from which God could again deliver them. Of course, if some future captivity were to happen, it would be at the expense of their currently free condition in Israel. Jews will never again be in bondage while they own a free state to which any of them may return at will. The modern state of Israel would have to be defeated, the Jews taken into bondage, and then God could deliver them again in order for there to be a future fulfillment of these predictions.

Yet, if one were to adopt such a gratuitous expectation, it would render all claims of the significance of the present state of Israel premature. It would require a future establishment of Israel after a still future bondage. Frankly, it is simpler, and more sensible, to recognize the fulfillment that occurred in the past as the only one intended in the predictions.

So, you see, Preterists are not involved in some radical enterprise. Like every Bible student, they like to see how God has fulfilled His promises and predictions when that is possible to do. It promises

to be the most fruitful path to understanding those scriptures which contain predictions which have been subsequently fulfilled. It was the approach taken by Jesus and the apostolic writings.

Does this translate into God being finished with Israel? Well, it does mean that prophecies about Israel that have been fulfilled do not need to be fulfilled a second time, without the predictions being repeated after the first fulfillment. That statement does not express a theological agenda. It is merely common-sense exegesis. It does mean that many of the arguments Dr. Brown makes from Old Testament passages would be invalid. However, it does not specifically predict that God will do nothing significant with Israel—or Egypt, Iran, Russia, the Ukraine, America, China, France, Outer Mongolia, or any other nation.

A Christian can affirm that God works in the geopolitical world to do significant things (the rise and fall of Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70, being among them). Not everything God does in history is found predicted in scripture. The prophets predicted relatively few of the historical events in which the hand of God could easily be seen—e.g., the rise and fall of the British Empire, the destruction of the Spanish Armada, the discovery of America, the outcomes of World Wars I and II—none of which are mentioned in scripture.

That God might do something with Israel in the future is therefore not necessarily ruled out by a belief in Preterism. However, to the question, “Do you believe the modern State of Israel is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy?” the only answer the Preterist can render is, “Which prophecy do you have in mind?” We must examine them case by case and in context.

Most of the examples provided will require us to answer, “Well, since that was fulfilled over 2,000 years ago, I see no reason to anticipate any additional fulfillments of the same prediction. Nor do I expect Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, as per Micah 5:2, at some future time.”

18. Dr. Brown:

So, we'll be addressing those wrong ideas, dangerously wrong ideas, in the days to come. And here, here's a good little hermeneutical principle that'll save you a lot of problems—the Messiah, coming into the world, does not cancel God's promises to Israel but confirms God's promises to Israel. Yeah, I just saved you a lot of error with that one little truth, and you find it in Romans 15:8 and 9.

Response:

Paul, in that place, says that Jesus came to “confirm” (or, as pointed out above, “fulfill”) the promises made to the fathers (patriarchs). The most consequential promise made to Abraham, and confirmed in later prophets, is that all races of men will benefit (“be blessed”) in the Seed of Abraham (Christ). This glorious promise, when contrasted with the prospect of one nation inheriting a rather common strip of land the size of New Jersey, relegates the latter to relative insignificance. Paul identifies this “blessing of Abraham” received by Gentiles as their being justified by faith and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal.3:8-9, 14)—which Paul, for excellent reasons, saw as being fulfilled in his own Gentile mission and the Church.

Dr. Brown, apparently, thinks that Jesus came to confirm to the Jews that the promises of restoration and possessing the land would be fulfilled in the future. This would be a strange message for Him to bring (and neither Jesus, nor Paul, ever actually said anything about that subject), since, during Jesus' and the apostles' lifetimes, the Jews were already in possession of their land, and had been for several hundred years. As it is today, so it was then. Even then, nothing was preventing the rest of the *diaspora* from returning to Israel at their leisure had they wished to do so.

It would then, as now, require no miracle on God's part for any or all Jews to travel to Israel. They already did so regularly for the festivals, as do many now, for brief visits. No one prevented them then, or now, simply to stay there. In Jesus' day, they did not see themselves as being in captivity or in need of deliverance from bondage (John 8:33). In that context, how nonsensical would it have been for Jesus to come and confirm to them that, in the last days, God would deliver them from bondage (which they were not then in—as they are not now) and that they would again be in their own land—as they already were and had been all their lives? In any case, Jesus never broached that subject. He only spoke (repeatedly) of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple—never mentioning its future restoration.

Paul is not saying that Jesus confirmed to the Jews specific promises that God had long ago fulfilled centuries earlier, but he identifies the specific content of the promises that Jesus confirmed. He mentions, as particular among those promises “confirmed” by Christ, that the Gentiles will share in the mercy of God and worship alongside Israel (citing several Old Testament verses to this effect). Thus, he sees “the promises” as fulfilled in the Church.

It is clear that Paul sees these promises as being fulfilled in his own time and through his own ministry. He even identifies the fulfillment of these promises with the “Root” springing from Jesse (v.12, citing Isa.11:1). Obviously, this refers to the first (not the second) coming of Christ, since Jesus sprang from Jesse's root two-thousand years ago and will not be springing from there a second time. Next time, He will “spring” from heaven (Phil.3:20).

19. Philip [a caller]:

Thank you, Dr. Brown for your ministry, and thank you for having me on. Romans 11:25 through 32, I think you just spoke briefly about the F. F Bruce commentary on 11:26, and so all Israel will be saved as it is written.

Now could you help me sort this passage out as far as trying to separate out the nation of Israel, the Jewish people, and how those promises apply?

Dr. Brown:

Sure, so let's go through it.

Paul has been writing about this big issue, this big question of how it is that nothing can separate us from the love of God, end of Romans 8, and yet it seems that the nation of Israel has rejected the Messiah when he came, and how can this be?

He says beginning in verse 25, "Lest you be wise in your own eyes, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers." He's writing to Gentile believers in Rome, and he says, I don't want you to be unaware of this truth about God's salvation plan that has been hidden, is now being revealed. "Lest you become arrogant." All right, so lest you become wise in your own sight.

In other words, if you think God's forever done with Israel, God's finished with the nation. You think, well, we've replaced them, we are the new kids on the block, we are the new Israel. And with that, you become arrogant and wise in your own eyes.

Response:

I presume Dr. Brown has never understood this theology, nor the exegesis supporting it, and has thus never embraced it. He has always been an outsider with reference to this historic Christian theology—first, as a dispensationalist, and then as a non-dispensational Zionist—and has always had an adversarial relation to it.

This would explain why he so frequently misses his guesses concerning what motives and attitudes will accompany such a belief. He has frequently predicted that one who believes that God has fulfilled His promises in Christ, thus showing Himself faithful to Israel, will (for some reason) believe that this confers some superiority upon the non-Jewish believer.

Dr. Brown is continually referring to this “arrogance” which, he says, such a doctrine spawns. This is the best evidence that he has never understood or held this belief, because doing so would make it obvious that nothing in it speaks of anyone’s superiority. It is the dispensational view that tends to make one see the Jews as superior to Gentiles. *Supersessionism* simply says, “We are all the same in Christ.” To a Christian Zionist, this is an expression of arrogance and anti-Semitism, just as the statement, “All lives matter,” is seen as a statement of anti-black racism by those in the Black Lives Matter movement. It never seems to occur to those who habitually think of people in racial categories that some people really have no interest in racial identities and simply wish to affirm things that are true.

20. Dr. Brown:

He said, “No, no, no! A partial hardness has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” So, a partial hardening has come on the Jewish people as a nation. It’s partial, meaning not on all Jews. There is always the remnant of believers. There’s always a remnant people like me, people like Paul...Jay Sekulow, and hundreds of thousands of Jewish believers today, and over the decades.

So, it’s not over the entire nation, and it’s not for all time. There will be a turning at the end of the age, all right. And in this way, all Israel will be saved.

Response:

I think the caller’s question was related to the difference between the nation of Israel, on the one hand, and the Jewish people, on the other. Paul doesn’t predict a large turning of the Jewish people to Christ anywhere in Romans 11, but if he did, this would have no immediate relevance to the political nation or the Land of Israel. Dr. Brown points out that Jews, like Paul and himself, have been turning to Christ for the past 2,000 years. However, Dr. Brown and most Messianic Jews have not relocated to Israel—which is an entirely different matter—showing that a Jew returning to God will not necessarily end up in the nation of Israel.

Dr. Brown could have turned to Christ when he did just as easily had there been no nation of Israel in the Middle East in his lifetime. In fact, if every Jew were to turn to Christ today, this would have no direct connection with the nation of Israel. As most Messianic Jews do not live in Israel today and never become part of that nation. It also would be possible for no Messianic Jews whatsoever ever to live there without impacting the question of the *salvation* of the Jews.

Dr. Brown believes that Paul predicted the salvation of all the Jews in the end times, but neither he nor Paul provide a case for the necessity of Israel’s existence as a nation in the Land. Paul has a heart-rending desire for the salvation of Israel (Rom.10:1), but he never predicts, nor expresses any interest in, a last-days ingathering of the majority of the *diaspora*—something which had not occurred in his time but which seemed not to concern him in the least. Though he believed that he was living at the end of the ages (1 Cor.10:11), in all his international travels, we never find him encouraging or predicting that the Jews whom he encountered in the synagogues should consider regathering to Israel. Such a scenario apparently played no part in his eschatological vision.

21. Dr. Brown:

So as the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, that further provokes Israel to jealousy, that's the hope. And the Gentile prayer for Israel, and on the heels of this, in this way, all Israel will be saved. Speaking of the nation now there will be a national turning, just like Jeremiah 31:31 says that.

Response:

I suppose the main problem with this statement is that the verse referenced says nothing about any national turning to God. It only says that God would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. The New Testament writers thought that this New Covenant had come with Christ already. He made this covenant with those whom even Dr. Brown himself recognizes as “*the Israel of God*” (i.e., the believing Jews, called the disciples) in the upper room. Those who reject this covenant are, as Paul puts it, “*not...Israel*” (Rom.9:6).

Paul said he was a minister of the New Covenant (2 Cor.3:6), which he obviously identified with his Gospel ministry. Hebrews said that Jesus has become the Mediator of “*a better covenant*”—citing Jer.31:31-34 (Heb.8:6-12), and that the Old Covenant has become obsolete as a consequence (Heb.8:13). Nothing in the New Testament suggests that any aspect of the New Covenant remains to be established in the future. To claim this would simply be to create doctrines out of thin air.

22. Dr. Brown:

- *At that time God will be the God of all the families of Israel...*

Response:

Dr. Brown is undoubtedly thinking of Jeremiah 31:1. *All the families of Israel* would no doubt refer to the same *Israel* as in v.31, with whom He makes the New Covenant. This refers to the inclusion of not only Judeans, but also Galileans, descended from the northern tribes—some of whom were participants at the Last Supper. Again, it is Dr. Brown himself that affirms “*the Israel of God*” (Gal.6:16) refers to the believing Jews. When God becomes the God of [all the families of] Israel” it is safe to assume that the “*Israel*” of whom He is the God is “*the Israel of God.*”

Did “*the Israel of God*” eventually include representatives from “*all the families of Israel*”? We have no idea, though nothing about the suggestion is intrinsically improbable. After all, if John identifies 12,000 saved from each of the tribes, we might wonder how this number could be attained while leaving any Jewish family unrepresented.

In any case, verses from this chapter of Jeremiah are repeatedly cited in the New Testament as being fulfilled in the first coming of Christ (e.g., v.15 in Mathew 2:18; and vv.31-34 in Heb.8:8-12). By contrast, no New Testament writer associates anything in Jeremiah 30-33 with the end times.

23. Dr. Brown:

- *Just like Zechariah 12:10 and following up to 13:1, speaks of the massive repentance that will come...*

Response:

Since the New Testament writers quote numerous verses in Zechariah 9 through 14 as being fulfilled in their own time, and never associate any part of this section with the end times, would it not be more reasonable to identify 12:10 with Pentecost, and 13:1 with the cleansing of the blood of Christ (Eph.1:7; 1 John 1:7), or with the “*washing of regeneration*” (Tit.3:5)? Notably, the Zechariah passages flanking the section referenced by Dr. Brown unambiguously have their fulfillment in the first coming of Christ (comp. Zech.11:12 with Matt.26:15; and Zech.13:7 with Matt.26:31).

Since John saw in the piercing of Christ's side the fulfillment of Zech.12:10 (see John 19:37), it is most likely that he also saw the water and blood that poured forth from the wound as the fountain "opened...for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech.13:1). What could be more natural? Certainly not the wrenching of the fulfillment from its chronological context to some date centuries later!

What New Testament text or exegesis justifies extending these prophecies to a time thousands of years beyond their stated fulfillments?

24. Dr. Brown:

- *Just as a Jewish Jerusalem must welcome Messiah back, according to Matthew 23:39...*

Response:

The statement, "you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,'" contains no prediction of the Jews' ever meeting such a condition. "Until" clearly means "unless and until"—just as in the statement, "You will receive no allowance until you clean your room." Such a statement provides no guarantee that the room will be cleaned, nor that the allowance will be paid. The statement was true of every contemporary Jew to whom He spoke (He mentioned no future generations). They had seen much of Him speaking publicly in the temple, but He departed at this point, and was never seen there again. If they did not join the remnant in their declaration of the blessedness of Him who came in the name of the Lord, they would see Him among them no more. However, those who were converted would see Him in a sense that others would not (John 14:21-23). This possibility was open to them still.

25. Dr. Brown:

- *Just as Peter says, as Jewish repentance comes, Acts 3:19—21 that the Messiah will return and set up His kingdom on the earth, fulfill all the promises given to the prophets about the restoration of all things. In this way, all Israel will be saved.*

Response:

Once again, no prediction can be found here. A conditional promise is made that, if the Jewish listeners will repent (they might or might not) then they will receive "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" as do all who repent and come to Christ. There is no hint of a national promise here. Salvation is offered to individuals who repent (Acts 3:19). Some of them did, as we see their numbers increased after that day (Acts 4:4). No doubt, those who met the condition experienced the very refreshing promised by Peter.

Peter did say that the refreshing from God had been predicted by all the prophets (Acts 3:21), but he did not associate these promises with the end times. Instead, he says that all the prophets, from Samuel onward, "foretold these days" (v.24). Clearly, Peter (like all the New Testament writers) says that his own days were the ones of which the prophets spoke, meaning the offer associated with repentance was for the present time—not some special end-time period.

If the above sampling of inapplicable verses provides the best proof that Dr. Brown can suggest, those of us who are of a contrary position might justly rest our case.

26. Dr. Brown:

As it is written the deliverer will come from Zion, will banish ungodliness from Jacob, and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

So, it speaks of the end time turning of the Jewish nation, not Jewish people through all ages. Jews have been lost through the ages like everyone else. But a final, national repentance that God will somehow orchestrate in his wisdom and grace.

Response:

Dr. Brown cites Paul, in Rom.9:26, who is there quoting Isaiah 59:20-21. I notice the reference to “end time” in Dr. Brown’s comment but fail to find it in the text cited. I’m pretty sure that Jesus and all the New Testament writers recognized Jesus as the Redeemer who had already come out of Zion, where He died for our redemption and arose from the dead. Next time, He will come out of heaven, not out of Zion.

The timing in the prophecy is “*when I take away their sins.*” I think we would be safe in assuming that this was accomplished by “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29), by the sacrifice of Himself a long time ago (Heb.9:28). This was a once-for-all deal (Rom.6:10; Heb.7:27; 9:12; 10:10), and there is no prediction of its being repeated in the future. When else, according to Isaiah 59:20-21, would Christ take away the sins of “*those who turn from transgression*” (Isa.59:20 Heb.) than when He makes His [New] Covenant with them?

It seems that dispensationalists and Zionists can fabricate new fulfillment scenarios from thin air for verses that (according to scripture) were long ago fulfilled. How do they justify this?

27. Dr. Brown:

As regards to the Gospel, they [meaning Jewish people today] are enemies for your sake, but this regards an election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God, Gentiles, but now have received mercy because of their disobedience [Israel's disobedience], so they too [Jewish people] have now been disobedient in order that by the mercies shown to you [Gentiles], they [the Jews] may also receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience that he may have mercy on all.

That's the good news of the Gospel.

Response:

If the idea of future promises someday being fulfilled to Israel is the Gospel, one must wonder why it is that neither Jesus, nor the apostles, ever preached such a Gospel. In the Bible, the Gospel they preached is called the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel of Peace, the Gospel of Salvation, and the Gospel of Grace—not the “Gospel of the Restoration of National Israel.” Of the many possible labels for the Gospel, this one does not seem to have made the cut. Perhaps, if it is a “Gospel” at all, it is that “*other Gospel*” against which Paul so strongly inveighed (Gal.1:8).

The verses cited from Romans 11 (above) certainly say nothing about this. The most optimistic meaning one could draw from the words would be that Jews will eventually turn to Christ in terms of the same Gospel we have all received (a Gospel which makes no mention of Israel’s future restoration). If Jews were to do so, this would, of course, render them “Christians” in the New Covenant—which has nothing to do with national Israel. Coming to God on the terms of any previous covenant is no longer an option. I see nothing in these verses about the Jews turning to God in the end—much as I would be delighted for this to happen. I have given a more thorough and correct exegesis of these verses in the first document in this set—“Is the Church the Israel of God?”

From AskDrBrown.org page

Article #1, May 18, 2015

28. Dr. Brown:

Is God finished with Israel? Is He done with the Jewish people as a people? Heaven forbid! All of Scripture and history shouts a loud “No” to this question.

Paul addressed this directly, asking, “So I ask, did they [speaking of the Jewish people as a whole] stumble in order that they might fall? By no means!” (Romans 11:11). Or, in the words of the King James Version, “God forbid.” So, despite Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah, Israel has not fallen beyond the point of recovery.

Response:

Probably relatively few people have fallen beyond recovery, including Jews. However, Paul does not broach the question of the possibility of such a recovery in this verse. The phrase “beyond recovery” is neither included nor implied in Paul’s rhetorical question. It is *eisegetically* added by dispensationalists who have trouble simply sticking with the text of any passages that never seem to go so far as to make any of their points for them.

Paul’s rhetorical question does not speak of *temporary* conditions, or the *possibility of recovery* from them. Paul only raises the question of the *purpose* and *results* of their falling. Paul only asks whether their fall was gratuitous, occurring for no other purpose than to fulfill certain Israel-condemning scriptural passages like those that Paul has quoted in the previous three verses. But was the mere fulfillment of scripture the only purpose in their falling? “No”, Paul says, “It also had a positive effect of promoting the evangelization of Gentiles.”

Paul’s pointing this out does not carry any subtext of a future reversal of this fall. Of course, the Jews who fell (Paul is not discussing the nation, but individuals) have the option of repenting and being recovered, as Paul will later point out as one of their options in v.23. How many Jews may end up doing this is not hinted at or speculated about by Paul. That it *can be done* is enough to give hope to any Jewish person that he or she may also be saved in Christ. No prediction of future restoration is mentioned or implied here by Paul.

29. Dr. Brown:

Rather, as Paul writes in Romans 9:4 (speaking, again, of non-believing Jews), “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.”

Notice carefully those words, all in the present tense in Greek: the divine promises still belong to Israel. And one of those promises is that, whatever Israel does as a nation, even falling under divine discipline, God will preserve them as a nation.

Response:

Which words are in the present tense in the Greek? The word “are”—that is, the affirmation that they are Israelites? I doubt anyone would find this observation controversial, since Paul calls them his brethren “*according to the flesh*” (a category that he soon afterward says has no significance in the electing purposes of God—Rom.9:7-8).

The only other verb in the sentence is “belong”—but this appears only in the translation, not in the original text [See comments in #13, above]. There is no corresponding word in the Greek, and

therefore there is no verb tense there. The Greek text simply reads: *"Whose the adoption, the glory, the covenants..."* This phrase could mean "whose are..." or "whose were..." (that is, "to whom were entrusted..." or "who were given the privilege of..."). The inclusion of "the glory," "the giving of the law," and "the [Levitical] worship" certainly refer to things given to them at a point in the past, and not present realities among the Jews (e.g., "the giving of the law" was not occurring when Paul wrote but was a past historical event). This strongly suggests that whatever verb we might wish to supply would have to be in the past tense.

30. Dr. Brown:

As written in Jeremiah 31:35-37: "Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name: 'If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.' Thus says the Lord: 'If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord.'"

Response:

I have already dealt with this argument previously [see #14, above]. No one has claimed that all the Jews have become extinct, nor that today there are none of them in God's holy nation, the Church (1 Pet.2:9-10). The terms of these verses are met in God preserving the remnant of Israel in Christ. It has nothing to do with the whole race or nation of the Jews.

The survival of ancient races is not always the result of miracles. Egyptians and Ethiopians also still exist from biblical times, as do Assyrians and Arabs. The same would be true of the Japanese and the aboriginal Australians. Must we assign separate miraculous interventions for the special preservation of all of these ethnic groups?

The promise that members of Abraham's race shall endure as long as the sun and the moon is also found in the Messianic Psalm 72, where those that endure are specifically identified as those who fear (i.e., worship) the Messiah Jesus: *"They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure"* (v.5). This is not about the nation of Israel, but the believing remnant of Israel who embrace Jesus.

31. Dr. Brown:

That's why the Jewish people still exist today: We have been miraculously preserved by God, not because of our goodness, but because of His goodness. Thank God that He keeps His promises! Thank God for His grace and mercy and longsuffering! (To all of my non-Jewish, Jesus-loving friends, remember: The Church does not have a monopoly on grace.)

Response:

Is Dr. Brown saying that the Gospel of grace is not the only vehicle for man to receive special grace? God gives general grace to all people. However, the grace that specially endears a man to God is found only in Jesus Christ, so far as we can deduce from any scriptural statements. How then, can those who reject Christ and the Gospel be counted among the recipients of special grace? *"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* General grace, on the other hand, is given to all mankind—to "the just and the unjust" (Matt.5:45).

32. Dr. Brown:

What about the fact that the vast majority of Jews do not believe in Jesus? What about the fact that some militantly oppose faith in Jesus?

That is tragic, and that is why Paul mourned in Romans 9:1-3. Jews without Jesus are lost, just as Gentiles without Jesus are lost (see Romans 2:6-11).

Yet, despite my people's rejection of our Messiah, we remain loved and chosen by God. As Paul stated so clearly, "As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:28-29).

Some would argue that when Paul said "Israel" in these verses, he meant only the believing remnant, the Israel within Israel, Jews who believe in Jesus (see Romans 9:6-8). But to argue for this is to do violence to the Word of God.

Response:

I discuss this verse in greater detail in Document #1 —"Is the Church the Israel of God?" The problem is in the translation Dr. Brown is citing, which omits the definite article before "election" (Gr. *ekloge*). Paul says that "they" (the unbelieving Jews) are enemies concerning the Gospel, but that another "they"—whom he calls "*the election*" are beloved for the fathers' sake. This expression "the election" has appeared earlier in the same chapter as a reference to the believing remnant, contrasted with unbelieving Israel (v.7).

Thus, Paul speaks of two categories within the ethnic Israel (as he also did in 9:6): 1) The greater race of Israelites (the enemies of the Gospel), and 2) "the election" or the remnant (v.5, 7). The latter are the Jews who have embraced Christ—that is, Christians. These have been preserved and saved out of the otherwise doomed nation, for the sake of the promises made to the patriarchs. A better translation would have made this clearer.

33. Dr. Brown:

First, after making this point about the Israel within Israel (the believing remnant) in Romans 9:6, Paul used the word "Israel" 10 more times, culminating in Romans 11:26. In every case, he meant the nation as a whole, not just the believing remnant.

Second, as New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce pointed out in his commentary to Romans 11:26, ". . . it is impossible to entertain an exegesis which takes 'Israel' here in a different sense from 'Israel' in v 25 ('blindness in part is happened to Israel')." In other words, the Israel that has been temporarily blinded is the Israel that will be saved.

As Bruce explained, "Temporarily alienated for the advantage of the Gentiles, they are eternally the object of God's electing love because his promises, once made to the patriarchs, will never be revoked."

Response:

My response to these points can be found earlier in this document.

34. Dr. Brown:

That's why Jesus spoke about the time of future "regeneration," with the twelve tribes of Israel playing a central role (Matthew 19:28).

That's why Peter spoke about the time of the restoration of all things, in accordance with the words of the Old Testament prophets (see Acts 3:19-21).

And what did those prophets speak about? They spoke of the time

- *when the Messiah would reign from Jerusalem,*
- *when Israel would be exalted, and*
- *when the nations would stream to Jerusalem to learn from Israel's God (see, for example, Isaiah 2:1-4).*

Response:

“Regeneration” (Matt.19:28) is a word used elsewhere only in Titus 3:5, where it is associated with salvation in this present time, not an eschatological future. I know of no biblical data that would justify associating this word with any special role of the Jews. Jesus did not say the twelve tribes would play any particular role—only that the apostles would.

The “restoration” (Acts 3:21) of which all the prophets spoke is identified by Peter as “these days” (v.24), not a future age.

The three bullet points given by Dr. Brown have already occurred in the Church. Christ rules today from His throne over the heavenly Jerusalem (identified by Paul and the writer of Hebrews as the Church).

The “*Israel of God*” is certainly exalted “*in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Eph.2:6).

The Gentiles have been streaming into this New Jerusalem for the past 2,000 years, and still do (see Heb.12:22). Of course, if one excludes the voice of the New Testament from consideration, one can pretend that all these things have not occurred and must occur in the future. But, really, why would any Christian exclude the apostolic witness in seeking to understand the Bible?

35. Dr. Brown:

The idea that a New Testament writer could reverse all these promises with a single stroke of his pen – as some claim Paul or others did – is to deny the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. After all, Jesus the Messiah came to fulfill the Hebrew Scriptures, not abolish them (see Matthew 5:17-20). He came to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, not cancel them (see Romans 15:8-9).

Response:

Dr. Brown sets up a straw man, suggesting that our believing the apostolic witness requires a denial of the inspiration of the Old Testament prophecies. No, it only undermines the Jews’ (and dispensationalists’) faulty interpretation of those prophecies. The Jews misunderstood the nature of the prophecies (Acts 13:27). We have a choice between, on the one hand, the interpretation of blinded Jews who have a veil over their hearts when the Old Testament is read (2 Cor.3:14-15), and on the other, the interpretation given by of the apostles of whom it is said that Jesus opened their understanding of the Old Testament scriptures (Luke 24:45).

This latter act of Christ would hardly be necessary if they, as Jews instructed in the synagogues every Sabbath, already were properly comprehending these prophecies! It is interesting that, once their understanding was thus enlightened by the coming of the Spirit, they never again spoke of the future regathering or restoration of the nation Israel, and, instead, interpreted every prophecy on the subject as having been fulfilled spiritually in their own time.

It should not surprise us that the Jewish rabbis and their disciples would be ignorant of the true meaning of the prophecies, since Paul repeatedly claimed that the fulfillment was a “mystery” which had not previously been revealed to the sons of men, but was now revealed by the Spirit to the apostles (Rom.16:25-26; 1 Cor.2:9-10; Eph.3:4-6; Col.1:26). Not only the rabbis, but also the prophets

themselves, according to Peter, were ignorant of the meaning of their own prophecies (1 Pet.1:10-12).

In view of all this, should we not be suspicious of our own interpretations if they simply follow the flawed expectations of those whom Jesus described as “*blind leaders of the blind*”?

Dr. Brown and the dispensationalists want us to place more confidence in the uninspired Jews to correctly understand the hope of Israel than in Jesus and the inspired apostles to reveal and clarify it. This is clear when he says that no New Testament writer has the authority to change the promises. While this is true, it is irrelevant. They did not change the promises, but they did identify the nature of their fulfillment as a corrective to the mistaken notions of the rabbis. The apostles certainly have the authority to correct the flawed interpretation of those promises according to the enlightenment Christ conferred upon them. One must decide which of the Testaments one wishes to embrace.

36. Dr. Brown:

And, as Paul also wrote, the Sinai covenant, which came 430 years after the promises to Abraham, cannot annul those promises (Galatians 3:17-18; this includes the promises to the Land of Israel; see also Psalm 105:7-11).

Response:

This argument has come up several times [see: 3:24, 26, 31; 5:32; 6:2; 10:36; 15:14; 16:3; 18:8], and I answered then as I will here: There is no annulment of the promises. According to the New Testament writers, there has been the fulfillment of them in Christ. It is, perhaps, hard being a Hebrew Christian—wanting to keep one foot in one’s Old Testament status but also wanting to give a measure of credence to the New. The Testaments are not the same. The New Testament is “*not like*” the old one (Jer.31:32) but is “*better*” and has “*better promises*” (Heb.8:6). Does the Hebrew Christian wish to claim the Old Testament promises or the better ones that are associated with the New? The New fulfills the Old—unless, of course, we side with the unbelieving Jews instead of Christ and the apostles.

The land promise given to Abraham and his Seed, according to Paul, refers to Christ’s possession of the whole world (Rom.4:13; cf., Ps.2:8; 72:8). One must wonder why Zionists so tenaciously wish to limit themselves to only a tiny portion of that inheritance. To whom is the rest then to be given? If it is to the Gentiles, why do the Jews (allegedly uniquely “*beloved for their fathers’ sakes*”) come out of the deal with only with such a narrow strip of land to call their own? Gentiles who support Zionism might well be suspected of wanting to relegate the Jews again to the *ghetto*—off in a corner away from the rest of us. As a Christian, I actually prefer to keep them right here among us in our fellowship. We would miss them if they all moved away!

37. Dr. Brown:

That alone explains the history of the Jewish people. Without a homeland for many centuries, scattered around the earth, yet preserved through generations of unspeakable suffering, only to be regathered to our ancient homeland. Nothing even remotely close to this has happened to any other people. It is only because of the Lord!

Response:

Divine intervention is certainly not the only possible explanation, but it is unimportant to argue the point. In the New Testament, the redeemed, like Abraham himself, are not concerned with an earthly country (Heb. 11:15-16) nor restricted to one earthly race (1 Pet.2:9).

38. Dr. Brown:

And so, both history and Scripture demolish the idea that God is finished with Israel. Not a chance!

Response:

I think Dr. Brown is overly impressed by current events since 1948. He certainly sees more in it than is justified by either scripture or present facts on the ground. The presence of the modern State of Israel may or may not be a miracle. Since it was never predicted in scripture, we are free to hold either opinion. However, the prophetic scriptures must be interpreted by the inspired writers, not by uninspired interpreters of current events.

Israel existed as a nation before I was born (just barely) and has been a geopolitical reality through all my 50+ years of ministry teaching the Bible. Like Dr. Brown, I also once used that fact as a touchstone for prophetic interpretation.

Eventually, I broke free from the spell of newspaper-exegesis and opened my eyes to the New Testament teaching. Like Paul, discovering the “mystery” of the Church was immensely life changing. It delivered me from that noxious “Replacement Theology” that puts antichristian Israel in the place of Jesus Christ, replacing Him in His role as the fulfillment of Israel’s hopes. What a wonderful breakthrough to become a New Testament believer!

39. Dr. Brown:

(For those wanting to do further study, I recommend the following titles:

- *Brock David Hollett, Debunking Preterism: How Over-Realized Eschatology Misses the ‘Not Yet’ of Bible Prophecy;*
- *Gerald R. McDermott, ed., The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land;*
- *by the same author, Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land;*
- *Barry E. Horner, Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged and Eternal Israel;*
- *Michael Vlach, Has the Church Replaced Israel?;*
- *Michael L. Brown, Our Hands Are Stained with Blood: The Tragic Story of the ‘Church’ and the Jewish People.)*

40. Dr. Brown:

Article #2

The idea that God is finished with the Jewish people as a nation and that the Church has replaced Israel in God’s plan is not only a serious theological error. It is a deadly one as well.

It was this false theology that helped fuel the fires of Jew-hatred in one of the early Church’s most respected leaders, John Chrysostom (347-407), who once said, “God hates the Jews, and on Judgment Day will say to those who sympathize with them: ‘Depart from Me, for you have had intercourse with My

murderers! Flee, then, from their assemblies, fly from their houses, and hold their synagogue in hatred and aversion."

Without this erroneous theology, the Crusades would never have taken place 700 years later.

*It was this false theology that helped fuel the fires of Jew-hatred in the great reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546), who gave this counsel to the German princes of his day: "First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools...Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed...Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies...Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them. Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb..." (For many more examples, see my book *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood*.)*

Luther's murderous words were put into action by none other than Adolf Hitler, beginning the night of November 9, 1938, which is called Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, when, according to Nazi officer Reinhard Heydrich, "815 [Jewish] shops [were] destroyed, 171 dwelling houses set on fire or destroyed ... 119 synagogues were set on fire, and another 76 completely destroyed ... 20,000 Jews were arrested, 36 deaths were reported and those seriously injured were also numbered at 36 ..."

This is a direct result of a theology that was dead wrong helping to justify deadly actions. (The Nazis were obviously not true Christians, but it was centuries of "Christian" anti-Semitism in Europe that helped make the Holocaust possible.)

Response:

It is hard to see how any sane person can connect the belief that "all the races are equal before God" with a particular sin of Jew-hatred. Those who hate Jews do not believe in what Dr. Brown wrongly labels as "Replacement Theology," since Jew-hatred, by definition, thinks of the Jews as worse than the Gentiles. This is contrary to the view that all races are equal. Dr. Brown continually makes this false connection. I guess when a doctrine cannot be defeated by exegesis, the use of "abusive ad hominem" argumentation will be hoped to suffice.

If the supersessionist belief that "the Jews are no more special to God than is anyone else" were to be accepted, Dr. Brown thinks, then there will remain no reason for anyone to treat the Jews like humans. What kind of slander against the Jews is this—that they cannot be regarded as having human rights or dignity without the theory that they are on a pedestal above the rest of the world? It may be this very belief of superiority, often held by the Jews themselves, that has contributed more than anything else to historic Gentile resentment toward them. Certainly, such a belief would more likely lead to such a response to them than would the supersessionist belief that all races stand as equal before God. How can a Christian be a racist while believing that "there is no partiality with God" (Rom.2:11).

Of course, having hatred toward any human being is proof that one does not have the Spirit of Christ, or eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:15). Therefore, there is no danger of Jew-hatred arising in the heart of any true Christian, regardless of his or her view in the present controversy. Certainly, there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the biblical teaching of equality of all races, on the one hand, and anti-Semitism, on the other. To claim such a relationship, as Dr. Brown regularly does, is to commit the genetic fallacy—since some anti-Semites have incidentally also held to supersessionism. This alone would disqualify his argument, even if the scriptures did not already so strikingly do so.

Commented [DG5]:

41. Dr. Brown:

To be sure, there are fine Christians today who embrace this same theological error (called Replacement Theology or Supersessionism (meaning that the church has replaced or superseded Israel), and they are absolutely not anti-Semites and they would never sanction the persecution of the Jewish people in Jesus' name. And they totally repudiate hateful quotes like these just cited.

But the sad fact of history is that it is this very theology that opened up the door to centuries of "Christian" anti-Semitism in the past, and it is threatening to open up that ugly door once again in the present.

In light of the third "Christ at the Checkpoint" conference that just took place in the ancient city of Bethlehem, where issues like these were anything but theological abstractions, it's important to remember how wrong theology leads to wrong actions.

Response:

I would like to hear a list of the alleged "wrong actions" that spring from the theological position that affirms all men and races are equal before God. The fact that there are "fine Christians" who hold this view, and who nonetheless haven't any inclinations toward Jew-hatred, disproves the connection between these two dissimilar and unrelated things, which Dr. Brown continually tries to join at the hip.

If this belief "opens the door" to anti-Semitism, this suggests that the only thing that closes that door would be a view of default Jewish favoritism. What else can we call a view that says not all races are equal before God, and that only the Jews are specially "*beloved (unlike Gentiles) for the sake of the patriarchs*"—that is, strictly on a racial basis? Certainly, "*Jewish Favoritism*" would be a more accurate label for this position than "*Replacement Theology*" would be for the opposite view!

42. Dr. Brown:

According to Acts 1, after the disciples had spent 40 days with Jesus after His resurrection, speaking to them "about the kingdom of God" (Act 1:3), His devoted followers wanted to ask Him one question before He ascended to heaven.

They inquired, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Act 1:6-8).

In other words, "that's a good question, and it certainly makes sense in light of everything we've been talking about, but the timing of when that will happen – when God will "restore the kingdom to Israel" – is not of your concern right now. You must concentrate on fulfilling the great commission with the help of the Spirit's power".

But that's not how John Calvin interpreted Jesus' reply. As noted by Dr. Paul R. Wilkinson in his book Understanding Christian Zionism, Calvin stated that there were "as many errors... as words" in the disciples' question concerning Israel's restoration. This, he believed, showed 'how bad scholars they were under so good a Master,' and therefore 'when he [Jesus] saith, you shall receive power, he admonisheth them of their imbecility.'"

Wilkinson also notes that, "At the 5th International Sabeel Conference in 2004 [this is an anti-Zionist conference], Mitri Raheb denounced the disciples as 'very narrow-minded,' 'nationalistic,' and 'blinded' for asking such a question."

To be candid, interpretations like these are nothing more than exegetical nonsense, standing the biblical text on its head.

For example, if the disciples had said to Jesus,

“Lord, is this the time for us to take up swords and behead our enemies?”,

He would not have replied, “It’s not for you to know the time for beheading that the Father has determined. You just concentrate on preaching the gospel.”

Hardly! Instead, He would have rebuked them in no uncertain terms.

Response:

I responded very adequately to this nonsensical argument in a previous document in this collection, entitled: “3. Latest Form of Replacement Theology.” It is clear from this line of argumentation that Dr. Brown really does not understand the view that he continually seeks to malign.

43. Dr. Brown:

But that’s not what He did here, despite the fact that His words are constantly interpreted as if He had said, “You idiots! Don’t you know that I’m through with Israel? Don’t you know that the Church has replaced Israel? Have I been with you so long and you still don’t get it?”

Response:

Precisely who is it that “constantly interprets” Christ’s answer this way? I have never heard that absurd explanation expressed by anyone. Is Dr. Brown aware of someone who says this, or is he simply casting off restraint out of disrespect for the intelligence of his audience?

44. Dr. Brown:

Instead, He simply told them it was not for them to know exactly when the Father would restore the kingdom to Israel (something that Jesus and Peter and Paul affirmed; see Matthew 19:28; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 11:28-29; 15:8); their mission was to be His witnesses.

Response:

Well, He didn’t actually say anything at all about the Father restoring the Kingdom to Israel. It is also the case that none of the verses Dr. Brown references in parentheses make any reference whatsoever to God restoring the Kingdom to Israel (I fear that exegesis is a lost art). It is interesting how often these verses are illegitimately raised to make the point of this doctrine—as if they represent the best case for it available. They probably do—but they say nothing to the subject that an objective exegete could discover.

Instead of saying anything like what Dr. Brown says He said, Jesus simply discouraged their curiosity about future events that God had not chosen to reveal. He neither confirmed, nor denied, their viewpoint. He said, essentially, “You have a job to do. Stop clock-watching and get to work. Whatever the Father is going to do He will do without your needing to know in advance.” He never said that they were stupid, but only that they should redirect their concerns.

Of course, it is the witness of the Gospels that the disciples were often rebuked for their dullness, so that, even though He did not do so, we should not be surprised had He rebuked their dullness here as well. However, there was nothing intrinsically wrong with their question. The kingdom was indeed restored to Israel, but, prior to Pentecost, they could not understand this (*the natural man does not*

receive the things of the Spirit of God...they are spiritually discerned). They obviously understood later, as their preaching and writings demonstrate.

His rebuke here was for their inappropriate inquisitiveness, not their lack of understanding. It is true that only a few weeks earlier He had told them that there were yet many things for them to learn which they could not, at that time, bear to hear. He said the Holy Spirit's coming would result in the continued education He could not give them at that time (John 16:12-13). We are not told what these "unbearable" things were, but we can assume they would offend or disappoint their existing expectations or sensitivities as Jews, and that the things they preached and taught after Pentecost would contain those things. It is interesting that there are currently Christian teachers who still find it hard to "bear" some of the insights given by the Spirit through the New Testament authors.

45. Dr. Brown:

Unfortunately, in our day, as we are seeing an increasing number of Christians turning against the modern State of Israel – and I don't simply mean that they are criticizing Israel when Israel deserves criticism but:

- *that they are rejecting it as a prophetic fulfillment in any sense of the word,*
- *also embracing the Palestinian narrative of Israel as an evil occupier and*
- *claiming that no prophetic promises remain to the Jewish people as a nation –*

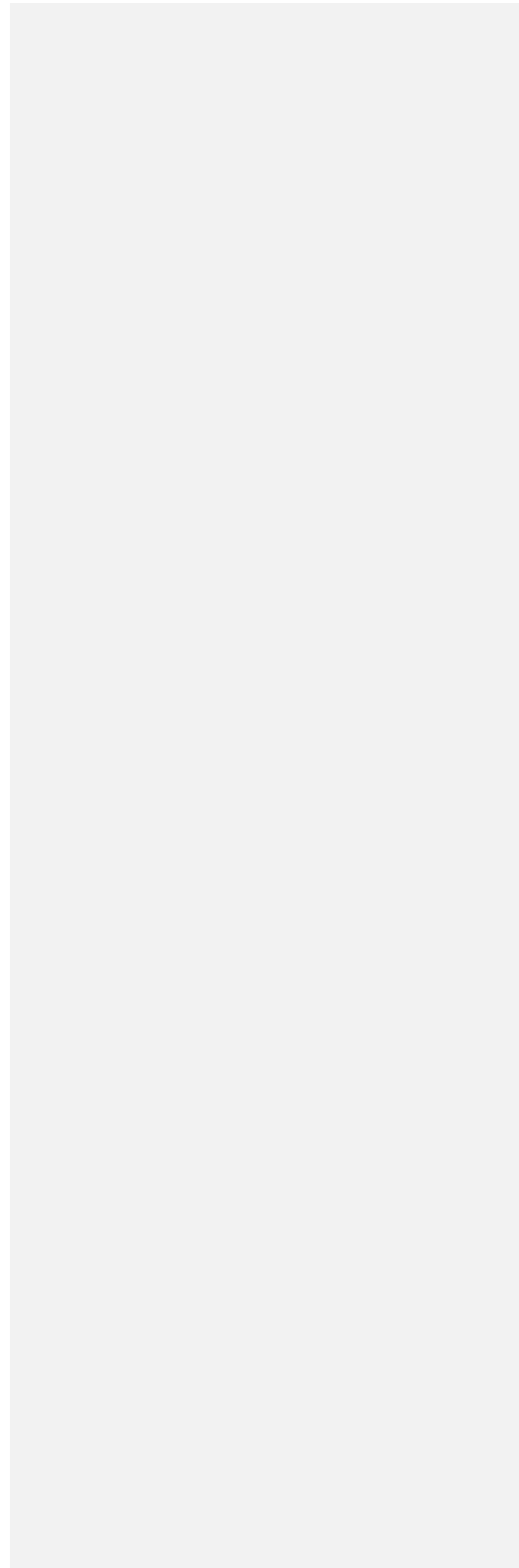
We are seeing the seeds of Jew hatred being planted again in the hearts of many of these believers. Their hostility to Israel is hardly a secret.

Be careful, people of God! History could well repeat itself – to the reproach of the name of Jesus, to the disgrace of the church, and to the spiritual and physical harm of the Jewish people – unless we get our theology right.

Response:

Beware, people of God, lest you underrate Christ's role as the fulfillment of Israel's hopes, and replace Him in that role with some political developments in the Middle East. Little children, keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21).

I think Dr. Brown uses the word "believers" more broadly than does scripture. There, believers are assumed to be Christians. Christians do not hate Jews. In fact, they seem to be the only people who love them without the pressure of some unscriptural doctrine of *Jewish Favoritism*. Dr. Brown thinks it impossible to reliably love Jews while denying such a doctrine. Those who reject it are "opening the door to anti-Semitism." If one abandons this *Jewish Supremist* doctrine, he says, there remains nothing to prevent Jew-hatred from arising. The door is flung wide open for Nazism. It apparently does not cross his mind that the Nazis not only rejected *Jewish Favoritism*, but Christ as well. The answer to the problem of anti-Semitism is not the imposition of doctrines foreign to the Bible, but simply embracing Christ Himself. Those who love and serve Him hate no one.



Document 11

Romans 9-11

Date: 22nd February 2020

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

We go to Romans 11, Romans 11, some of what I may say will be known to all, some will be brand new, but let me make sure we're all together on the same page. We understand Romans to be Paul's most important doctrinal letter. He had not yet been to Rome. He knew he would get to Rome, and he wanted to be sure that the Roman believers rightly understood the foundations of the Gospel.

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation first, for the Jew, then for the Gentile. And I believe the best understanding of that passage is not just historical. Romans 1:16 is not just historical that first the gospel went to the Jewish people, and then it went to the Gentile people. But it is always the matter of divine priority - first the Jew, then the Gentile.

It is, after all, the Jewish message of the Jewish Messiah. And if Jesus is not the Messiah of Israel, he's not the Savior of the world. He is the Savior of the world because he's the Messiah of Israel. If he didn't fulfill that part of the mission, he is not who he says he is.

After that declaration, Paul then begins to explain the foundations of his gospel beginning in Romans 1:18 and from there to the end of the third chapter.

- *His first theme is the wrath of God and the universal sinfulness of man, God's wrath, and universal sinfulness, both Jew and Gentile.*
- *And then, towards the end of the third chapter, and then chapters 4 and 5, he lays out God's answer, justification by faith. Putting our faith in Jesus for salvation from this damnable plague of sin.*
- *And then in chapters 6, 7, and 8, he deals with our victory over sin, and life in the spirit, and the battle with the flesh.*
- *And then, in 9, 10, and 11, he deals with God's eternal purposes for Israel.*
- *And then from 12 to the end of the book is practical application.*

And that is sometimes a pattern that Paul has, like in Ephesians, doctrine for the first three chapters, practical application for the last three.

Response:

Though I see the development of thought in Romans differently (cf., my verse-by-verse lectures through Romans), Dr. Brown has correctly represented the outline of Romans as it is generally viewed by evangelical scholars since Luther's time.

2. Dr. Brown:

But here's what I want you to grasp. When Paul wanted the Roman believers to understand the foundations of the gospel, he included within that - God's plan for Israel. In other words, this is part of the ABCs of the heart and mind of God when it comes to his plan of salvation.

One teacher of the word told me years back that he knew a pastor that every few years would preach through Romans because it was so important. But he skipped chapters 9, 10, and 11 because they were no longer relevant today.

Then if we don't skip Romans 9, 10, and 11, we often misinterpret Romans 9, 10, and 11. So the question remains, why was this such a big deal to Paul? Why was this part of his gospel?

One of my long-time colleagues at Fire School of ministry, Bob Gladstone, has often said "If you don't understand Israel, you don't understand Paul's gospel." It is not just a matter of looking back. It's the matter of present, and it's the matter of looking ahead.

Response:

It would be helpful to know exactly in what sense the role of Israel in the core message of the Gospel is here being affirmed. If one is merely saying, "An understanding of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is immensely relevant to understanding Jesus and His mission," then I do not see how anyone would find this controversial. On the other hand, if what is being suggested is, "The Gospel is very largely a message about unfulfilled prophecies that will determine the geopolitical role of Israel in the end times," then, I would have to politely dissent. I find no instance of the inclusion of such a message, either in the as Gospel preached or as summarized in scripture.

3. Dr. Brown:

So, the problem that he lays out is this, beginning in the ninth chapter, and he explains how he has continual grief and anguish in his heart, continual pain, and then in a five-fold way, he makes it clear. I'm not exaggerating about this.

In the beginning of Romans 9, [Paul writes] that he lives with this constant pain because of his people Israel, because the mass of the nation did not embrace the Messiah of Israel when he came. How could this be?

This is what Israel's waiting for—when the Messiah comes, the people embrace him, and it brings salvation to the nations. And yet the bulk of the people in the leadership ultimately rejected him. How could this be?

Response:

In this statement (and elsewhere), Dr. Brown emphasizes that it was "the leadership" (in contrast with the nation as a whole) who rejected Jesus. This is, of course, largely true—but with exceptions. Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and perhaps others were members of Israel's leadership which cannot be said to have rejected Jesus. Also, very many who were not the leaders also rejected Him (e.g., Judas Iscariot, the synagogue attendees in Nazareth, and those who cried out to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar!").

Anon, we will find Dr. Brown saying that Paul's statements, in Romans 9 through 11, about Israel's rejection of Christ refer to "Israel as a nation" and "the people as a whole." However, here he wishes to pin the rejection of Christ, essentially, on the leaders, not the Jews *en masse*. We will have occasion to discuss this presently.

4. Dr. Brown:

And he makes plain that the people of Israel, the covenant promises were not just theirs in the past, he said theirs are the promises. The adoption of sons, the glory, all of these things, and the covenantal promises, they belong to Israel.

Response:

This claim that Paul presently applies the promises (as if still unfulfilled) to Israel has been brought up, and answered, more than once in the documents treated earlier in this collection [see: 3:32; 5:14; 10:13, 29 ; 11:4; 15:2-3, 10; 18:8].

5. Dr. Brown:

So, is it that God's words failed then? If God made all these promises to Israel, and then Israel doesn't respond, then God's words failed.

And he explains, in Romans 9:6 that, well, no, no, no, you have to understand, not all Israel is Israel. And even though they're Abraham's descendants, it doesn't mean they are all children of God.

In other words, there's a remnant within Israel. He's not talking about the Church there at large, the Gentile believers. He's saying that there's an Israel within Israel. There's a remnant saved by grace, and that's the way it's always been. There has always been an Israel within Israel.

Response:

While this is technically true of this verse (i.e., that it does not make any reference to “the Church at large,” but only to the remnant of Israel), Dr. Brown underrates the Pauline doctrine, taught in many epistles and later in this discussion (11:16ff), that Gentile believers have been grafted into the same tree with the remnant of Israel, and are now one organism (elsewhere, Paul says, “One New Man”—Eph.2:15). While Paul sometimes will discuss the Jewish element in the Church (the Jewish remnant) and the Gentile element in the Church separately, it is illegitimate to pretend that Paul recognized any significant distinction between the two elements in the Church.

Until the Gentiles began to be converted, the remnant of Israel was the Church. It was into this remnant Church (and not to some other entity) that Gentiles were eventually added. This is just like saying the promises to Israel under the Old Covenant cannot be said to exclude Gentiles like Rahab or Ruth, who had become an indistinguishable part of Israel.

6. Dr. Brown:

Like today, for example, the Jewish believers in Jesus living in Israel, they're the Israel within Israel. People like me, Jewish believers in Jesus around the world, we're the remnant, we're the Israel within Israel.

And he's explaining how the remnant has always received the promise, and the remnant, those are the ones who are the children of God. So, in that special sense, that's who Israel is.

Response:

The above contains a key concession that Dr. Brown would probably deny in other parts of the debate—namely, that Paul says the promises made to Israel apply, and were fulfilled, to only the remnant of Israel—not the nation as a whole. Since Paul will soon, in the illustration of the olive tree, point out that believing Gentiles have also become members of this remnant (see also Eph.2:11-22), Dr. Brown has here joined with those who teach what he calls “Replacement Theology” in affirming our major tenet. The remnant of Israel, which now (as in Old Testament times) also includes ethnic Gentiles, is what has always been called the “Church”—in both Testaments. Thus, Dr. Brown has inadvertently acknowledged that the promises made to Israel (that is, to the remnant) are given to and realized in Christ—that is, in the Church—the remnant.

7. Dr. Brown:

But then from there on, if you look at every single time he speaks of Israel or Israelites, the rest of Romans 9, and the 10th chapter, in the 11th chapter, he is speaking of the nation and the people as a whole. He now goes back to speaking about Israel as a whole.

What happened? Israel didn't receive, Israel rebelled, the Gentiles received, the Israelites didn't. The one received by faith, the other missed it by works. So, after saying it is in Israel, within Israel, he goes back to talking about Israel as the whole.

Response:

In much of Romans 9 through 11, Paul does distinguish between Israel and the Gentiles. The former he speaks of as “*not the children of God*” (9:8), “*vessels of wrath*” (9:22), “*blinded*” (11:7), “*broken off*” (11:20), and “*enemies*” (11:28). He is not describing Gentiles here.

Dr. Brown says that these references have to do with “the nation and the people as a whole.” Of course, this is not the case. Paul is part of the “people as a whole.” Taken collectively, it cannot be asserted that the whole race has rejected Christ. Paul argues that his own case and the existence of the saved “remnant” prove that this rejection has not occurred to Israel as a people. It is well known that most Jewish people have historically rejected Christ, but there have been hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Jews about whom this cannot be said. Paul does not make any disparaging remarks about Jews *as a race*—which would include Jesus, the apostles, and Dr. Brown himself.

The dispensational scheme, while denying that it does so, views God’s purposes *racially*. It is their position that the Jews as a race rejected Christ, and have been temporarily rejected by God. However, they believe the Jews as a race are recipients of unconditional promises which will yet be fulfilled (*for the sake of the fathers*) in the end times. The scheme deals with Jews as a racial block (as every racist ideology does), rather than as individuals.

By contrast, God deals with Jews (and Gentiles) not as homogenous races, but as so many responsible individuals to be judged and assessed individually on their personal choices. Thus, Paul never speaks of the Jewish “people as a whole.” He sees the lump of clay (the Jews—Jer.18:1ff) as divided into two classes (or vessels—Rom.9:21). Any individual Jew can choose to be in one vessel (category) or the other. Some individual Jews reject Christ and are vessels of wrath. Other individual Jews embrace Christ and are vessels of mercy. The same is true of individual Gentiles (Rom.9:23-24).

Paul has nothing to say about the “group condition” or “group destiny” of the Jews as a race “on the whole.” That subject never comes up in Romans 9 through 11. Earlier, in Romans 2:6-10, Paul has already made it unmistakably clear that God does not assess people according to their racial identities. In Romans 9:6-8, he introduces two categories of Jews—those who choose to believe and those who choose not to believe—and never deviates from this paradigm. When Paul later speaks of olive branches being broken off or grafted in, he has nothing to say about Jews or Gentiles as homogenous racial wholes, but only of believing or unbelieving Jewish or Gentile individuals.

This is the basic mistake that dispensationalists, and their cousins like Dr. Brown, make from the beginning of their analysis of Romans 9 through 11. Since they mistakenly think that Paul describes the whole race as (temporarily) rejected, they have to think, for the sake of balance, that he will speak of their whole race being restored. By contrast, Paul only speaks of Jews and Gentiles as individual believers and unbelievers. There is no predicted change of racial circumstances in Chapter 11 from what was described in Chapters 9 and 10.

8. Dr. Brown:

And now he gets to the 11th chapter, and he asks, "I ask then..." Why "then"? We'll look back to the previous verse, Romans 10, we will start in verse 19, "Again, I ask, did Israel not understand?" Who is he talking about? The nation as a whole.

Response:

Not so. He is referring to the unbelieving Jews, who happen to comprise the majority of the nation as a whole. Paul continually bears in mind that "the nation as a whole" includes people like himself, and that the "whole nation" never has rejected Christ—just like the whole nation of Germany never completely embraced Nazism. God no longer deals with people as homogenous nations or races—nor genders, nor members of different social status groups (Gal.3:28).

9. Dr. Brown:

"First Moses said, "I'll make you envious by those who are not a nation. I'll make you angry by a nation that has no understanding." Verse 20, "And Isaiah boldly says, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."

Verse 21, "But concerning Israel," he says. Which Israel? Israel, the nation as a whole. "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient, obstinate people," which leads to the question, I asked: "Then did God reject his people? Is it over for Israel? Has God said, you've sinned one sin too many, and it's over?"

There are people who teach hate. The fig tree is Israel, and Jesus cursed the fig tree and said, never bear fruit again, and that's what its symbolized. There are people who teach very actively, very aggressively today that when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, that was God saying, "I'm finished forever with Israel."

Response:

I confess to being one of those described in that last paragraph (apart from the part about teaching hate). Does Dr. Brown know of a preferable interpretation of Christ's cursing the fig tree? And why is this represented as "teach[ing] hate"? We say that Israel had a special role to play—which included bringing the Messiah into the world and accepting Him themselves. We say that most of Israel did not accept Him, resulting in their decommissioning by God, so that they are now on the level with every other nation. Exactly where does the "hate" come into this statement?

I similarly don't think the Japanese hold a place in God's sight superior to all other races, but does this make me a hater of the Japanese? I have nothing against either the Japanese nor the Jews. What is there in my theology that would warrant this slander against me? It is when dispensationalists make this leap from one's embracing historic Christian theology to anti-Semitism that their hysteria is most clearly on display.

10. Dr. Brown:

So individual Jews like me can be saved, but there are no more covenant promises that remain for Israel. And what they fail to understand when they do that is, they completely undermine everything in the Old Testament. It's like building a two-story house, and when you finish the second floor, you cut out the first, then the second-floor collapses.

It means that all of the things that God said in the Old Testament that he was actually, double-minded about that he was saying one thing and meaning another.

Response:

Nothing in the New Testament undermines the things written in the Old Testament. Jesus did not come to nullify these things, but to fulfill them—which He did! If the only way to harmonize the Old and New Testament statements is to conclude that God is “double-minded” then our whole theological template is skewed. Dr. Brown cannot make the Old Testament square with the plain statements of the New Testament. He affirms both, but only in a way that diminishes the impact of the latter. He thinks a robust affirmation of the things Paul said must somehow diminish the Old Testament—so he diminishes Paul’s statements instead. I do not diminish either the Old or the New Testaments, but if it became necessary to live only with one or the other, I would take Jesus, not Moses.

The Old Testament promises are not “the first story” of a two-story house. A better analogy would be that the Old Testament provides the scaffolding within which the house was built. Now that the house is built, the scaffolding can go. The promises of the Old Covenant comprise the inspired blueprint of a whole house that was to be built by Christ (2 Sam.7:13; Heb.3:6), which is the Church (Matt.16:18; Eph.2:20-22; 1 Tim.3:15; 1 Peter 2:5). The Architect, as with Moses and the tabernacle, described a house properly to be understood in spiritual terms. Only the spiritual mind could eventually see it properly. It was concealed from former generations but was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets through the Spirit (Rom.16:25-26; 1 Cor.2:6-10; Eph.3:1-6; Col.1:26-27; 1 Peter 1:10-12). Those who read the plan without the Holy Spirit’s guidance (revealed in the apostolic writings) are seeking to read the blueprints while wearing a veil over their minds (2 Cor.3:14-15).

I do not see why people like Dr. Brown so belittle the promises and privileges associated with being in Christ as to think themselves cheated if there is not something more—particularly some oceanfront real estate on the Mediterranean—in their future. Paul rhapsodized over the riches of grace and privilege that he and all Christians have received in Christ. He never expressed the slightest interest in real estate, nor anything else which had been associated with privileges he had enjoyed as an Old Testament Jew. In fact, he counted that whole aspect of his Jewish privilege as “dung.”

Dr. Brown believes that the Jewish race “as a whole” will come to Christ (I don’t, but it would please me well if it were true). Yet, this would simply involve all contemporary Jews receiving what Dr. Brown and all Christians have already received—Jesus, which is the best that God has to give to those who love Him. Dr. Brown speaks as if this is a small matter, if not accompanied with a plot of ground the size of New Jersey. In this sentiment, Dr. Brown parts company with every New Testament writer and with most of historic Christianity as well. It is, frankly, an insult to Christ to suggest that He alone is not enough to fulfill every desire of His people.

11. Dr. Brown:

I had a very sincere Palestinian Christian on my radio show a few weeks ago, who insisted that yes when God’s said to Israel, I will scatter you in my wrath, that applied to the Jews, but when he said I will regather you in my mercy, that applies to the Church, that applies to a spiritual regathering.

The fact is, as we see through the Scripture, however literal the curse was, that’s how literal the blessing must be. However literal the judgment was, that’s how literal the restoration must be.

Response:

The promise of literal blessings was literally fulfilled (see Josh.21:43-45). Dispensationalists claim that this scriptural statement is not really accurate, but I trust the scriptures above the opinions of theological ideologues. Shouldn’t we all?

The fact remains that the blessings and institutions of the Old Covenant served as types and shadows of the spiritual (Col.2:16-17). Whereas Abraham's seed (Israel) did receive the literal Promised Land in the days of Joshua, Abraham himself looked beyond that, hoping for a more *spiritual* inheritance than the earthly country he received. This heavenly inheritance has now come into existence (Heb.11:10, 16; 12:22-24). The Old Covenant offered to national Israel physical blessings in the earth (See Deut.28:1-14), whereas Christ has bestowed "*spiritual blessings in heavenly places*" (Eph.1:3).

We may believe that we are free to choose between the conditions of the Old Order or those of the New. However, the Old Order is no longer an option. Those who seek to relate to God in terms of the Old are said to have become "*estranged from Christ*" and "*fallen from grace*" (Paul's words, not mine—Gal.5:4). One who wants the earthly inheritance can attempt to reinstate the Order of which it was a part—but only at the expense of the inheritance of the New Order. The New has rendered the Old "*obsolete*" (Heb.8:13), so it is a fool's errand to seek to return to that defunct system.

If I promised my child a tricycle, I should give him an actual tricycle. However, after I have done so, I am not a promise-breaker if I exchange it for a two-wheeler when he has reached a greater stage of maturity. The Old Testament was for children, and the New is for grown-ups (Gal.4:1-7). Paul says we are "heirs of God." Is that not enough of an inheritance?

12. Dr. Brown:

And if I make an unconditional covenantal promise, and I put it in legal terminology, and I say to the Grays, no matter what you ever do, whether you agree with me or not, whether you walk with me or not, no matter what you ever do, no matter what you ever believe, I am putting a scholarship in for your kids, your grandkids to a 100 generations, and I will provide for them the best university education, no matter what you do, no matter what you believe.

And 5 years later, they switch their beliefs, so I say, 'you are not the Grays'. I turn to someone else and say you are now the Grays, that's dishonest, that's deceitful.

Response:

When he makes analogies, Dr. Brown often demonstrates either 1) that he has no gift for analogies, or 2) that he can make a good analogy for a point that is not in the discussion.

First, we are not discussing any promise of God that was "unconditional" (as in the analogy). Neither at the time it was made to Abraham, nor when it was reaffirmed to Israel, do we find anything unconditional. The very first words of the promises made to Abraham contained the condition that he must leave his home and travel to another land (a condition that he met, though the promise would not have been fulfilled had he refused). Later, God specifically said that His ability to keep the promises He had made to Abraham depended upon the behavior of Abraham's children, specifically that they would "*keep the word of the Lord to do justice and righteousness*" (Gen.18:19). To ignore the stated conditions in God's promises is to consign one to doing one's exegesis in the dark.

When the same promises were reaffirmed to the nation of Israel, at its founding, the conditionality attached to them was, if anything, even more blatant (Ex.19:5-6; Lev.26; Deut.28). If this were not sufficiently plain, God said through Jeremiah that He never makes or has made one unconditional promise to any nation (Jer.18:7-10).

So that "unconditional" feature is off the table.

Second, it is not deceitful or inconsistent for God, who called Israel His people when they were faithful, to say to their apostate descendants, “*You are not people*” (Hos.1:9; Ps.50:16-17) when they have broken every condition for being called His people (see Ex.19:5-6).

Dr. Brown’s analogy, then, is completely irrelevant to this discussion.

To summarize, God made physical and conditional promises to Abraham and his seed. He fulfilled the physical promises long ago, but Israel did not meet the stated conditions for retaining them. The spiritual promises, which were foreshadowed in the physical ones, have been fulfilled eternally to the faithful remnant (Jews and Gentiles) who are in Christ, being now the only ones bearing the title “*Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise*” (Gal.3:29).

The physical land promise was also a type and shadow of a greater land promise. Abraham’s Seed is destined to be “*heirs of the world*” (Rom.4:13)—of which the tiny bit in the Levant was only a token during and age of tokens and shadows.

13. Dr. Brown:

When people say, “Well, I don’t believe God is a racist. I don’t believe in ethnic superiority, I don’t believe that God chooses one group because of their ethnicity,” or something like that. I said, “No, of course, he’s not a racist, and of course, he doesn’t choose because of ethnicity, but he keeps His word, He has integrity. This is about the integrity of God.”

Commented [DG6]:

Response:

The word *racist* is a harsh word and is used promiscuously by the Left to demonize anyone who disagrees with anything they say on any subject. So, we must be careful about how we use it. If, however, we define “racism” as the policy or attitude of favoring or disfavoring any individual or group based upon race alone, and not upon individual merit, we should find no reasonable person objecting to this definition. Yet, Dr. Brown believes that there is a special regard that God has for Israel after the flesh, based, not upon their beliefs, behavior, or character—but solely on the basis of their race. This is what “*beloved for the sake of their fathers*” (Rom.11:28) means, as Dr. Brown interprets it. It is strictly their genetic connection to “their fathers” (meaning, their race and ethnicity) that qualified them for this special “belovedness.” Someone is telling us that they are specially regarded by God due only to their ancestry—which is racial identity. If this is not what *racism* means, may someone provide a more fitting definition?

Our government may adopt a policy exclusively favoring black Americans because they are descended from slaves and because we pity them on behalf of the suffering of their fathers. If that policy grants special privileges to them based not on merit, but strictly upon this racial heritage, we may congratulate ourselves for our compassion but the policy is wholly racist without remainder.

Now, if this is God’s sovereign policy toward racial Jews, it is within His sovereign rights to adopt it. I, for one, will not complain since I do not covet for myself or my children the things the Jews seem to want so badly for themselves. I would much rather have Jesus. My treasure is in heaven. But if such is God’s policy then racism cannot be said to be sin, since God never sins. However, this cannot be said to be anything other than the textbook definition of racism, no matter how ugly the word may sound to our ears.

14. Dr. Brown:

And we have to ask ourselves if he could say, "I make these promises to Israel." And then when Israel disobeys, he says now, "You are [not?] Israel," and he switches them, then one day, he could do the same with the Church.

Response:

Dispensationalists often make this argument—but it only works for them because they typically believe in "Eternal Security" of the believer. I do not believe that doctrine, and neither does Dr. Brown. When you recognize that the only constituency of the Church that God acknowledges are those who are at any time followers of Christ and that apostates are no longer true members of Christ's body, the argument becomes silly. Can Jesus deal with the Church as He did with Israel? Of course, and Paul says that is exactly what God does (Rom.11:22)!

The promises were made, and are realized, to the faithful remnant in Israel. This is a group that is now comprised of believers of all races. This is the Church. God will never forsake His promises to the Church because, unlike Israel, all its members are, by definition, faithful to Him. As soon as they defect from Him, they no longer belong to His Body, and, yes, God can reject them. Since the true Church is comprised only of the faithful it cannot be that the promises made to the faithful can fail to materialize to the Church.

15. Dr. Brown:

"I ask then did God reject his people? By no means," Paul says. "I'm an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew."

So, he's first saying, there's still a remnant. Obviously, God didn't reject us because there's a remnant. If he rejected us, we'd be gone, but there's still a remnant, we're still here. We are the first fruits. And he goes on to explain this and says that verse 5, "at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace." Then verse 7, "What then? What Israel sought so earnestly did not obtain."

Israel, meaning the nation as the whole and explains that the judgment that's come and the hardness of heart.

Response:

Here, again, Dr. Brown wants to say "Israel" refers to "the nation as a whole." But Paul is not interested in the nation as a whole. His concern is how God has fulfilled the promises He made to Israel, and Paul's answer is that the individuals in the remnant (a sub-group within the nation as a whole) are the only recipients ever intended when the promises were made to "Israel." This point was made clear from 9:6 onward, and Paul has not forgotten his argument. He has focused like a laser beam on this point from the beginning.

Paul says that God does not deal with the nation as a whole, but as persons in two categories—Jews who believe and Jews who do not believe. In the statement above, Paul clearly refers to the unbelieving majority, but not the whole nation. His point is precisely that unbelief and failure to receive the promises is not a feature of the whole nation, but only of the apostate within it.

Dr. Brown, following the dispensationalists, wants Paul (and God) to deal with whole racial groups (as Hitler did, incidentally). This is, again, a racist paradigm. It allows the dispensationalist to paint a false picture in which the Jews, as a whole, have been temporarily rejected for their unbelief, but the race, as a whole, will later become believers and be accepted again. This makes Paul's discussion an eschatological one. The salvation of Israel is then a thing of the future, not the present.

The present salvation of the remnant is a glitch in this scheme. A freakish exception to the policy somehow sneaking in ahead of the program. Yet Paul never makes an eschatological statement in Romans 9-11. The remnant are not ahead of the program—*they are the program*, and have always been.

To the dispensationalist, Paul's explanation for the failure of the Jews to be saved is thought to be: "Well, those promises have, indeed, failed to materialize at the present, but in the end, you will see that they were true." Paul makes no such argument.

His actual argument begins by saying that the promises have *in no sense failed* to materialize (Romans 9:6a)—neither temporarily nor permanently. To think they have failed is to misidentify who it was to whom they applied. They were intended for "Israel," to be sure—but all Jews do not belong to the "Israel" (the faithful remnant) for whom the promises were intended." (Romans 9:6b)

The dispensationalist transforms Paul's argument from what it is—one of methodology ("How has God fulfilled His promise to save Israel?")—to one of eschatology ("When will God fulfill His promise to save Israel?"), which it is not. To do so, the dispensationalist mentally inserts new words, which Paul did not write, into several of Paul's statements. These include the implied inclusion of the word "permanently" into Paul's question at 11:1; "temporarily" into 11:25, and "then..." at 11:26. In the latter, Paul actually says "thus"—a word speaking of method, not chronology (Dr. Brown will be found to repeatedly claim, without warrant, that this word means *on the heels of*—see 10:21; 11:36; 15:8). Terms that seem to support this assumption are inserted promiscuously into the text, especially throughout chapter 11, by dispensationalists—with whom Dr. Brown seems to be aligned on this subject.

16. Dr. Brown:

Now we get to verse 11, "Again, I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall?" NIV explaining this, says, "Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?"

What's his answer? "Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious."

Response:

The dispensational translators of the NIV have followed the policy I described above, but they went so far as to add a whole phrase "*beyond recovery*" to the verse. Apparently, they feel Paul was not able to express his own views very well and would have included that phrase had he been a better communicator, like themselves. Of course, another possibility is that Paul said exactly what he meant and omitted phrases that would have obscured or changed his point.

The question Paul asks is not whether Israel's fall was permanent (the adding of this element prepares for a future, eschatological conclusion, which Paul does not provide in his answer to the question). He asked if it was without purpose, other than to fulfill the curses against them mentioned in the Old Testament verses he had just recited.

Paul finds a deeper value in the disaster of Israel's fall. It is a matter of history that the Jews' rejection of Christ and the Gospel ultimately drove the missionaries out of Israel and to the Gentiles. Thus, Israel's loss, disastrous as it was, had an upshot that can be seen as advantageous to the Kingdom—just as Paul said his imprisonment (a bad thing in itself) resulted in broader evangelization (Phil.1:12ff). God can make lemonade out of lemons.

17. Dr. Brown:

I heard a prosperity preacher one time say that the only way the Church is going to make Israel envious is by making more money than the Jewish people.

First, that's one of the most carnal, judgmental, shall I say, stupid statements I've heard from a preacher's lips.

Secondly, good luck!

Response:

Amen!

18. Dr. Brown:

What is it that will make Israel envious—not in a negative sense—but in a positive sense will make them envious?

“Well, we Gentiles will just start to dress up like Jews, and start to wear Jewish garments, and say Hebrew prayers in a butchered Hebrew, and mix and mingle some traditions together.”

Listen to me, you know what that's going to do? That's going to make Jesus look stupid to people, that's going to make the gospel look cheap.

Response:

Preach it, Brother!

19. Dr. Brown:

What is it that Israel once had, but it doesn't have that we can have that can make Israel envious? What is it that can be demonstrated that we have this relationship with God, that we are experiencing the presence and reality of God, that we are walking in the reality of forgiveness of sins, and a changed life?

Tragically, it's often been the exact opposite, that professing Christians have driven Jews away. That your average Jew who knows his history—especially, the more traditional Jews, who have preserved these memories more, they associate Christianity with the Crusades, with inquisitions, even with the Holocaust. They associate Christianity with anti-Semitism and hypocrisy.

Response:

Like them, I also associate in my mind the ideas of hatred and hypocrisy, to a large extent, with the institutional Churches. We may hope that the number of true Christians who are abandoning these monstrosities will become significant enough to catch the attention of those who are desiring the real God and the real Jesus.

20. Dr. Brown:

All the more then is it imperative, not that we put on some show, but that we demonstrate the reality of a transformed life for the salvation of Jewish people so that they ultimately look at what we have and want it.

An Orthodox rabbi, a friend of mine, had visited our community one day. We were going to do a little debate with each other, and he was going to speak to our students, and then he was going to attend our Thursday night service.

And he was standing in the back with Nancy, watching. So it is mainly young people, mainly students that were there, so it's a pretty young crowd. And we're worshiping, and they're dancing, and celebrating.

And this rabbi looks over to Nancy, he said if you bring this to New York, we could shut down every disco in the city. Is this something that he saw the young people being touched by that, he thought, that's what the young people want, that's what they're looking for.

No, he's not a believer, and he hasn't come to faith, and with all of our debate and dialogue, I don't know that he's any closer than he was before. But I'm just telling you, he saw something, and it got his attention.

Response:

This underscores an important point: Making Israel jealous does not necessarily predict for their conversion. In verse 14, Paul says that he magnifies his role as apostle to Gentiles in order to make his fellow Jews jealous *"if by any means I may...save some of them."* Paul may well have provoked Jews wherever he went, though not many of that demographic seem to have been converted through his efforts.

Paul's terminology of "provoking" Jews "to jealousy" is, of course, an allusion to Deut.32:21. There, God told Israel that, if they rebelled and made Him jealous with their idols, He would similarly make them jealous by taking another people *"who are not a nation."* I hope this doesn't sound too much like the language of "replacement" to Dr. Brown but the statement is God's, not mine.

21. Dr. Brown:

So, look at what Paul says, "If their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss, means riches for the nations, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!"(Rom.11:12)

So, notice, he says, there has been a rejection, there has been a loss, because of that, the gospel has gone to the nations. But what's going to happen when the fullness of Israel comes in? There is a future. There are promises.

Response:

Not to be a stickler...but Paul never makes any predictions of "the fullness of Israel" coming in. He does, a few verses later, speak of *"the fullness of the Gentiles"* coming in (v.25). How do we know that Paul even believed in a massive influx of Jews to Christ (we can hope, of course)? In the verse cited (v.12), the nearest antecedent to *"their fullness"* is the word *"Gentiles."* This same observation applies to v.15. In both verses, the verbs are missing from the sentence, allowing the possibility of inserting "would" in place of "will." Such a replacement not only makes better sense of the verses in the context of Paul's argument, but also removes any hint of a prediction from the verses.

We are still looking for those unfulfilled promises that Dr. Brown thinks Paul has in mind for the Jews. Paul's silence on this subject is deafening. Are we sure he knew about any?

22. Dr. Brown:

And understand what he's saying. Think of what the rejection of the Jewish people, their rejection of the gospel, the gospel going to the nations, think of what that's produced. Think of the hundreds of millions of people saved around the world, think of people delivered from alcoholism, from drug addiction, from prostitution, from terrorism, from atheism, from dead religion, people healed and set free, think of that.

And Paul says if that's what happened when Israel does things wrong, what happens when Israel gets things right?

Response:

Just as a minor observation...Paul never predicts a time when Jews "as a whole" will "get things right."

23. Dr. Brown:

Wow, I'm talking to Gentiles. Notice, it's not a dirty word. It can be negative if it's associated with pagans, and the New Testament can use it in that way, but otherwise, it just means people of the nations.

Notice, he's not calling them spiritual Jews here, or spiritual Israelites.

"I'm talking to Gentiles, inasmuch as I'm the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them."

Remarkable, he goes to the Gentile world because he loves the Gentiles, but also, with the hope of provoking Israel to jealousy.

Response:

Of course, Paul is not calling them "spiritual Jews" here (nor does he use that term in any of his writings—though his use of "Jew" in Romans 2:28-29 might reasonably include believing Gentiles who are the true circumcision—Phil.3:3). He has statements that are directed to the Jewish believers in his audience, and other statements directed to the Gentile believers in his audience. That is because his discussion involves getting certain points across to each of these demographics in the Church.

If Dr. Brown was addressing a mixed-race congregation about the problems of black/white racism, you might expect him at times to say, "you white people..." and at others to say "you black people..." as comments are directed to the respective demographics. Yet, it would be strange if someone mistook Dr. Brown to be making any distinction of significance between the general Christian duties or privileges in Christ of one group over against the other.

Dr. Brown is a true scholar, with special training in languages. Therefore, I would expect to find in him an awareness of the breadth of meaning that may be found in one word when used in different contexts. He acknowledges this in the first of the above three paragraphs. He knows that "Gentile" can be a designation of race (and, thus, not a "dirty word"), or it can refer to the religious category of Gentiles as "pagans."

Paul makes this distinction himself in the letter to the Ephesians (or whoever those original recipients were). In 2:11, he describes his believing readers as (racially) "*Gentiles in the flesh.*" Later, he speaks disparagingly of "*Gentiles*"—meaning "pagans" (4:17). Yet, the main theme of his letter is that there is no significant difference between (racial) Gentiles and Jews in Christ (e.g., 2:11-15). Significantly, he says that this absence of distinction in Christ is "*the mystery*" (3:1-6), which is, incidentally, also what he calls this doctrine in Romans 11:25.

As "Gentile" can refer to one's race, or to the unbelieving pagans who characterize the majority of that race, so the word "Israel" is used with the same flexibility and variety. One can find, in scripture, no fewer than five or six meanings of the word "Israel." Paul primarily limits himself to speaking of two of them: the religious Jews, who oppose the Gospel, and the believing remnant of the Jews (whom he calls "the election"), who embrace the Gospel (11:7, 28). Both are called "Israel" in a single verse (9:6), and the usage that Paul has in mind in any given case (like the word "Gentile") is expected to be discernible to anyone having a moderate capacity to follow his train of thought.

24. Dr. Brown:

Resurrection of Israel

"For if the rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Rom.11:15)

What's another word for life from the dead? Resurrection. I like to explain it like this. It's very clear in Scripture. There are a number of passages that speak of Israel turning to the Lord.

- For example, Jeremiah 31:1, after God's wrath is poured out apparently, on the nations from the end of the thirtieth chapter, Jeremiah 31:31, "At that time, I will be God of all the clans of Israel. They will be my people." A national turning to the Lord;
- or Zechariah 12, beginning in verse 10 that says, "That the people of Jerusalem and Judah will look to the one they pierce." "wə-hib·bī·tū 'ê-lay 'êṭ 'ā-šer- dā-qā-rū." They'll look to me whom they've pierced, and they'll mourn for him as if mourning for a first-born son.
- And this mass repentance, people just separate themselves to repent and grieve, and wail, leads them to 13:1, "At that time, a fountain will be open to the house with David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for cleansing."
- And then that leads into the fourteenth chapter, and in all of these passages, the Lord is returning, so somehow, the turning of the nation of Israel to the Messiah ties in directly with the Messiah's return.

Response:

Having dealt more at length with these passages in earlier documents of this series, I will here be as brief as possible:

None of the verses cited makes any reference to the "end times." Not a hint. Nor is there mention of Christ's second coming anywhere in the vicinity of any of these passages. We might expect, after these predictions were uttered, that the first historical instance of their fulfillment would be recognized as that to which they refer (since they give no hint of any expected "double fulfillment").

That being the case, the fact that "*the time of Jacob's trouble*" (Jer.30:7) and the various references to judgment up to 31:31, would find very adequate fulfillment in the Babylonian exile, and its subsequent effects on the diasporic Jews (e.g., at the hands of Haman, Antiochus, the Romans, et al, up till A.D.70). There is no question that Jeremiah 31:31ff refers to the New Covenant, which the New Testament (that is, New Covenant) writers all describe as having been fulfilled in their own lives and times. Jesus said He was inaugurating it at the Last Supper.

Zechariah, chapters 9-14, are never said to be relevant to the end times or to the second coming of Christ. In fact, every New Testament reference to this section of Zechariah clearly applies it to events in the life of Christ or its immediate effects in the first century (e.g., 9:9; 11:12-13; 12:10; 13:7). There are further New Testament allusions to other verses and concepts in this section: Compare Zech.11:4 with John 10:14; Zech.14:8 with John 7:37-39.

Also, there are predictions in this section that came true in the ancient time, including the Maccabean wars, the only time in history the sons of Zion made war against the sons of Greece (9:13), the destruction of Jerusalem with the salvation of the remnant (14:1-2). With reference to this, God is seen (as when Jerusalem was given over to the Babylonians—Ezek.11:23) as having abandoned the city to its enemies, as He stands nearby on the Mount of Olives (14:4). Again, the flight of the remnant is noted (14:5).

Ironically, even though these things happened after Zechariah made these predictions (viz., in A.D.70), many wish to have Zechariah skip entirely over that history-altering event in order to predict the fall of a hypothetical third temple never mentioned anywhere in prophecy!

The apocalyptic imagery of Zechariah 9-14 is sufficiently unfamiliar to modern readers as to cause many to mistake these visions for end of the world events. Of course, the same mistake is commonly made with reference to Daniel's apocalyptic visions, which describe, e.g., the fall of Persia to Greece and the fate of Alexander's kingdom (Dan.8).

There is not a scrap of evidence either in Zechariah or in the New Testament citations from this passage, that would warrant an application to the end times or the Second Coming.

Dr. Brown did not originate this error of interpretation, but someone did, and he apparently neglected to check it against the New Testament data before passing it along.

25. Dr. Brown:

I tell people like this if you want to see Jesus return, pray for the salvation of Israel. I mean, we know there are three essential things that must happen:

- *The people of God, the Church, the ekklesia, we must come into the fullness of our life and calling.*
- *The Gospel must go to every nation and people,*
- *and Israel must be saved.*

These are things that must happen in the climax of the ages regardless of how you split them, and whatever your eschatology is.

Response:

Two-thirds correct. The third is never mentioned in connection with biblical eschatology. It is not in Revelation, nor in the Olivet Discourse, nor in the Old Testament prophets. It originated in the imagination of someone careless of exegesis. That person was not Dr. Brown, but he has taken to repeating it, apparently, without any critical cross-examination from scripture.

26. Dr. Brown:

But I use this silly little illustration, stereotypical as it is. But in the world to come, two men meet the golden streets of Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem, one is the Texas evangelist, another a Brooklyn Jew who moved to Israel.

Texas evangelist, big guy, still cowboy hat, boots. "Hey, brother, what's your name?"

"My name is Barry, Barry Goldstein."

"Brother, you know who I am? Ever heard of evangelist Smith?"

"No, I am sorry, I didn't."

"So, I had a powerful ministry for years. I preached sometimes to crowds of more than 120 thousand people. In fact, we had one meeting where three people got out of their wheelchairs. What've you done, son?"

"Well, I don't really do much. I'm a Jewish believer in Jesus, and God sent me to Jerusalem to pray for salvation of my people and return of Yeshua, the Messiah. And after all the prayer, my people turned to the Lord, and Jesus came back, and millions of people got out of their graves."

That's what we're talking about, that's the great glory and the greater hope. Please, forgive the stereotypes.

Response:

I have no problem with the stereotypes. The story indicates that prayer can be as fruitful as preaching, if not more so. I would not disagree. The story seems, however, to suggest that going to Jerusalem, and praying for the salvation of Jews is a calling that would be qualitatively different from living anywhere else and praying for the salvation of any nation. I only draw this meaning from it because the story is given to illustrate the importance of the Jews being saved before the return of Christ (without mentioning any equivalent importance of all the Gentiles being saved). After all, Jesus did mention the evangelization of Gentiles as a precursor to His coming, though He neglected to mention the conversion of the Jews in this or any other connection. If someone goes to Israel to pray for the salvation of the Jews, I am all for it, though there is no reason to believe that prayers originating from Jerusalem reach God with more potency than those offered from anywhere else..

27. Dr. Brown:

Now Paul says, "If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches."

What God started with Israel he'll finish. And then he begins to explain, look, some of the branches were broken off because of unbelief. Israel is pictured here as an olive tree, some of the branches were broken off. So individual Israelites, unbelief.

And you coming from a wild olive tree, Gentiles were grafted in, but don't boast against the branches.

Look, in Jesus, there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile, meaning we are all equal as believers in God's sight. There's no caste system, there's no class system, there's no higher, there's no lower, we are equals in the Lord. But you better believe, there are still men and women, there are still distinctions, there are things men can do that women can't, women can do that men can't.

The reality is that Paul even has teaching, okay, I'm telling the men this, I'm telling the women this because those distinctions remain, and there were still people who were slaves, and still people who were free. And Paul gave them instructions, even though there's no slave or free in Jesus. The same way, Jew, or Gentile, we're equal, but we're not exactly the same. We have distinctives. We have callings. We have identity in God.

Response:

This discussion of Galatians 3:28, which somehow found itself again into this passage in Romans, as in so many previous documents in this series, is a red herring. It has been answered several times previously [See: 1:4, 9; 8:1-2, 5; 12:1, 4; 15:16], so I will not belabor it here. I only challenge the statement that, as there are distinct roles for men and women, and for slaves and free men (meaning there are some things that one group can do while the other cannot), so also there is a different role for Jews (apparently in Christ) than there is for Gentiles. I am still interested in hearing what this distinct role may be and would like an example of something that a Jewish believer can do by calling that could not also be done by a Gentile believer given the same task. Are there different tasks assigned to Jews and Gentiles? What are they?

On the other hand, I commend Dr. Brown for saying that the branches broken off are individual Jews who disbelieve. The reason this is commendable is that elsewhere Dr. Brown seems to take the dispensationalist approach of seeing Israel as a *racial bloc*, and Paul's reference to the broken

branches as a blanket statement about the Jews, as a race, being currently unbelievers. When Paul, further on, says these broken branches can be grafted back onto the tree *"if they do not remain in unbelief"* this is too often taken as a prediction of massive Jewish restoration, rather than, as Paul says it, an option still open to individual unbelieving Jews as well as Gentiles.

Paul, notably, neglects to mention any unbelieving Jews other than those living at the time of writing, who were broken off but still capable of converting. Those Jews, of course, are now long dead, and Paul made no specific allusion to Jews of any later generations. His purpose was to appeal to his contemporary unbelieving countrymen—assuring them that their doom is not sealed and that they could still repent. Though, of course, the same rule would apply to Jews and Gentiles of any generation, there is simply no prediction here, or in the rest of the discussion, of some final generation of Jews being converted.

28. Dr. Brown:

So, he's saying, don't boast against the branches, don't boast against the other Jews. And remember that if you don't stand by faith, you can be cut off.

And then he comes to the climax of his arguments here.

Romans 11 Verse 25, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited."

Well, let's just stop there for a moment. When Paul uses the word mystery, he does not use it as in a mystery novel, or a mystery thriller. One well-known pastor commenting on this passage made the ridiculous point 'Well, if it was a mystery to Paul, it's a mystery to me'.

No, no, a mystery is something in God's plan of salvation that was previously hidden but is now revealed. And often it was something that was hidden in the Scriptures that's now revealed. You look back, oh, now I see it, now it makes sense. So, he says, I don't want you to be ignorant to this; otherwise, you will become conceited. Ignorance leads to arrogance.

Response:

I agree with Dr. Brown's definition of "mystery." Paul uses the term about 21 times in his writings. Once, he speaks of the rapture/resurrection as a mystery (1 Cor.15:51), and once, he speaks of the mystery of the union of Christ and the Church (Eph.5:32). In numerous places, He identifies the "mystery" as the union of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, or the Church (Eph.3:6; Col.1:27). He repeatedly says that this mystery was concealed from former generations but was lately revealed to Paul and the other apostles by the Spirit (Rom.16:25; 1 Cor.2:7-9; Eph.3:1-9; Col.1:26).

The remainder of the occurrences of "mystery" are ambiguous, and may refer to this last point since it is Paul's favorite. I believe that a good case can be made for equating the "mystery" in Romans 11:25 with that of Ephesians and Colossians—that is, the Church. It is the phenomenon of believing Jews and believing Gentiles being brought together into one olive tree—as also into one "Body" (Eph.2:15)—thus comprising *"all Israel"* (as opposed to just the Jewish branches of Israel).

29. Dr. Brown:

So, listen, if I lent you my car for one day because I didn't need it, I didn't need the car, and I lent it to you for one day, and asked you to bring it back with a tank full of gas as you had it. That would be very, very different than if I gave you the car forever, here the keys, here's the insurance, it's yours, drive off, right.

If one of our kids was going away for a few weeks, and you were coming into town. Just those weeks, I said, hey, we've got a guest room, if you don't mind using this room, we've got a guest room. Our girl is going to be away for a couple of weeks, you can stay there. Perfect. That's one thing, but then when she comes back, you leave, right.

No, this is my room, okay.

Response:

I'm not quite getting Dr. Brown's point here...

30. Dr. Brown:

Paul's point here is this, Israel has experienced a hardening in part. Now, who's he talking about when he says, Israel? The Church? No. The remnant, the believers in the nation? No. The nation as a whole. That's who he's been talking about.

Ever since Romans 9:6, not all Israel is Israel. After he talks about the remnant within the nation, every reference to Israel from there on, it's 10 times, every reference to Israel from there on is the nation as a whole, the nation that rejected, the nation that missed the opportunity.

Response:

We went over this earlier. Paul is not speaking of the nation collectively as a whole. The whole nation of Israel was not hardened. Paul has earlier said that "the election" (a term he uses twice for the faithful remnant—vv.7, 28) have found what they were seeking, and "the rest" (the unbelieving Jews) did not and were "hardened" (as here, in v.25). Part of Israel was hardened—not the nation or race as a whole. The situation, in this respect, is no different from the case in any previous generation of Jews in the Old Testament. There is not a judicial hardening on the nation as a whole—only on those who currently are unbelievers, whom Paul says could change their condition by repenting.

31. Dr. Brown:

Israel has experienced a hardening in part, who's experienced the hardening in part? The nation as a whole. Yes, a hardening in part until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And NIV says full number, best to translate fullness. Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. What's the big point here? The hardening on Israel is only in part.

Number one, it's not over all the people because there is a remnant that is saved, and it's not for all time. It will end at a certain point.

Response:

Wrong on both points. As pointed out in the last segment, Paul does not say that the nation as a whole has been hardened, and flatly denies it in vv.1-7 of this chapter.

Second, Paul says nothing about this condition having an end at a certain point. Dr. Brown assumes this, but Paul makes no statement warranting this belief.

The main reason for dispensationalists seeing this verse as describing a temporary condition is that Paul says the hardening has occurred, "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." The word "until" is thought to limit the time period, suggesting an eventual end to this hardening. However, Paul mentions no end, and the word "until" does not necessarily imply it. For all we know, this coming in of the Gentiles may continue until the very last day and the coming of Christ—with the partial hardening of Israel continuing the whole duration. Nothing is predicted to occur after it.

Again, I must beg the reader to consider what he or she already knows about language and word usage. The word “until” has numerous connotations. In some cases, it means “unless” as in, “You will not watch television until you have apologized.” No predictions are implied about either the apology or the television watching. It is merely stating a condition, as when Jesus tells His enemies, “*You will not see me until you say ‘blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’*” No prediction here, just a stated condition.

Another use of “until” means “extending to, if not beyond” a particular goal or event. It means the thing named will not end prior to the anticipated goal has been realized—without implying a necessary change at that point. Examples from scripture include (but are not limited to):

Genesis 8:5— says the flood waters decreased “*until the tenth month*” when the tops of the mountains were seen. This does not mean that the waters stopped receding at that point.

Genesis 26:13—says that Isaac “*continued prospering until he was very prosperous.*” Should we think this is saying that once he became very prosperous, he prospered no more?

In Genesis 28:15—God told Jacob, “*I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.*” This is not saying that God would leave him after God had fulfilled His promises.

In Genesis 49:10—Jacob prophesied that “*the scepter will not depart from Judah until Shiloh [Messiah] comes.*” Yet the Messiah is also from Judah, so, when He received the scepter, it did not pass from Judah even then!

In Matthew 28:20—Jesus said, “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” So, is He saying that, after the end of the age, He will no longer be with us?

There are very many instances in scripture of this usage of “until.” I have collected a much longer list.

In passages like these, the word “until” is not delimiting, but inclusive. In other words, it is not saying “only this long and no longer.” It is saying, “this will not cease to be the case before this stated goal has been attained.” It may continue beyond that time, but it will not end prior to the fulfillment of the stated goal. The goal is the focus of the statement, and there is no suggestion that the thing continuing until then will cease to be true beyond that point.

When Paul says hardening in part has happened to Israel *until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in*, it is not predicting an end to the hardening of those who are hardened. It is saying that, while the process of drawing in the Gentiles is occurring the partial hardness of Israel will remain a reality. Of course, the inclusion of a part of Israel will also be a reality throughout the period. Will there ever be a reversal of this situation prior to Christ’s coming? We are not told.

Instead of saying, “after this, something will change...” Paul makes no reference to anything changing, nor to anything “after this.”

What he does say is “*In this way*” all Israel will be saved—meaning all of the Israel olive tree, inclusive of all its Jewish and Gentile branches (v.26). The very use of the adverb “*thus*,” or “*in this way*” proves he is not describing a sequence of events, but a means by which something is being accomplished.

The prediction that Israel would be saved by the Messiah is the particular promise that has been under discussion since the beginning of chapter 9. Paul and his readers are painfully aware that the coming of the Messiah has not seemed to result in the salvation of Israel, as the prophets predicted (e.g., Isa.45:17; Jer.23:6; Zech.9:9). What’s up with that?

Again, the dispensationalist thinks Paul is answering the question “when” these prophecies will be fulfilled. Paul, rather, is concerned to describe “how” they have in fact been being fulfilled all along. All Israel indeed will be, and is currently being, saved. But “Israel” must not be mistaken for “the nation as a whole” (which is what Dr. Brown and dispensationalists mistakenly suggest). The “Israel” referred to in the prophecies is the remnant, the vessels of honor, the election, the believing branches. The rest of Israel was never implied in the promises (Ps.50:16-17), and there is no guarantee, stated or implied, about their eventual conversion.

32. Dr. Brown:

Now, if you don't know this, you'll become arrogant because you'll think “we're the new kids on the block. We took over, not just the guestroom, but the whole house.”

Response:

This sounds like a prediction. If so, it does not appear to have come true in any of the saints I personally know. I wonder why Dr. Brown thinks this to be true? It is, at the very least, uncharitable.

33. Dr. Brown:

And listen, there is Church theology talk from the early centuries of the Church era. There was Church theology that said, the prosperity and triumph of the Church, especially with Constantine's co-conversion, and the co-Christianizing of the Roman Empire.

Now the Church has these great monuments and buildings and things like this, and the Jewish people still suffering, still out of their homeland, or still under judgments. So, this was a proof of the triumph of Christianity.

The Christians are blessed, the Jews are cursed, and this is an ongoing proof because they're still cursed. And look at us. We're the new kids on the block. All the promises God made to Israel belong to us, and they don't apply to them anymore.

This very erroneous, dangerous theology called Replacement Theology that the Church has replaced Israel, or Supersessionism, that the Church has superseded Israel, that the promises once given to Israel, now have gone to the Church, and they no longer apply to Israel. This has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews through history.

And if you want to add in Martin Luther's anti-Semitism that was utilized by the Nazis and the Holocaust, then you could say, it cost millions of Jewish lives. And it has cost the Church dearly because Paul warned, don't you cut yourself off from the roots.

Response:

Dr. Brown draws a cause-and-effect connection from *Supersessionism* to anti-Semitism. If this is true, then we would have grounds for asserting that, had Luther not been a supersessionist, Hitler would not have been anti-Semitic. Luther's *Supersessionism* is continually blamed for Hitler's actions. It is as if to say that Hitler had no personal animus toward Jews until, one evening, while reading Luther peacefully by the fire, it dawned on him, “Hey! The Jews are no longer God's unique favorites! The only sensible thing is to kill them all!”

It is easy to find a few supersessionists in the history of the Church (which was entirely comprised of them!) who also had sinful attitudes toward Jews, and then pretend that correlation is causation—that is, if we wish to make ourselves appear irrational. We would then be warranted in suggesting that Haman, Antiochus IV, and Vespasian were also supersessionist theologians.

On the other hand, suppose we were to say, “If you believe God has a special interest in Jewish people, you will despise all Gentiles, like the Pharisees did.” This would be an even more justified (and fairly rational) prediction—though it would be as false as is that of Dr. Brown.

34. Dr. Brown:

We are not talking about Jewish tradition. We're talking about honoring of the Father. We're talking about recognizing the connection. We're talking about understanding the Jewish roots and foundations of the Gospel, and God's eternal promises to Israel. When you're cut off from that, he's saying, it's like a branch that's cut off from the rest of the tree, it's going to wither and die.

Response:

Did Dr. Brown just liken Paul's broken-off branches to a Gentile believer who is not mindful of his Jewish roots? There's bizarre exegesis for you! Paul uses the illustration to describe Jews who are alienated from Christ, but Dr. Brown likens it to Christians who are alienated from Jewish roots?

35. Dr. Brown:

And you can often see through Church history that to the extent the Church has cut itself off from its Jewish roots, it has walked in spiritual darkness.

Now listen, there are fine Christians today, who hold to Replacement Theology or Supersessionism in different ways, and they are not anti-Semites. There are some fine Christians today who love Jesus, and have wonderful walks with the Lord, and have a blind spot here. And perhaps, every one of us, in one way or another, has a blind spot, but this is a very serious blind spot and one that Paul explicitly addressed.

Response:

The disclaimer of the second paragraph rings very hollow in light of the slander of the first paragraph that it seeks to mitigate.

36. Dr. Brown:

He says, 'and so', either meaning

- *on the heels of this, the fullness of the Gentiles coming in,*
- or*
- *sequentially, 'after this'.*

Response:

I'm pretty sure Dr. Brown's specialty is in Semitic languages. This may explain his apparent unawareness of the meaning of common Greek words (unawareness is the more charitable of two possible suggestions).

The Greek word “*houto*” is a demonstrative adverb, rendered “so” in the KJV, which means neither “on the heels of this” nor “after this.” There are at least five lexical meanings given by *koine* authorities, none of which suggest any such idea of sequence as do the *ad hoc* definitions gratuitously invented above. The word, in this context, speaks of the method or means of a thing. The leading English equivalents given in the lexicons are: “thus,” “in this manner,” and “on this wise.”

Paul is therefore discussing *how* the prophecies of Israel's salvation are fulfilled, rather than the timing or sequence of events. Again, there is no eschatology in Romans 9-11.

I would appreciate hearing which lexical sources Dr. Brown consulted in justification of his imaginary definitions. As I said a few segments earlier, this is a brazen attempt to turn a non-eschatological passage into an eschatological one—by inserting a chronological element nowhere suggested (or intended) by Paul. The task of a teacher is to study and present Paul's theology—not to recreate it for him in the image of our own.

37. Dr. Brown:

And so, all Israel will be saved. The only possible way to understand all Israel is the Israel that was spoken of in the previous verse.

Response:

This is not the only possibility. Another would be to take it in context as the conclusion of Paul's protracted discussion, in which he has never yet mentioned a future conversion of "the nation as a whole." On the other hand, he has consistently argued that the salvation of Israel (the olive tree) prophesied in the Old Testament relates only to the true Israel, to which most Jews do not belong, and perhaps never have. He has argued throughout that a part of Israel has always been saved, and this has never changed. This "saved Israel" is the remnant—the true Israel. This Israel, even in Old Testament times, has always included Gentiles. In the Old Testament, Israel, the *ekklesia*, included mostly Jews, and some Gentiles. Today, the same *ekklesia* contains mostly Gentiles and some Jews. The only change in that regard is not in the corporate identity of the faithful remnant (the tree is still the same tree), but in the surprising shift in demographic percentages included in it.

38. Dr. Brown:

You have to do all kinds of exegetical gymnastics, interpretive gymnastics to turn the thing upside down, and separate it contextually to say, "It means the Church as the whole or just all the remnants of Jewish believers through the centuries combined."

Response:

This is a common and unsurprising assessment of one's theological opponents in a dispute. Obviously, I would make the same criticism of Dr. Brown's conclusions and methods. The reader now has both before him/her and can make one's own judgment.

39. Dr. Brown:

No, no, no, the Israel that's been hardened will be turned, all Israel will be saved. "As it is written, the deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob."

Notice, Jacob, which was never used as a Church word. I don't know any Christians that say, we are the new Jacob. Jacob, Israel, the Jewish people, and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

Response:

It is a rather hollow claim that "Jacob" is never used of the Church, as if "Israel" might conceivably be allowed as a name for the remnant, but certainly not the name "Jacob." Dr. Brown is convinced that "Israel" is never used with reference to the Church—although he does believe that the early

Church, before Gentiles were included, were identical to *"the Israel of God."* Apparently, without mentioning it, Paul felt that the identity of the Church as the Israel of God changed when Gentiles were grafted into the tree.

The names Jacob and Israel, being two names for the same man and the same nation throughout the Old Testament, are always used interchangeably. To say that "Jacob" cannot mean the Church, because "Israel" does not mean the Church would be begging the question. An excellent case can be made for saying that Israel, in v.26, does in fact refer to the Church. If so, it is entirely natural for Paul to support this with a passage using the alternative name "Jacob" (v.27). What is true of one name is true of both. Whether either of them refers to the Church is precisely what has been the point under consideration, and cannot, without folly, be given a cavalier dismissal.

40. Dr. Brown:

"As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account, but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs for God's gift, and his call are irrevocable."

Amen.

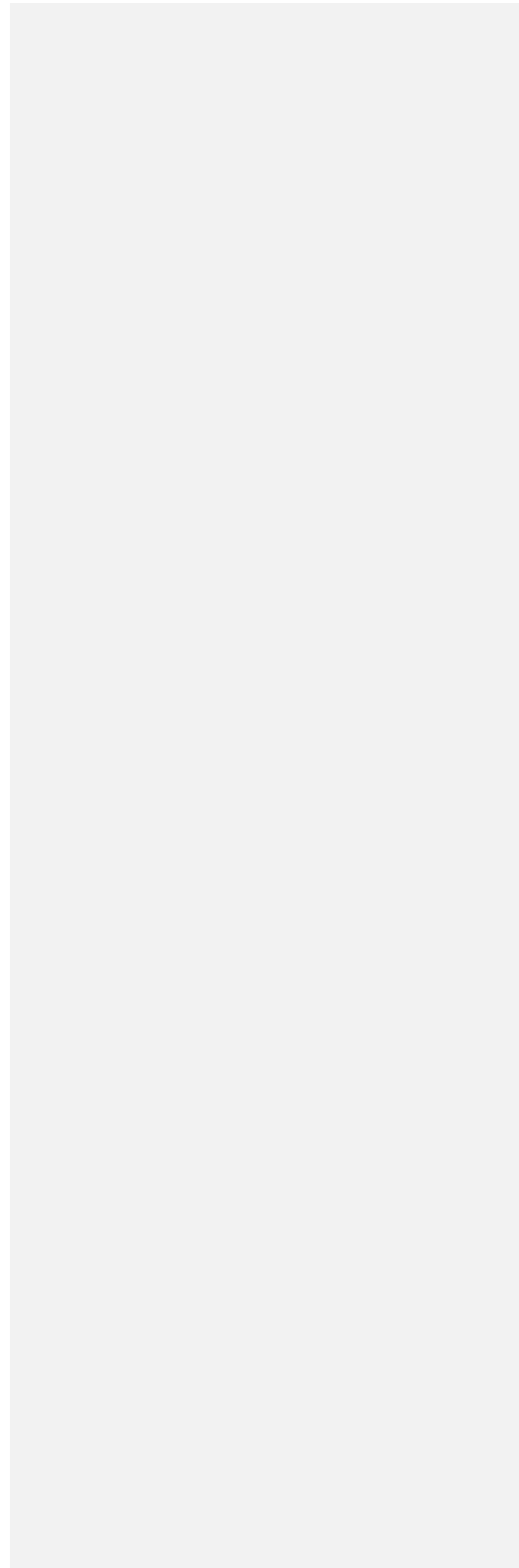
Somehow, we have no problem thinking that God's promises to the Church are irrevocable because of what Jesus did.

And the point of the fact, he made unconditional promises to Israel long, long before. And if we can't trust his promises to Israel, we can't trust his promises to the Church.

Response:

I addressed this syllogism earlier. Israel is made up of two elements. Each Jew has a conditional opportunity to be in the saved category, by faith in Christ. Those who do not choose this are lost. There is no unconditional promise to any man or nation (Jer.18:7-10).

The same is true of the institutional Church. As with Israel, there is a true Church within the institutional Church, comprised of the faithful only. As with Israel, each person in the Church can choose faithfulness or apostasy. The results are the same as with Israel, in this respect.



Document 12

Messianic Judaism Vs. Christianity

Date: 22nd February 2020

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Are Messianic Judaism and Christianity, two separate religions? If we are talking about Messianic Jews and Gentiles, does that erect a wall of separation?

Well, the first thing we want to do is have no wall of separation. Jesus tore that dividing wall down, and in him, in Yeshua, we are one. And that's why Paul wrote to the Galatians and the Colossians that there's neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female, there is neither slave nor free.

But when he said that he wasn't saying that there are no distinctions. Certainly, there's a difference between a man and a woman, all right. There's also a difference between a Jew and a Gentile. But in Jesus, there's no caste system, there's no class system. We all have equal access to God.

Response:

Dr. Brown thinks it as obvious that there is a difference between a Jew and a Gentile as that there is a difference between a man and a woman. I think the differences in the latter case are significantly more obvious.

Men and women have different body parts, facial hair, etc. Not so with Jews and Gentiles. They are usually indistinguishable from each other.

One can be half or quarter Jewish and the other part Gentile. No one is part man and part woman.

Women can have babies and nurse them at the breast, something no man can do. Yet, I know of nothing that a man or woman is restricted from doing on the basis of being either a Jew or a Gentile.

I am not sure that there is that much distinction between Jews and Gentiles after all—especially if we are using the differences between men and women as the comparison.

2. Dr. Brown:

But Paul also wrote this to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 7, he said this, "Was anyone at the time of his call," meaning call to salvation, "already circumcised, let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised, let him not seek circumcision, for neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God."

When it comes to our salvation, circumcision doesn't count for anything, and uncircumcision doesn't count for anything, being Jewish or being Gentile doesn't count for anything.

However, Paul says if you come to faith as a Jew, don't become a Gentile. If you come to faith as a Gentile, don't become a Jew.

Response:

Does Dr. Brown really think he has correctly captured Paul's point here? Paul is not saying anything about a Gentile or Jew experiencing a racial transformation. He is saying that Christian Gentiles are not obliged to be circumcised (because, of course, they are already circumcised in the only sense that matters—Rom.2:26, 28-29; Phil.3:3; Col.2:11). He is also saying that a Jewish person who comes to Christ does not need to be surgically "uncircumcised." He certainly is saying nothing about there being some significant difference between Jews and Gentiles in Christ, but the opposite.

In the next verse, Paul insists that being a Jew or Gentile (that is, circumcised or uncircumcised) counts for nothing at all.

3. Dr. Brown:

Because Christianity as a whole has swung so far from its Jewish roots, because it has completely displaced say, Passover with Easter because it has displaced a Saturday Sabbath with Sunday.

So that if a Jewish believer says, well, I celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus within Passover, or if a Jewish believer says, well, I still separate the seventh day as a holy day to God and worship, they're looked at as if something is wrong, whereas that's how the first believers lived, they were all Jews.

Response:

...until they weren't. Gentiles began to be saved in significant numbers after the stoning of Stephen (Acts 11:19-20). This was about three years after Pentecost, in all likelihood, so the "first believers" were distinctly the Jewish remnant, without Gentile membership for a relatively short time. Once the Gentiles became saved, they did not seem to keep Jewish customs—at least if they were under Paul's instruction they did not.

4. Dr. Brown:

What we have to have is space for everyone. We may use terms like Messianic Judaism, and Christianity, but we're talking about the same faith of coming to God through the blood of Jesus, the Messiah, who died for our sins and rose from the dead and is the only Redeemer and the only deliverer and the only hope of Jew or Gentile.

But there may be a calling on a Jew to live one way, and a calling on a Gentile to live another way, in which case, we come together as one body. Just like there are men and women in the body with all of their diversities, with all of their differences, with all of their distinctives, and yet they come together as one in marriage and family, and within the body, it's the same with Jew and Gentile.

Let us have our distinctives and uniqueness in the Lord as we come together as one family, without a dividing wall separating us. In our distinctives, we find our unity.

Response:

To suggest that a Jewish believer is called to live the Christian life one way, and a Gentile is called to live another raises question. "Called by whom?" Does God have a different calling on Jewish Christians overall, or does Dr. Brown simply mean that a given Jewish believer who feels "called" to live among Jews may choose to act like a Jew? This was Paul's own approach, though he made it clear that his behavior among Jews, where he lived "*as under the Law,*" was a mere evangelistic strategy—not a special calling upon him as a Jewish believer.

Document 13

Are Gentile Christians Spiritual Jews?

Date: 22nd February 2020

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Is it true that a Gentile Christian is actually a spiritual Jew, which would mean perhaps that someone who was a natural Jew but not a follower of Jesus is not a spiritual Jew?

On the one hand, this is a concept that you can get from certain verses and in and of itself is not a dangerous concept. I've met many godly Christians around the world, people with a great love for the Lord, and a great love for the Jewish people. And they've come up to me, I mean Gentile men and women, and they've come up to me and said we are Jews in our heart, from different parts of the world, speaking different languages, but in their simple English 'we are spiritual Jews'.

There's something beautiful about that, and I can understand the perspective, and I can understand how they could get that from Romans 2. There Paul is rebuking Jewish hypocrisy in a sense of Jewish superiority, and Paul says this in Romans the second chapter, "For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God."

In context you could say that he's talking about a Gentile who loves God, and has the Word of God, the law of God written on his heart, and seeks to obey that law, that that person is the real Jew in God's sight. And that the naturally born Jew, who is not circumcised in his own heart, who is not doing the will of God in his own life, that that person is not really a Jew.

But many translations indicate and add to the Greek for clarification, so we get the full sense of it. That when Paul is saying a person is not a Jew if he's one only outwardly, and circumcision is not only outward and in the flesh, in other words it must also be inward.

What Paul's really saying here is between two Jews, who's the real Jew in God's sight? The one who's only a Jew outwardly, or the one who's also a Jew inwardly with a circumcised heart, living a life in obedience to God?

You say, "How do I know that?" Because in the very next verse, there are no chapter divisions in the Greek, in the very next verse, so chapter 3:1, Paul then asked the question, "so then what's the advantage of being a Jew," in other words he's still talking about natural Jews.

Response:

The context suggests that Paul is saying being Jewish or Gentile is a non-issue, so long as one is circumcised in their heart. In the verses just above verses 28-29, Paul has already explained his thesis, of which the passage under consideration is a mere summary:

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision." (v.25)

Note that Paul says that a Jew who is not obedient to God's covenant law, despite his Jewish birth and circumcision, has become an uncircumcised man (a Gentile) in God's sight. Therefore, Paul says that even a physically circumcised man has no claim to being a true "Jew" unless he is also obedient. This is what Dr. Brown affirms.

But Paul goes on to say that the reverse is also true. He says that an uncircumcised man (i.e., a Gentile) will be counted by God as a circumcised man (a Jew) if that man is obedient to God generally (thus displaying a circumcised heart):

“Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?” (v.26).

“Counted” by whom? Certainly, by God Himself. God counts the obedient Gentile (who is uncircumcised) as a circumcised Jew.

There can be no reason to distinguish between the word “circumcised” and the word “Jew” in Paul’s argument. He uses the two words interchangeably in v.28 and in v.29. To Paul and the Jews of his time, “circumcised” was a synonym of the word “Jewish” (see also Gal.2:7-8).

Yet, Paul says that a Gentile who keeps God’s commandments will be “counted” [i.e., by God] to be circumcised—that is, a Jew in the only sense that matters. Paul told Gentile Christians that he and they, together, were the true “circumcision” (i.e., “Jews”) due to their rejoicing in Christ and worshiping in the Spirit (Phil.3:3). He even said that true Jews are those who *“put no confidence in the flesh”* (Ibid.). That is, their fleshly pedigree. Natural Jews generally do put such confidence in the flesh (Rom.2:17ff). Paul tells us that he also once put confidence in his fleshly Jewishness, since he enjoyed a perfect Jewish pedigree and lifestyle according to Torah. However, as a Christian, he regarded all that to be worth no more than a pile of dung (Phil.3:4-9).

Paul makes it clear that any sense in which he once identified himself as a Jew after the flesh was of absolute zero value to him in Christ. Being in Christ was all that identified him and was the only thing that made him and his Gentile readers equally the true circumcision.

2. Dr. Brown:

What is he saying in Romans 1:16? I’m not ashamed of the gospel, right, it’s the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. So, he still recognizes there are people called Jews who need the gospel.

And if you read through the rest of Romans, every time he mentions Jew, Jew, Jew, Jew, he’s talking about natural Jewish people.

Response:

Except, of course, in Romans 2:28-29, as discussed above.

However, even if true, it remains irrelevant to the subject. Paul never denied that different races exist, nor that one of those races was the Jewish one. He could refer to Greeks, Barbarians, Jews, etc. as separate (but not significant) racial groups. However, the point he made was that there can be no distinction of significance made between the various races once one’s identity is in Christ—no longer in race, gender, or social status. It is of no relevance to the discussion to point out that Paul was aware of (and sometimes spoke of) the ethnic Jews. The relevant question is: What did he say about them when he mentioned them? Paul’s teaching was that all races are equal and undistinguished from each other in Christ (Eph.3:3-6; Gal.3:26-29). That some professed New Testament believers would or could mistake Paul’s mind on this matter is astonishing.

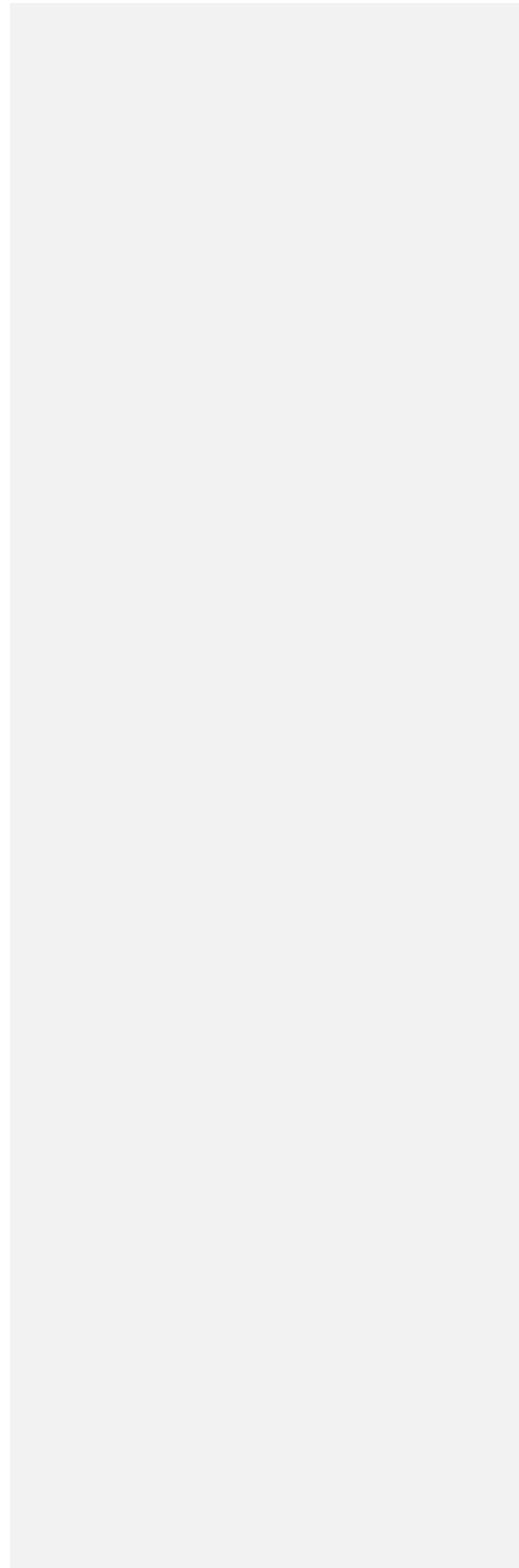
3. Dr. Brown:

But the one that is not just a natural Jew, but a spiritual Jew in God's sight is the Jewish believer in Yeshua, the Messiah, the one who has been born from above, who's circumcised within and without.

So are Gentile Christians, spiritual Jews? I understand the concept, but in reality that's not what Paul taught.

Response:

In reality, it is exactly what Paul taught—since the “spiritual Jew” would be identical to the “spiritually circumcised.”



Document 14

Does God Bless Those Who Bless Israel?

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

All right, we know God told Abram, Abraham, in Genesis 12:3, "I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you, will be cursed," God will curse them. Those who revile and treat Israel lightly will be cursed.

Does it apply to Israel of all time? Does it apply to Jewish people today, or am I even right in saying Israel at all, or does it just apply to Abraham and his seed, whatever that means?

Well, when we look at it in context, we see that the promise is repeated to the patriarchs. We even see that when Isaac blesses Jacob, he blesses him in the same way. So, we can certainly say from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob, these principles definitely apply. That God would bless those who would bless Abraham and his seed, Isaac and Isaac's seed, Jacob and the seed of Jacob.

We definitely know that is the truth, the case how far does it go, how long does this apply? Well, when we get to the Book of Numbers, we see that Balaam is hired by Balak, the king of Moab, to curse Israel as Israel's in the wilderness before entering into the Promised Land. And Balaam, instead of cursing, blesses because God sent him to bless. And God said Israel is blessed, you won't curse them.

And Balaam as he speaks in Numbers 22 to 24, repeats these same words over the whole nation of Israel, the Israel that was in the wilderness, the Israel that was under judgment, the Israel that many of them died in the wilderness, that's the Israel that was spoken over.

In other words, the point is that God blessed the nation even in its sin and all of its faults and blemishes, just like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had their faults and blemishes.

In fact they get more extreme with each generation. So, Jacob and his offspring, yeah, they were full of faults and blemishes, yet it is reinforced through Balaam that God will bless those who bless Israel, and those who curse Israel, will be cursed.

Commented [DG7]:

Response:

The purpose of God's "blessing" of Abraham was to make him instrumental in extending blessing ("the blessing of Abraham"—Gal.3:14) to all nations, without distinction (Gen.12:2; 18:18; 26:4). The nations would ultimately be blessed through his Seed, which is Christ (Gal.3:8, 9, 14, 16). This blessing is identified, by Paul, as the blessing of justification by faith and the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Gal.3:6-9, 14). This has occurred, and continues to occur. Christ came through Israel ("Salvation is of the Jews"—John 4:22) and the blessing of Abraham—justification and the gift of the Holy Spirit—is now extended to all nations through the global Gospel mission.

The nation Israel was that one branch of Abraham's numerous descendants through whom this Seed would come. This is the entire story of the Old Testament. During the time that this purpose for Israel had not yet been fulfilled, God was dealing uniquely with Israel, so that His purpose through them would come to fruition. These special dealings included God's giving them a safe land in which to live, and a promise to uniquely preserve and protect them from ultimate harm. The repeated promise of blessing "those who bless" and cursing "those who curse" Israel were also part of that package.

This bouquet of benefits belonged to the nation Israel through the Sinaitic Covenant. Of course, the promises were earlier made to Abraham's "Seed," but that designation was very general, and

could potentially be claimed by many different nations, including Ishmaelites, Edomites, Midianites, etc. It was only at Sinai that the group delivered out of Egypt became a holy nation (Ex.19:5-6), and the Abrahamic promises of land and protection were specifically identified with them.

Of course, just as the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were to be fulfilled, not to those men personally, but to their "Seed," so also, the same promises, when extended to Israel as a nation, anticipated their particular Seed, whom God would bring into the world through them (see Rev.12:1-2, 5). Having now fulfilled its purpose in bringing the Messiah into the world, no additional mission or blessing uniquely associated with the nation of Israel has been identified in scripture.

It follows that, the special promises that were associated by covenant with the nation Israel in the Old Testament have passed along with the covenant (the Sinaitic) of which they were a part. The same promises previously made concerning Abraham's Seed through the earlier "Abrahamic Covenant" still apply to Christ and those who are in Him, who are "*Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (Gal.3:29).

Of course, this takes nothing of ultimate value from the Jews, who are as eligible as are any other people to enjoy the blessing of Abraham. They have neither been excluded as a race, nor "replaced." In fact, Peter specifically promises that this "blessing" has been offered to the Jews: "*To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities*" (Acts 3:26).

2. Dr. Brown:

You say, "Well, when we get to the New Testament, Romans 9:6 says, not all Israel is Israel. Paul's making a point there in Romans 9:6 that there is a remnant of Jewish believers, a remnant within Israel, an Israel within Israel, and he's speaking about that immediately in that context.

But as he goes on in the rest of the chapters 9, 10, and 11, he speaks of Israel, the nation as a whole, the nation as a whole, the nation as a whole. And then says plainly in Romans 11:28 and 29 that even though the Jewish people, Israel, the nation, presently that people is an enemy for the Gospel's sake, they are still loved by God on account of the patriarchs, for the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

Response:

Whenever Dr. Brown speaks of Romans 9:6, he says "Paul is making the point that there is a remnant in Israel." And then moves on. The point he fails to note is that Paul's purpose in the statement is to say that *only* the remnant actually is "Israel" (i.e., the chosen people, to whom the promises apply). This is Paul's unmistakable point in the verse, and is conveniently omitted in Dr. Brown's commentary on it.

If anyone wishes to evaluate the validity of claims in the second paragraph, I recommend the extensive answers I have provided in other documents of this series [1:6, 7; 10:16, 32; 14:2; 15:6, 11; 18:8].

3. Dr. Brown:

So, I say, yes, this applies to this day. And I have seen supernatural evidence of churches, of individuals, who have felt called to identify with Israel and bless Israel.

It doesn't mean everything Israel does is right, it doesn't mean that you can't speak correctively to Israel, it doesn't mean that you're against the Palestinians, but what it means is that you recognize that Israel has been chosen by God.

Even in sin and disobedience that God's love is still on the Jewish people, that he's the one who scattered us, he's the one who's regathering us, and you recognize God's hand at work. And therefore, you don't stand against Israel.

Response:

Dr. Brown wants us to recognize the modern State of Israel and contemporary Jews as having “been chosen by God.” If one might simply ask the obvious question, “Chosen for what?” what answer would we receive?

We see God choosing Israel, in the Old Testament, as the conduit of blessing to the world—that is, to bring us the Messiah. I know of no Christian who disputes this. Of course, their role in that mission, so far as we have scripture to inform us, was fulfilled long ago when Jesus came. The New Testament does not mention the Jews currently being “chosen” to do anything more in particular—other than, of course, that which is required of all nations which is to embrace Christ as King. This they for the most part have not done.

Jews are still as free as ever to receive their Messiah if they are ever so inclined, but there is no scripture saying that they have been uniquely “chosen” apart from other nations to do so. This is a universal obligation upon all people.

No current or future mission is known for which we can say Israel today is “chosen.” Every New Testament reference to God’s “chosen” or “elect” refers either to Christ Himself as the chosen Servant of Yahweh, or else to those who are in Him (Eph.1:4)—and not to the nation of Israel or the Jews.

There is nothing to dispute in these observations.

The only possible (and desperate) argument for Israel’s remaining specially a “chosen people” today would be pointing to elements in the Old Covenant in which promises are said to be “forever” (Gen.13:15) or “for all generations” (Ex.31:13). Expressions like these are abundant in the Old Testament and apply to almost every promise and institution, including the land promise (Gen.13:15), the physical rite of circumcision (Gen.17:9, 13), the validity of the Aaronic priesthood (Ex.27:21; 29:28), the animal sacrifices (Lev.7:34), the observance of Yom Kippur (Lev.16:29), the blowing of silver trumpets by Aaron’s sons to call assemblies (Num.10:8), the length of a bondsman’s servitude to his master (Deut.15:17), the length of time that all the curses of Deut.28 will remain upon disobedient Israel (Deut.28:45-46), etc.

If we can accept that all of these aspects of the Old Covenant remain intact forever, then we can consistently claim that the uniqueness of Israel, her land-grant, etc., are also literally forever. The language is the same in every case. On the other hand, if any of these “eternal” things have passed into obsolescence, then this requires our exegesis concerning such “forever” things to be more careful and nuanced.

Obviously, “eternal” promises can fall into several alternative categories:

- Those that remain true literally forever—e.g., the reign of Christ (Isa.9:6-7);
- Those that were conditioned upon obedience, and have been forfeited—e.g., the land promise (Lev.18:26-28; Deut.28:63);
- Those whose eternal aspect is spiritual, rather than mundane—e.g., circumcision (Rom.2:28-29; Phil.3:3; Col.2:11) and the observance of Passover and Unleavened Bread (1 Cor.5:7-8).

If anything remains of Israel's "chosen" status, we will need to learn a) What have they been chosen for, now that their original mission has long-since been accomplished? and b) Where do we learn of this continuing "chosen-ness" in the New Testament?

4. Dr. Brown:

I have seen supernatural evidence for this for many, many years now, for decades, striking evidence of supernatural blessing.

And Derek Prince has been with the Lord a number of years now, but the Great British Bible teacher, spent half of his time for many years living in Israel. He said that he was there, he was there at the end of World War II. He was there at the birth of the nation of Israel.

It used to be said the Sun never sets on the British Empire, Great Britain. He says that he watched with his own eyes, and you go back in decades before when Great Britain changed its policy towards Israel and the Jewish people, and many would say betrayed the Jewish people and did not even allow Jews fleeing Nazi Germany to enter into Palestine. He said, from that time on, Great Britain has been in serious decline. Something to think about.

Response:

Okay, now that we have thought about it, is there some conclusion to be reached from these facts? Have there not been many nations who have declined after a complex history of mixed good and bad behavior (like America, and historical Israel, for instance)? Would not a Christian view of history incline us to see the decline of Britain as having more to do with their abandonment of Christianity than with their Middle East policies?

If Britain's decline is thought to prove that there remains a rule that those who curse Israel will be cursed, how do we account for every nation or entity that was unkind to Israel but flourished for centuries—or nations that have declined or were destroyed without any reference to their treatment of the Jews?

Evidence from history has a way of being ambiguous.

Document 15

Has Israel Forfeited God's Promises

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

What about the promises that God gave to Israel in the Old Testament? What are they most fundamentally? Do they still apply today? Has the nation of Israel, the Jewish people as a whole—and I speak as a Jew—have we forfeited those promises?

So, if I was not a believer in Jesus, just part of the nation as a whole, have we forever forfeited those promises, or do they still apply if we repent, or perhaps, in God's sovereign will, or do they now all apply to Christians? How do we sort this out?

Response:

This is a complicated question. As mentioned in my response to the previous document [14:3; see also *Introduction*, point #14], the promises fall into different categories.

There are promises, for example, that God gave to Noah. These can be applied also to Israel, as well as to every nation since all are Noah's offspring.

There are promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which potentially could have been fulfilled to any or all of Jacob's righteous offspring. That the promises to Abraham's offspring were dependent upon their good behavior is made clear in Genesis 18:19. In agreement with this, Jesus and Paul both asserted (and John the Baptist implied) that only those who were righteous like Abraham are qualified in God's sight to be regarded as "*children of Abraham*" in terms of covenant privileges (Matt.3:9; John 8:39; Gal.3:7).

God eventually did confirm these Abrahamic promises to the racially mixed multitude (predominantly ethnic Israelite) that came out of Egypt (Ex.19:5-6). That these promises to the newly formed nation were strictly conditional is repeated frequently in the Torah (e.g., Deut.28). It is a principal theme of the Old Testament that they consistently failed to meet the conditions for fulfillment (see Psalm 106:6-46).

It is clear that God did not consider His promise to Abraham as necessarily requiring to be fulfilled to all twelve of the tribes of Israel. At one point, He contemplated wiping them all out and replacing them with a nation from the tribe of Levi alone, through Moses (Ex.32:10). Moses himself (and a few others, like Joshua) seem to have comprised the entire faithful remnant of Israel at that moment.

Of the promises made to the nation Israel, we have the unambiguous testimony of scripture that they were all fulfilled in Joshua's day, as well as subsequently (Josh.21:43-45) and continued to be enjoyed for centuries afterward (1 Kings 4:20-21).

The continuing relevance or enjoyment of these promises was conditional upon Israel's ongoing faithfulness to the covenant (Jer.18:7-10). Due to their utter failure in this regard, and particularly their rejection and murder of the Messiah, their special role as God's Kingdom and holy nation was ultimately taken from them and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruit of justice and righteousness that Israel consistently failed to produce (Isa.5:1-7; Matt.21:43; 1 Pet.2:9-10).

Many of the promises, commands, and institutions related to the nation Israel had to do with ritual and mundane issues that foreshadowed spiritual, eternal realities (Col.2:16-17). These have materialized through the New Covenant which superseded the Old. Since every covenant has its own related promises and stipulations, the coming of the New Covenant has rendered the first one

obsolete (Heb.8:13), and has replaced old, inferior promises of the Old with “*better promises*” associated with the New (Heb.8:6).

If we ask, “Has Israel forfeited the promises,” the natural corollary question must be asked, “Which ones?” In view of the above, we can say that the conditional and mundane promises associated with the Old Covenant—which would potentially have been theirs forever, had they been faithful—have indeed been forfeited. They exist no more because the covenant which included them is obsolete and nonexistent.

But what of the Abrahamic promises? I have discussed this sufficiently in previous documents of this series. The short answer is that Christ (including justification by faith and the universal availability of the Holy Spirit) is the fulfillment of these promises. This is the whole of Paul’s teaching in Galatians 3.

No faithful Jew is excluded from the benefits of the Abrahamic promises, since no faithful human being is excluded from them. The unfaithful, on the other hand, have never been included in the covenants.

But what of the land promise made to Abraham and his Seed? Paul speaks of that specific promise to Abraham’s Seed in Romans 4:13. In that verse, Paul clearly identifies the “land-promise” as a promise of inheriting the whole world. The land formerly belonging to the Canaanites was conditionally given to the nation of Israel for a home while they needed to maintain their racial and cultural separation from other nations. There is no such requirement now that the kingdom which they represented has become a global and interracial phenomenon. Abraham’s Seed (Christ) truly is destined to inherit the Land because it is part of the whole world which was promised to Him (Ps.2:8-9; 72).

2. Dr. Brown:

Let’s take a look in Romans 9. Romans 9 beginning in verse 1, where Paul speaks of the great sorrow in his heart, “I tell the truth in Messiah, do not lie, my conscience assuring me in the Ruach Ha’qodesh, the Holy Spirit that my sorrow is great, the anguish in my heart unending, but I would pray that I myself were cursed, banished from Messiah for the sake of my people, my own flesh and blood.” Notice Paul says they are his flesh and blood, “who are Israelites.”

Now look at this, “To them belong the adoption in the son and the glory and the Covenant and the giving of the Torah and the temple service and the promises, to them belong the patriarchs, and for them, according to the flesh, the Messiah who is over all God blessed forever. Amen.”

So, he says, present tense, that to them, the people of Israel even those, he’s speaking of the nation as a whole, who do not believe, to them belong the promises. Promises are still there.

Response:

I take no joy in demonstrating the absolute invalidity of this argument (and I have done so previously, in responses to previous documents). The entirety of this argument hangs, as Dr. Brown mentions, on the “present tense” of the word “belongs.” In the Greek text of this verse, no word corresponding to “belongs” can be found. Strangely, there is no verb in the sentence, leaving the verb—whether in the present or past tense—to be implied.

In the list of benefits given to Israel, the one benefit that Dr. Brown wishes to retain for modern Israel is “the promises.” He wants to say the promises still belong, particularly, to Israel. Is a present tense belonging agreeable with the list in general? What is there? Let’s see: a) the adoption, b) the

glory (probably referring to the manifested Shekinah), c) the covenant(s), d) the giving of the law, e) the (temple) service, f) the promises, g) the ancestors. What can we say about the seven items in Paul's list? In Paul's day, were they present or past things related to Israel?

- 1) We can say that Israel's adoption was implied when God spoke of Israel as His firstborn and was a past event.
- 2) The visible Shekinah was certainly a great privilege of the past, but not remaining in Paul's time.
- 3) The covenants (Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and Davidic) were certainly given in their past (F.F. Bruce thinks there is a good textual case for the word to be singular—i.e., the Sinaitic covenant).
- 4) The giving of the Torah occurred only once in the past and was not an ongoing process.
- 5) The temple service was of no value after the veil was torn and God's temple became one built from living stones. That Jewish temple worship was defunct when Paul wrote.
- 6) Promises were made to Israel in the past. After their fulfillment, we know of no new or current ones applicable to them.
- 7) The fathers, likewise, were a benefit of Israel's past, not present.

The fact that everything on the list is something from Israel's past, many of which did not pertain to the time of Paul's writing, raises serious doubts about the likelihood of Paul's using the present tense verb of possession regarding them. Beyond this, prior to writing Romans, Paul had written Galatians, in which he had emphatically said that the promises did not pertain to the ethnic "seeds" of Abraham as a group, but to the "Seed"—Christ (3:16), which includes (3:9) and is restricted to (3:7) those who believe in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile (3:26-29). He also declared in Galatians 4 that those whom he described as Abraham's children "*according to the flesh*," or "*of the bond woman*" (4:23-26) would not be heirs of the covenant promises. These, he said, belong only to the children "*of the promise*" or "*of the free woman*"—whom he identified with the Church (4:31).

Paul repeated this teaching, more briefly, in Romans 9:7-8, consideration of which is required in order to inform us of the thoughts behind his ambiguous allusion to the promises in verse 4.

3. Dr. Brown:

Now he explains in the verses that follow, the ones who have received the benefits of those promises now in the Messiah, that's the Israel within Israel, that's people like Paul or me or Jay Sekulow or John Bernice or hundreds of thousands of other Jewish believers in Jesus.

But the promises still belong to the nation as a whole, just like the patriarchs belong to the nation as a whole.

Response:

In what sense do our ancestors "belong" to us today? We no longer have them. They belong to our history, not to us today. My great grandfather was in my family and belonged to us all. Today, he is only an ancestor who used to belong to us. But if Dr. Brown is referring to "Father Abraham," he does not belong to the Jews any more than to the Christians (Matt.3:9; John 8:37, 39; Gal.3:7).

4. Dr. Brown:

So, Paul gets to the end of his discussion in Romans 9, 10, and 11. So 3 chapters in our Bibles as we have them today as my colleague, Bob Gladstone, says if you don't understand Israel, you don't understand Paul's gospel. This is a foundational importance for him.

And after explaining there's an Israel within Israel, he then speaks of Israel 10 times after Romans 9:6, every time speaking of the nations as a whole, the nation as a whole, the nation as a whole, the nation that doesn't believe.

Response:

We have spent enough time in previous documents in this series refuting the claim that Paul speaks of "the nation as a whole" in Romans 9-11. We have no comments from Paul about the nation of Israel as a whole [2:11; 4:45-46; 10:15; 11:7-9, 15, 30; 14:2].

Commented [DG8]:

5. Dr. Brown:

Let me get to Romans 11 beginning at verse 25, and let's see what's written there. Romans 11:25, and writing to Gentile believers, "For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own eyes that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

So partial hardening has come upon Israel. What Israel? The Israel that does not believe, that's the Israel that is hard. "And in this way, all Israel will be saved,"

So as the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, this will provoke Israel to envy. The prayers of the Gentiles will work on Israel's behalf, the fulfillment of the prophecy will be sped along in this way, as a result of this, "all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."

Notice this, it is not the Church, it is Jacob, the non-believing Jewish people.

Response:

These arguments were thoroughly discussed and refuted in Document #11. On the usage of "Jacob" see 11:39; 15:5.

6. Dr. Brown:

Now look at this, "Concerning the good news, the gospel, they are hostile," who is 'they'? The non-believing Jews, the Israel that is hardened in part, the Israel that one day will turn, and be saved, "Considering the good news, they are hostile for your sake, but concerning chosen-ness," concerning election, "they are loved on account of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

Paul wrote that, about whom? About Jewish people who do not believe. The gifts and calling are still irrevocable.

Response:

As discussed in several previous documents [1:6; 10:32; 14:2; cf., 18:8], this argument rests on a faulty translation of Romans 11:28. Paul does not say "concerning chosen-ness" but, "concerning the election." "The election" is a term he chose, 22 verses earlier, to describe the faithful remnant, in contrast to the unbelieving Jews. Unless Paul has changed his vocabulary without notice, we should read this verse:

"Concerning the gospel, they [unbelieving Jews] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election, they [i.e., the election, or the remnant—v.7] are beloved for the sake of the fathers."

This translation is an accurate summary of the whole argument of Romans 9 through 11.

7. Dr. Brown:

What happens to a Jewish person who dies without Jesus today? They're lost like anyone else is lost. What happened to a Jewish person, who died a hundred years ago without Jesus? They rejected the Messiah. They're lost like anyone else is lost. It's not going to be retroactive salvation.

Response:

How sad is that for the Jews who happened, through no fault of their own, to be born a generation or more too soon? Had they been born to a later generation, their conversion and salvation would have been assured, according to Dr. Brown's understanding of Romans 11:26. The salvation or damnation of a Jew, then, comes down to an accident of his birth occurring at one or another time.

The Jews of the final "saved" generation, on this view, are said to be "*beloved for the sake of the fathers.*" Didn't the previous "unsaved" generations of the Jews have the same fathers? Why didn't that work for them?

In other words, assuming the last generation of Jews is to be inevitably and irresistibly called to Christ (specifically because they are Jews and have certain ancestors whom God is honoring by saving their children), then how was the situation different for other Jews previously? They had precisely the same ancestry. Would not the fathers have had the same interest in their salvation as well? How is this scenario honoring the fathers?

And where does the idea come from that assigns salvation to a son because he had a righteous father? Doesn't Ezekiel spend at least one chapter (ch.18) arguing that this is not how God deals with people? How can Dr. Brown's view of Romans 11:28 be viewed as either just or scriptural?

Why not, rather, understand Paul's statement in the context of his protracted argument? That is, Paul has been saying that those who have the faith of their fathers (*the remnant, or the election*) have, in all generations, been God's people and specially loved for their faith. Those who are unfaithful are God's enemies—regardless who their fathers may have been. This is the simplest, most biblical, position and consistent with both the whole of Paul's argument and the wording of the verse in question.

8. Dr. Brown:

But Paul is telling us that at the end of the age, as the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, or on the heels of the fullness of the Gentiles coming in, all Israel will be saved. The Israel that has been hardened, which is the majority of the nation, will no longer be hardened. And that's what Jeremiah speaks of in Jeremiah 31:1, God says, at that time, God will be the God of all the families of Israel, & they shall be my people.

Commented [DG9]:

Response:

Neither Jeremiah 31, nor Romans 11, ever refer to the end of the age, nor to any guaranteed future conversion of the Jews as a race (See Document #11).

9. Dr. Brown:

Now some point to Joshua 21 to say, "No, no, no, no, this whole idea that God promised the land to Israel, and he is going to give the Land back, or the Jewish people living in Israel today, that's the fulfillment of prophecy. No, no, no, forget that. Those promises were already fulfilled, and they point to Joshua 21".

Let's take a look at what's written there. Joshua 21, it speaks of how God gave the land to the people of Israel, and how he fulfilled his promises.

So, verse 41, "1 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty-eight cities with their common-lands. 42 Every one of these cities had its common-land surrounding it; thus were all these cities.

43 So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. 44 The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

People say, "You see, it's already passed. God gave them the land, and it has already happened. It's not going to happen in the future. God gave them the land that's promised, and that's done, that's past. You can't say there's anything future about it".

Actually, of course, we can because God didn't promise to give it to them and then take it away. He didn't promise to give it to them, and then if they sinned, take it away forever.

Response:

God certainly did say that He would take the Land from them if they rebelled. Furthermore, He did just that at least twice (586 B.C. and A.D.70). To say God did not tell them their expulsion would be permanent is irrelevant since He also did not predict, with reference to A.D.70, that He would restore it to them. When He expelled them in 586 B.C. God clearly said this was a temporary expulsion and would last only seventy years. However, this was like a warning shot across the bow. The final expulsion occurred in A.D.70 and has continued nearly 2,000 years—with no promise of return anywhere to be found. If the Jews had learned their lesson from the Babylonian exile, they would not have been finally expelled. However, their second expulsion is nowhere said to be temporary.

As for the concept that they own the Land, even when disobedient, we have no such suggestion in any of the promises. In fact, God specifically told them it is not their rightful possession unconditionally. He told them, "*The land is Mine, and you are strangers and sojourners with me*" (Lev.25:23). Sounds like the opposite of a permanent transfer deed. More than that, God said that He had caused the land to vomit out the Canaanites for their wickedness. He threatened that, if Israel were to become similarly wicked, God would cause the land similarly to vomit them out of it (Lev.18:24-28). Is vomit permanently expelled from a body, or is the Land to be seen as a dog that returns to its vomit? The Canaanites and Israelites were both equally vomited out of the Land for their wickedness. The Canaanites were not readmitted into the Land. On what grounds can we expect otherwise for the Israelites? Is God a respecter of persons (Rom.2:6-11; 1 Pet.1:17)?

10. Dr. Brown:

No, what's written in Psalm 105? Psalm 105, this is made as clear as possible. Remember, Romans 9 says that the promises still belong to the people of Israel, even the non-believing people, who have not experienced the blessing of those covenant promises, they still belong to them.

Response:

Actually, those who have read Galatians 3-4 should remember that this is declared not to be the case.

11. Dr. Brown:

And Paul reiterated Romans 11 that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable, right.

So, Psalm 105, let's take a look at what's written there.

"He is Adonai, our God. His judgments are on all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever.

The word he commanded for a thousand generations, which he made with Abraham, and swore to Isaac, and confirmed to Jacob as his decree that Israel is an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you, I give the land of Canaan the portion of your inheritance."

So, notice it's an everlasting covenant. It's for a thousand generations. It's a covenant forever and confirmed, it's a decree, it's an oath that's sworn. God could not have made himself any bit clearer.

Response:

Of course, it was an everlasting conditional covenant. The conditions are stated and reiterated so many times in the Torah that it seems inexcusable that this element would be consistently overlooked and unmentioned by Dr. Brown.

The problem is that Dr. Brown, like the dispensationalists, seems reluctant to allow the inspired apostles to be the authoritative interpreters of scripture. If he were to do so, he would acknowledge that the "land-promise" refers, ultimately, to the inheritance of the whole world by Abraham's Seed (Rom.4:13; Ps.2:8-9), who is Christ (Gal.3:16)—and that Abraham's "children according to the flesh" will not be heirs along with the children of the promise (Gal.4:23, 30-31).

12. Dr. Brown:

- *So, number one, he promised that he would keep his Jewish people no matter what. He would discipline us in judgment, but he would preserve us and keep us. That's number one.*

Response:

Scripture please. None has been provided for this point, and this statement contradicts the bulk of the Old Testament.

13. Dr. Brown:

- *Number two, he said that the land of Israel was our lasting inheritance. Under the Sinai covenant, if we sinned, we'd be exiled from the land. If we repented, we'd be brought back to the land.*

Response:

The Sinaitic covenant did say that if they repented they would be restored to the Land. However, the Sinaitic Covenant no longer exists (Heb.8:13), and the New one makes no such promises. But 97% of the Jews have not repented, yet Dr. Brown thinks they have been brought back to the Land in our times. Therefore, even according to Dr. Brown's statement (above) the immigration of unbelieving Jews to Israel cannot be identified with any biblical promise.

When you forfeit something promised, and the promise is revoked, you cannot later come back and say, "Well, I'm ready to cash in on that promise now." The generation that came out of Egypt were promised they would conquer the giants and inherit the Land of Canaan. Due to their rebellion, God revoked the promise and "replaced" them with the non-rebellious younger generation. After the promise was forfeit to them, the Israelites decided to take the Land after all, but were totally defeated, because God had changed the promise and the plan (Num.13, 14).

Similarly, the Jews lost the Land, and the promise was revoked and superseded by a New Covenant given to their non-rebellious children (the remnant). The old promise no longer is relevant. The rebels cannot now change their mind and say, "You know, God, we have decided to take you up on that covenant promise you gave us through Moses." God's answer would be, "What covenant promise? There is now a New Covenant. You are welcome to join me in that one. The Old one is a thing of the past."

14. Dr. Brown:

But God had given these promises, these unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before that. And Paul reiterates in Galatians 4 that the law which came 430 years after the promise, Galatians the 3rd chapter, that the law which came 430 years after the promise, cannot annul the promise.

Response:

This contradicts scripture. God gave conditions applicable to the Abrahamic promises. They depended on the obedience of Abraham himself to God's command (Gen.12:1) and upon the obedience of his children to do justice and righteousness (18:19). Why does Dr. Brown keep referring to "unconditional promises"? Where are these found? And if they exist, why did God say that that He never makes unconditional promises to any people (Jer.18:7-10)?

15. Dr. Brown:

So, these promises remain.

And that's why God can act whenever he chooses, even when Israel is in sin, even when Israel is in unbelief, even when he uses atheists and communists to help found the modern State of Israel, and a non-religious Jewish man like Theodore Herzl, even when the great majority of Orthodox rabbis opposed the restoration to the land. God can do what he chooses to do because he's sovereign.

Response:

God can do these things. He is sovereign. However, it is not His promises to Israel (as Dr. Brown says) that permit God to do whatever He wishes. That right inheres in Him absolutely, regardless of promises. He is not bound by conditional promises which expired unclaimed.

16. Dr. Brown:

You say, "No, no, no, all those promises apply to the Church". No, Paul is quite emphatic about that, these promises are Israel's promises. The Gentile Christians share in Israel's spiritual benefits so that in Jesus, there's neither Jew nor Gentile just like there's neither male nor female.

In Jesus, we are exactly equal spiritually, Jewish believers, Gentile believers, we're one in the Messiah. We share the same eternal life, we share the same sonship, we share the same Holy Spirit, we share the same eternal promises, we share the same standing, there's no higher or lower, better, or worse, just like male-female. Those divisions are obliterated in terms of a caste system or a class system in Yeshua.

But there are specific promises God gave to Israel, those promises remain. So I don't get worked up when Christians deny that, when Christians say we're the new Israel and the promises are ours, and God no longer works with the Jewish people as a nation, or the modern State of Israel is not a fulfillment of the prophecy. I don't get worked up as if that's going to stop God, or as if his promises won't come to pass.

But I get grieved because I've seen what that's done in Church history. I've seen how that's opened the door to anti-Semitism and even Church persecution of Jews.

Response:

Much of this has been asserted repeatedly in the former documents to which I have responded. I am still especially interested in this claim: "But there are specific promises God gave to Israel, those promises remain." Since neither Jesus, nor any New Testament writer identified any such unfulfilled promises, I remain eager to hear Dr. Brown name a few.

17. Dr. Brown:

And I see today with some ridiculous statements being made by Christian leaders that just bash Israel day and night, how spiritually blinded they are. I could do shows on them all the time, it's just not worth it, it's so erroneous. And so out in my field, but a lot of people believe it, follow it, that's what concerns me.

I want us to provoke Israel to jealousy, not drive the Jewish people away from Jesus by repeating the standard old lies. I want the church to provoke the Jewish people to jealousy so that they turn to Jesus and be saved.

Response:

Of course, Dr. Brown was not speaking of me in the above statements, since he has not previously seen my responses to these documents. However, I am interested in hearing him identify some of the "ridiculous statements," the "bash[ing of] Israel day and night" and the "standard old lies" to which he refers. I wonder if he would regard any of my statement in these documents to fall into any of these categories.

I have written no comments (and seldom do) without giving full scriptural documentation for each point and have invited Dr. Brown to present a more responsible exegesis than mine of the passages I have cited, and I have responded one-by-one to every scripture that he has provided. This strikes me as a particularly non-ridiculous manner of argumentation on my part. Nothing I have asserted is a lie (unless the scriptures I have exegeted may be said to be lies), and nothing I have said either bashes, nor speaks negatively at all, of the modern State of Israel or contemporary Jews.

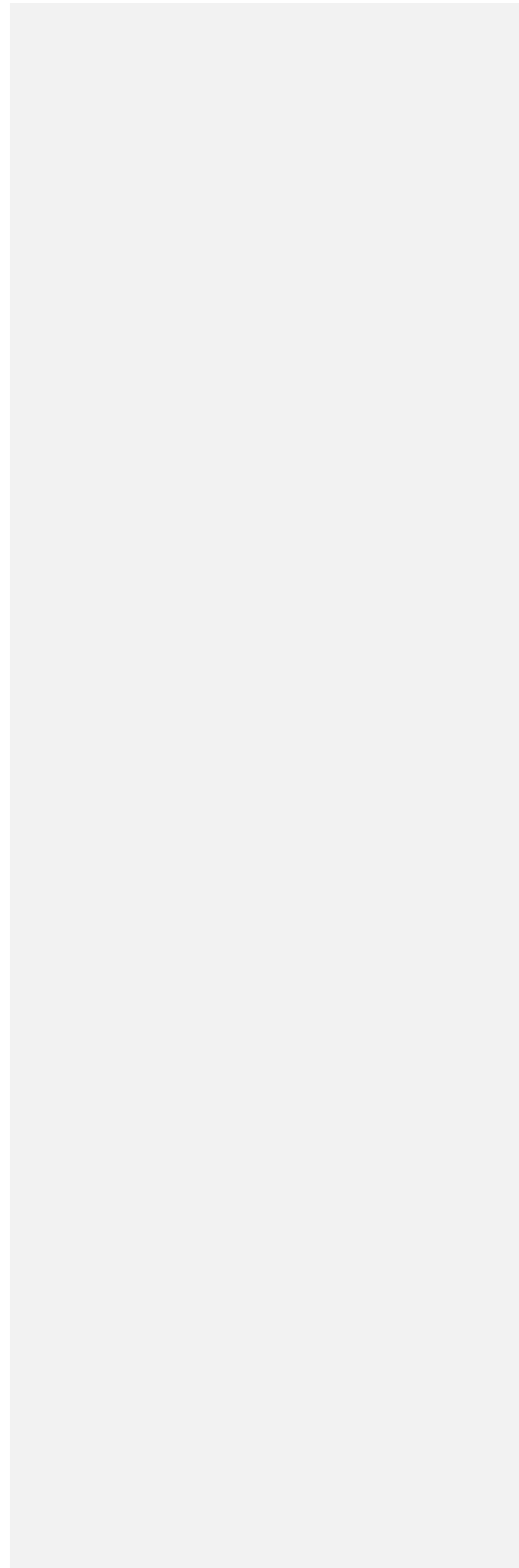
18. Dr. Brown:

And I also want the Church to recognize what God is doing in the earth. He has brought the Jewish people back to the land as he promised. After scattering us, he's brought us back. And just like in Ezekiel 36, he did it even in our unbelief, He acted even in our sin.

Why? For his name's sake, he does what he does, first and foremost, for his glory, and in doing so, it is for the lasting good of his people.

Response:

God bless you, Dr. Brown. I hope someday to have an opportunity of sitting down with you, with Bibles open, and going verse-by-verse over whatever passages you believe to be about the "last days" regathering of Israel, and comparing what is said with what actually exists in Israel and World Jewry today. I do not see how doing so can leave either of us believing that the fulfillment of these passages has occurred, or is occurring, in our time. Shalom.



Document 16
Is God a Zionist?

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Is God a Zionist? Before we can answer the question, we first need to define the term "Zionist." Well, a Zionist is simply someone who believes that the Jewish people should have a homeland, and what is now Israel. That's it.

Response:

Christians are to love all people, Jew and Gentile, just as God does. In the course of deciding what our position shall be on complex geo-political policies requiring consideration of the costs and benefits to various ethnic communities, there are many factors to consider. I personally do not object to the existence of an autonomous Jewish State, so long as its procurement does not involve injustice, violence, or the oppression of other ethnic groups. Even when the Jews were indisputably God's "chosen people," in Old Testament times, God never favored their exploitation of foreigners nor excused their injustice toward others.

To intimidate Christians into agreeing with Zionism, the label "anti-Semite" has often been used to describe any resistance to Zionism. This is obviously disingenuous. The word "anti-Semite" is a term referring to racial animus toward Jews (which no true Christian could justify), whereas "Zionism" is a particular geo-political philosophy which one might readily oppose on moral grounds, without the slightest dislike for Jewish people.

No humane person can fail to pity the Jews who have suffered throughout history in their *diaspora* among hostile Gentile nations. If there were an available piece of property sitting empty, and we were asked to approve of the setting up of a national refuge for the displaced Jewish people, how could anyone object? While I am not a Zionist, I have no objection, in principle, to there being a Jewish State allowing the Jewish people to govern themselves, and to defend themselves against hostile enemies. The question, however, must also take into consideration the prior and present population of the property being considered. Are the present residents amenable to some negotiated transfer of their real estate, or is it simply going to be seized, like Naboth's vineyard, from its current and historic inhabitants?

Until such concerns can be reasonably analyzed, the question of our support or non-support for the Zionist enterprise cannot be responsibly decided for the Christian.

It is vain to appeal to the historic methods of Joshua in conquering the Land in the second millennium B.C. There can be no injustice in carrying out God's orders, as Joshua was doing. However, no such command from God is even pretended to exist in the mind of the modern Jewish State to justify modern Zionism. Dispensational Christians, with their morals beclouded by their eschatological visions, may pretend that such a divine mandate exists—but, since no scripture records such, they must fabricate a mandate out of thin air.

Even if we had clear predictions about the eventual recovery of Jewish control of the Land, this would not tell us that the timing is right—especially if we had to compromise our ethics to approve of it. God told the exodus generation that they would not get the promised land in their own generation, but they sought to take it anyway, ahead of God's timing. God had to humiliate them for their presumption (Num.14:39-45).

2. Dr. Brown:

Based on that definition, we can say that yes, for sure, God is a Zionist. How could I be so confident?

First, the Scriptures makes it perfectly clear that the Land of Israel was to be the lasting homeland of the Jewish people, and when I say perfectly clear, I mean perfectly clear. God Himself promised this, repeating it over and over in scores of different texts, most clearly in Psalm 105.

In fact, in this passage alone, this theme is repeated in so many different ways that it's almost redundant. The Lord was making a point.

The Psalm states, "He is ever mindful of his covenant, the promise he gave for a thousand generations that he made with Abraham, swore to Isaac, and confirmed in a decree for Jacob, for Israel, as an eternal covenant, saying, "To you, I will give the land of Canaan as your allotted heritage.""

Notice the vocabulary used:

- *This is God's covenant,*
- *His eternal covenant, the promise he made, his decree.*
- *This was something he swore and confirmed.*
- *It is eternal for a thousand generations.*

Could he have made himself any clearer?

Response:

During the period following Sinai (1400 B.C.) until the coming of the New Covenant (A.D. 30), the Abrahamic Covenant overlapped and encompassed the Sinaitic Covenant. The latter was made specifically with the nation of Israel, which was created at the time of the exodus. Prior to that, God had promised the Land to the offspring (Seed) of Abraham. According to Paul, the promised Seed of Abraham referred to Christ from the beginning, though He would come through the larger community of Abraham's offspring. From the time of Abraham (2000 B.C.) until Sinai (1400 B.C.), the identity of that community through whom the promise was to be fulfilled had repeatedly been narrowed—first to Isaac, instead of Ishmael; then to Jacob, instead of Esau.

After the exodus, the community that was largely populated by Jacob's descendants (along with a mixed multitude of Gentiles) was allowed to become a distinct nation, with whom the Abrahamic covenant would provisionally be associated. This was brought about through another covenant, a strictly conditional one, that was made with the community rescued from Egypt and who now formed the nation called Israel. The Psalmist says this was an everlasting covenant—and so it was, so long as the conditions for keeping it in force were observed. However, it was strictly conditional (Ex.19:5-6).

This Nation of Israel failed to meet the requirements of the covenant, and was rejected, as God had frequently forewarned would be the case. The Sinaitic Covenant, which created and defined national Israel, was then replaced with what Jeremiah (and Jesus) called "the New Covenant." With the establishment of this New Covenant, the Sinaitic Covenant became obsolete (Heb.8:13). From that point on, the Abrahamic Covenant was associated only with the small remnant of the Jewish race who embraced the true "Seed," Christ (Gal.3:16, 29).

The Psalm cited by Dr. Brown was written during, and stated conditions prevailing in, the period between the making of the Sinaitic Covenant (which provisionally gave Israel the privileges of the Abrahamic Covenant) and the making of the New Covenant (which identifies the covenant promises with Christ).

Every covenant is a separate contract stipulating its own promises and requirements. The New Covenant did not contain any of the ritual Laws of the first covenant, nor the promise of Land, nor

the favored status of any nation. It embraces all nations and peoples equally, and the only stipulation for inclusion in its benefits is loyalty to the King Jesus.

There are not two covenants today—one for Israel including Land promises, and one for the Messiah's people lacking such promises. God relates to His people only by one covenant at a time, just as a woman can have only one valid marriage covenant at a time (Rom.7:1-4).

Galatians makes this indisputable. What could be clearer?

3. Dr. Brown:

It's true that under the law, the Sinai covenant, God said that he would exile his people from their homeland if they sinned and bring them back only if they repented, but this does not annul his promises.

As Paul explained, "What I'm saying is this: the Torah, [the law], which came 430 years later," meaning 430 years after God gave his promise to Abraham, "Does not cancel the covenant previously confirmed by God, so as to make the promise ineffective.

For if the inheritance is based on law, it's no longer based on a promise. But God has graciously given it to Abraham by means of a promise."

Response:

The Sinaitic Covenant did not annul the promises made to Abraham—it only determined whether the nation of Israel would or would not be identified as the "Seed" of Abraham who through whom those promises would be fulfilled. Again, this was conditional. If they would keep the terms of the covenant, Israel would be the recipients of the promised blessings of Abraham (Deut.28:1-14); if they did not keep those terms, they would no longer be the people to whom the promises would apply (Deut.28:15-68).

4. Dr. Brown:

That promise still stands, which means that God is still a Zionist.

Response:

The promise would still stand if the conditions had been observed. They were not, so the promise was revoked, and a new covenant based upon "better promises" (Heb.8:6) has arisen in its place.

5. Dr. Brown:

Second, it's impossible to explain the existence of the Jewish people in their ancient homeland today without divine intervention.

No other nation has been expelled from its homeland for a period of many hundreds of years only to maintain its identity, and then return to its original homeland. Every other nation that has been scattered from its homeland for a period of centuries has ceased to exist as a nation without exception, except for the Jewish people.

And note that the Jewish people survived as a nation despite centuries of terrible suffering, being expelled from country after country, being herded together in ghettos, being reduced to second-class citizenship, sometimes even facing annihilation, most recently under the Nazis.

If the Jewish people live as celebrated, it is because God has preserved them. As a Jew myself, I can say, he has preserved us not because of our faithfulness, but because of his faithfulness, not because of our goodness, but because of his goodness.

And just think the Nazis slaughtered six million Jews, two out of every three Jews in Europe, and yet today, there are more than six million Jews living in Israel. This could not have happened without the hand of God.

Don't take my word for it, this is supported by the Scriptures as well based on simple biblical logic.

Response:

International religious communities often maintain their identities for generations or centuries while living elsewhere than their native countries—especially if their customs or temperaments tend toward isolating them from native populations. The Amish have spent centuries away from their country of origin (Germany) but still live out their unique culture in their new domicile nations.

Possessing common religion and culture tends to solidify bonds and keep people together, perhaps more than does race. People of strong religious identities will often avoid marrying across religious lines more than they avoid marrying cross-racially within their own faith.

Jews identify themselves both racially and religiously, and it may be the combination of both factors that accounts for the Jews remaining a discreet culture in *diaspora*. There are many Jews who do not observe their faith, or who have married *goyim*, but who still identify as Jews—whether by race or culture. The latter often has more to do with Jewish identity than does race, it seems.

It is not clear whether such multi-generational cultural identity really requires special divine intervention to accomplish. Most major religious communities—especially those having a strong ethnic component like Judaism, Islam and Hinduism—have managed to pass along their faith and culture from one generation to another through many centuries even when removed from their countries of origin.

Moreover, even if we could affirm that God has specially preserved the Jewish race through the centuries, it would be a *non-sequitur* to argue that this proves His particular approval of any given political developments in the Middle East. What if God preserved them merely to grant to the descendants of Abraham continuing opportunities for salvation—entirely unrelated to Zionism?

6. Dr. Brown:

You see, according to the Scriptures when God blesses, no one can curse. When he curses, no one can bless. When he opens the door, no one can close it. When he closes a door, no one can open it. When he smites, no one can heal, and when he heals, no one can smite. In the same way, when he gathers, no one can scatter, and when he scatters, no one can gather.

Since the Bible tells us that God scattered the Jewish people in his anger, there's only one possible way they can be back in the land today, God Himself regathered us. To suggest that the Jewish people themselves and the United Nations re-established Israel is to say that God's will was overthrown by human effort. Perish the thought.

Response:

I wish that every time someone said, “According to the Scriptures...” the statement would be accompanied by an identifiable text. Dr. Brown likes to use this argument, which appears in most of the documents in this set. It is based upon the premise that people could not gather what God has

scattered, nor scatter what God gathers. There is no such statement in scripture, so far as I am aware—and no such principle acknowledged (e.g., Matt.23:37).

7. Dr. Brown:

This also explains why there's such extreme hostility towards the State of Israel, why so many radical groups want to wipe out the Jewish state, why the nations of the world want to determine Israel's boundaries, why these same nations refuse to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's country. It's the same pattern that has existed for millennia. The nations of the world are hostile to the purposes of God, in particular, his purposes for Israel.

This doesn't mean that everything Israel does is right, everything the Palestinians do is wrong, and it doesn't mean that lovers of the God of the Bible should not pursue justice for all the Middle Eastern peoples.

It does mean the State of Israel exists today because God decreed it, and that means that God is a Zionist.

Response:

I personally have no hostility toward the State of Israel, and I don't think I know any Christians who do. However, when I think about the facts, I can imagine reasons for some people's hostility which are entirely unrelated to the question of God's decree.

Many hostile Palestinians probably see themselves as freedom fighters against an invasive regime. When the Nazis invaded Poland and confined the Jews in the Warsaw ghettos, some Jews would sneak out at night and run terror raids against the Nazis. We can't say that their hostility to Nazis was connected to any decree of God determining that the Nazis should control Poland. There is probably a much more natural explanation for their resistance. They might simply have seen the Nazis as foreigners who had come in and stripped them and their families of their former homes and freedoms and they hoped to return things to their former, normal state.

I wonder how many Palestinian terrorists see their efforts as those Warsaw Jews saw theirs. I am not saying that terrorist activities are justified, but I am simply thinking of alternative reasons for a hostility that Dr. Brown thinks can only be described in terms of hatred directed toward a divine decree.

When we ask, "Is God a Zionist?" we need to take various factors into consideration, and not answer glibly. It's complicated. Consider the following:

- The land was already occupied before the Jewish migration. Many Europeans were sold on the idea of Zionism by the false claim that it was merely providing of "A land without a people for a people without a land." The Arabs who were born there, and whose ancestors had lived there for 1300 years (and who, naturally, thought of it as their own homeland) might think this a strange characterization of their homeland.
- The transfer was not justly negotiated. The decision was not made by an agreement being reached between the residents and the returning Israelis. It was decreed by a foreign power (the United Nations) residing on another continent.

- In the wake of the returning Jews, Palestinians had their homes and farms seized by force, and were driven out of their territories by war. When the war ended, thousands of Palestinians were not permitted to return to their homes and lands.
- Today there are more Christians among the Palestinians, *per capita*, than there are among the Israelis. Of the Israeli population, less than 2% are Christian. Of those Israeli Christians, more than 75% are ethnic Arabs. Among Palestinian Arabs, between 6% and 7% are Christians. This means, if you meet a Christian man in the land of Israel, there is more than seven times the probability of that person being a Palestinian than of his being a Jew. While Christians are to be concerned for justice to all peoples, whether Christian or not, we are commanded to have special concern for those of the household of God (Gal.6:10).
- Dr. Brown said (above), “God said that he would exile his people from their homeland if they sinned and bring them back only if they repented.” So, why would we say God is bringing them back today? They have not repented. They were driven from the Land, in A.D. 70, because they rejected Christ. They reject Him to this day to the same degree as they did then. Not only have they not come to Christ, but they also are apostate even from the religion of their ancestors—the percentage of atheists among them being triple that found among the world population. They have formed a secular, anti-Christian State. How is this God’s doing?
- If Jews were to justly return to the Land prior to becoming Christians, they might at least be expected to obey the Torah, in terms which the Land was originally promised to them. Yet the nation of Israel is not Torah-observant. The Torah forbade the shedding of innocent blood, the moving of ancient landmarks to seize another’s land, and the oppression of the foreigners among them in the Land. Where, exactly, are we seeing any correlation between scripture and facts on the ground in Israel?
- Even if there remained a promise of God to restore Israel in the “last days,” on what basis can we conclude that we are presently living in that time? We have no knowledge whether Christ is coming tomorrow or two centuries from now. The return of the Jews in the 20th century did not resemble any of the biblical descriptions of how this would happen. If God were restoring a righteous nation, would He not do it in a righteous manner, without oppressing and stealing land from innocent peasants and dirt-farmers? That sounds more like the way Ahab and Jezebel seized Naboth’s vineyard. Elijah decried them for this act of oppression (1 Kings 21). If the reader is unfamiliar with these things, see Appendix (below).

Dr. Brown knows about all these things, which is why he repeatedly makes sure he gives the disclaimer, “This doesn’t mean we approve of everything Israel does.”

But the question he has put on the table is: “Is God a Zionist?” In other words, does God place His stamp of approval on the recent and present circumstances of the Jewish *diaspora*’s seizure and possession of the Land? We should not be too quick to speak for God in cases where He has not placed an endorsement on a given historical project. Should we not judge the matter by the same standards that we would use to judge any other modern secular nation? The Old Testament prophets used the same standard of judgment to judge Israel as was applied to the nations—except there were stricter measures added to the judgment of Israel than to others owing to their having received greater revelation and privilege than others. Messiah also used a similar standard to that of the prophets when judging the Jewish leadership (see Matt.23). Paul said that, in God’s judgment of Israel and other peoples, He will use one standard, because there is no partiality (Rom.2:5-10).

(For more on this, see Appendix immediately below)

Appendix: Facts usually overlooked by Christian Zionists—

“For the entire day of April 9, 1948, Irgun and LEHI soldiers [members of Israeli terrorist bands] carried out the slaughter in a cold and premeditated fashion...The attackers ‘lined men, women and children up against the walls and shot them’...The ruthlessness of the attack on Deir Yassin shocked Jewish and world opinion alike, drove fear and panic into the Arab population, and led to the flight of unarmed civilians from their homes all over the country.”
—Israeli author, Simha Flapan, *“The Birth of Israel.”*

“That Ben-Gurion’s ultimate aim was to evacuate as much of the Arab population as possible from the Jewish state can hardly be doubted, if only from the variety of means he employed to achieve his purpose...most decisively, the destruction of whole villages and the eviction of their inhabitants...even [if] they had not participated in the war and had stayed in Israel hoping to live in peace and equality, as promised in the Declaration of Independence.”
—Israeli author, Simha Flapan, *“The Birth of Israel.”*

“By 1948, the Jew was not only able to defend himself but to commit massive atrocities as well. Indeed, according to the former director of the Israeli army archives, ‘in almost every village occupied by us during the War of Independence, acts were committed which are defined as war crimes, such as murders, massacres, and rapes’...Uri Milstein, the authoritative Israeli military historian of the 1948 war, goes one step further, maintaining that ‘every skirmish ended in a massacre of Arabs.’”
—Norman Finkelstein, *“Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict”*

“Do not move your neighbor’s boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess...Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor’s boundary stone.”
—Moses (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17)

“This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?” Then say to him, “This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood – yes, yours!”
—Elijah (see 1 Kings 21:1-19)

“[After the slaughter at Deir Yassin] A few men were left alive and driven around to other villages to tell the story; then those men were killed too. The result was a panic. That’s why so many Palestinians fled. Entire villages were emptied, which is exactly what the Israelis wanted. They just took over those people’s homes.”
—Brother Andrew [“God’s Smuggler”] and Al Janssen, *Light Force: A Stirring Account of the Church Caught in the Middle East Crossfire* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2004), p.110.

“The winter of 1949, the first winter of exile for more than seven hundred fifty thousand Palestinians, was cold and hard...Families huddled in caves, abandoned huts, or makeshift tents...Many of the starving were only miles away from their own vegetable gardens and orchards in occupied Palestine—the new state of Israel.”
—*“Our Roots Are Still Alive”* by The Peoples Press Palestine Book Project

“In violation of international law, Israel has confiscated over 52 percent of the land in the West Bank and 30 percent of the Gaza Strip for military use or for settlement by Jewish civilians...From 1967 to 1982, Israel’s military government demolished 1,338 Palestinian homes on the West Bank. Over this period, more than 300,000 Palestinians were detained without trial for various periods by Israeli security forces.”
—*“Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation,”* ed. Lockman and Beinun.

Richard Falk, the former UN special rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has called Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories “a crime against humanity.” Falk also has compared Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians to the Nazi treatment of the Jews. Falk has said, “I think the Palestinians stand out

as the most victimised people in the world.”

“Israel has crossed the threshold from ‘the only democracy in the Middle East’ to the only apartheid regime in the Western world.”
—Henry Siegman, Rabbi and director of the U.S./Middle East Project

“If Israel’s reactions to probing along its borders seem out of proportion to the provocations suffered—admittedly a two-eyes-for-an-eye policy of retaliation—the Christian is duty-bound to apply the measuring stick of moral values as he knows them.”

—Paul S. Allen, “*Arab or Israeli*,” *Alliance Witness* 92 (8 May 1957), p. 2.

“Likewise, the state of Israel is not relieved of its obligation to act responsibly in the community of nations even though the secret purpose of God may be brought to fruition through its actions.”

—Dispensationalist, Charles Ryrie, “Perspective on Palestine,” *Christianity Today* 13 (23 May 1969), p. 8

“Elizabeth Elliot, widow of the missionary Jim Elliot, and author of well-known books about the murder of her husband by Auca Indians and their subsequent conversion, had already proved herself one of the great Christians of the twentieth century. In 1967, after the Six Day War, she visited Jerusalem. She had no background knowledge of the Middle East and arrived with a slight bias to the dispensationalist view. However, she examined the situation with an open mind. Her book [*Furnace of the Lord*] has been called impartial and is indeed very fair to the Jews, but it has a slight but very definite inclination to the Arab point of view. Moreover she takes a completely different approach from that of the dispensationalists...Mrs. Elliot had great difficulty in getting the book published because it was considered much too pro-Arab. Apparently no Christian publisher would publish it and she ended up having to get a secular publisher, Doubleday, to publish it... Mrs. Elliot also discovered the Palestine problem, and this discovery evidently turned her sympathies towards the Arab cause...”

—Graham Hoskins, cited by Colin Chapman in *Whose Promised Land?* (pp.163f)

Common Myths and Misunderstandings

1. “A land without a people for a people without a land.”

“Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, [is] rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs and future hopes of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.”

—Lord James Balfour, writing in 1922 (cited by Martin Bunton, *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*) 19-20

“We came to this country which was already populated by Arabs, and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is a Jewish, state here...Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages...There is not a single community in the country that did not have a former Arab population.”

—Israeli leader, Moshe Dayan,¹ quoted in Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi’s *Original Sins*.”

2. “Much of the land was legally purchased by Jews before the establishment of the state of Israel.”

“[The Ottoman Land Code of 1858] required the registration in the name of individual owners of agricultural land, most of which had never previously been registered and which had formerly been treated according to traditional forms of land tenure...The new law meant that for the first time a peasant could be deprived not of title to his land, which he had rarely held before, but rather of the right to live on it, cultivate it and pass it on to his heirs, which had formerly been inalienable...Under the provisions of the 1858 law, communal rights of tenure were often ignored...Instead, members of the upper classes, adept at manipulating or circumventing the legal process, registered large areas of land as theirs...The fellahin [peasants] naturally considered the land to be theirs, and often discovered that they had ceased to be the legal owners only when the land was sold to Jewish settlers by an absentee landlord...Not only was the land

being purchased; its Arab cultivators were being dispossessed and replaced by foreigners who had overt political objectives in Palestine.” —Rashid Khalidi, *“Blaming the Victims,”* ed., Said and Hitchens

“In 1948, at the moment that Israel declared itself a state, it legally owned a little more than 6 percent of the land of Palestine.” —Edward Said, *“The Question of Palestine.”*

3. “Palestine was a barren desert before Israel reclaimed and cultivated it.”

[In Ottoman-controlled Palestine] “Farming in the plains and valleys produced a variety of products hungrily consumed in Europe—wheat, barley, and maize, for 1 example—but the choice export item in Palestine was the juicy, thick-skinned, and easy to transport Jaffa orange.” —Martin Bunton, *The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 6, 9

“The Holy Land, since the Crusader genocide, has been renowned for its olive groves and olive oil industry; and long before Zionist immigration began in 1920, Palestine was known as a citrus exporting country...records show that in 1912-13, the Arabs had exported 1,608,570 cases of oranges to Europe. As regards the hill regions, the country is covered with olive orchards, vineyards and other deciduous fruit trees; while the lands in the South were used for the cultivation of grain, and those in the Jordan Valley for the production of vegetables and fruits. Every inch of fertile soil was used to full capacity.”

—Refaat M. Loubani, “Palestine Before 1947” posted 11/7/01

“We abroad are used to believe the Eretz Yisrael is now almost totally desolate, a desert that is not sowed...But in truth that is not the case. Throughout the country it is difficult to find fields that are not sowed.” (Ahad Ha'Am, a leading European Jewish essayist who visited Palestine in 1891 for three months, in *Righteous Victims*, p. 42)

“I saw things which the Ministry of Tourism would just as soon I hadn't seen: hillsides which for centuries had been cultivated and terraced by Arabs, turned into desert since 1948. The Israelis had neither knowledge nor inclination to preserve the olive trees and I saw hundreds of acres of crumbling terraces, dried vines, dying trees. It would be impossible to cultivate these terraces by machine, and in modern Israel economically unsound to cultivate them in the ancient way.” —Elisabeth Elliott in *“Furnace of the Lord”*

4. “Israel just wants to be left alone; it is the Palestinians who are the aggressors.”

“The Arab League hastily called for its member countries to send regular army troops into Palestine. They were ordered to secure only the sections of Palestine given to the Arabs under the partition plan. But these regular armies were ill equipped and lacked any central command to coordinate their efforts...[Jordan's King Abdullah] promised [the Israelis and the British] that his troops, the Arab Legion, the only real fighting force among the Arab armies, would avoid fighting with Jewish settlements...Yet Western historians record this as the moment when the young state of Israel fought off “the overwhelming hordes” of five Arab countries. In reality, the Israeli offensive against the Palestinians intensified.”

—*“Our Roots Are Still Alive,”* by the Peoples Press Palestine Book Project.

“Before the end of the mandate and, therefore before any possible intervention by Arab states, the Jews, taking advantage of their superior military preparation and organization, had occupied...most of the Arab cities in Palestine before May 15,1948. Tiberias was occupied on April 19,1948, Haifa on April 22, Jaffa on April 28, the Arab quarters in the New City of Jerusalem on April 30, Beisan on May 8, Safad on May 10 and Acre on May 14,1948...In contrast, the Palestine Arabs did not seize any of the territories reserved for the Jewish state under the partition resolution.”

—British author, Henry Cattan, *“Palestine, The Arabs and Israel.”*

"Menahem Begin, the Leader of the Irgun, tells how 'in Jerusalem, as elsewhere, we were the first to pass from the defensive to the offensive...Arabs began to flee in terror...Hagana was carrying out successful attacks on other fronts, while all the Jewish forces proceeded to advance through Haifa like a knife through butter'..The Israelis now allege that the Palestine war began with the entry of the Arab armies into Palestine after 15 May 1948. But that was the second phase of the war; they overlook the massacres, expulsions and disposessions which took place prior to that date and which necessitated Arab states' intervention."

—Sami Hadawi, "*Bitter Harvest*."

"In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."

— Menahem Begin, cited by Noam Chomsky, "*The Fateful Triangle*."

"[in taking farmland in the Golan Heights] We would send a tractor to plow some area...in the demilitarized area, and knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn't shoot, we would tell the tractor to advance further, until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot. And then we would use artillery and later the air force also, and that's how it was...The Syrians, on the fourth day of the war, were not a threat to us."

—Moshe Dayan, quoted in *The New York Times*, May 11, 1997

"The main danger which Israel, as a 'Jewish state', poses to its own people, to other Jews and to its neighbors, is its ideologically motivated pursuit of territorial expansion and the inevitable series of wars resulting from this aim..."

—Israeli professor, Israel Shahak, "*Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of 3000 Years*."

"[Israel] must see the sword as the main, if not the only, instrument with which to keep its morale high and to retain its moral tension. Toward this end it may, no—it must—invent dangers, and to do this it must adopt the method of provocation and- revenge...And above all—let us hope for a new war with the Arab countries, so that we may finally get rid of our troubles and acquire our space."

—Moshe Dayan, quoted in Livia Rokach, "*Israel's Sacred Terrorism*."

5. "Israel's survival and military conquests against hostile Arabs is nothing short of miraculous."

"[In 1948] these regular [Arab] armies were ill equipped and lacked any central command to coordinate their efforts...[Jordan's] troops...[were] the only real fighting force among the Arab armies."

—"Our Roots Are Still Alive"

6. "Modern Israel is a modern democratic nation amid Arab totalitarian monarchies"

"Even if nobody lost their land, the [Zionist] program was unjust in principle because it denied majority political rights... Zionism, in principle, could not allow the natives to exercise their political rights because it would mean the end of the Zionist enterprise."

—Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, "*Original Sins*."

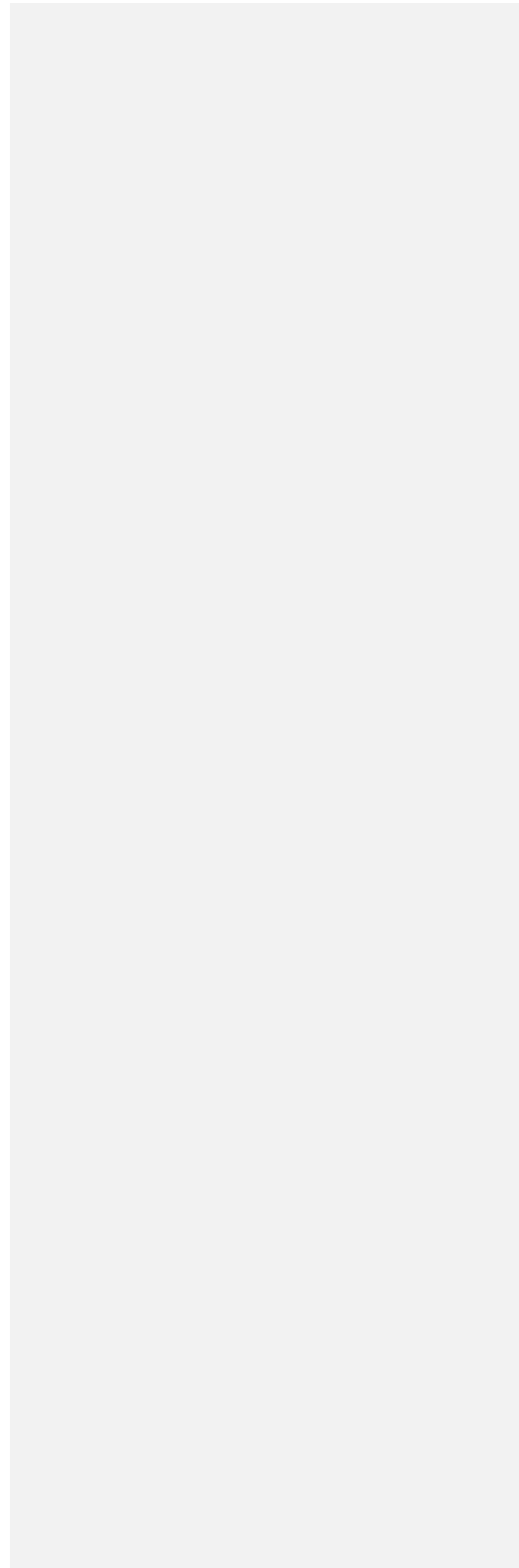
"The abstention from formulating a constitution was no accident. The massive expropriation of lands and other properties from those Arabs who fled the country as a result of the War of Independence and of those who remained but were declared absent, as well as the confiscation of large tracts of land from Arab villages who did not flee, and the laws passed to legalize those acts—all this would have necessarily been declared unconstitutional, null and void, by the Supreme Court, being expressly discriminatory against one part of the citizenry, whereas a democratic constitution obliges the state to treat all of its citizens equally."

—Israeli author, Boas Evron, "*Jewish State or Israeli Nation?*"

"The 1989 Israel High Court decision that any political party advocating full equality between Arab and Jew can be barred from fielding candidates in an election...[means] that the Israeli state is the state of the Jews...not their [the Arabs'] state."

—Professor Norman Finkelstein, "*Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*."

"Israel has crossed the threshold from 'the only democracy in the Middle East' to the only apartheid regime in the Western world."
—Henry Siegman, Rabbi and director of the U.S./Middle East Project



Document 17

How Did the Church Get Cut Off from Its Jewish Roots?

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Did you know that Jesus was a rabbi, not a reverend—that “Christ” wasn’t his last name, but the Greek way of saying “Messiah”? Did you know that Jesus’ original Hebrew name was Yeshua and that his mother’s name was Miriam, not Mary, that his first followers were Jewish men with names like Yohannan, and Yakob, and Yehuda? Did you know that the letter of James was actually the letter of Jacob, and the letter of Jude was actually the letter of Judah?

Did you know that the big controversy in the early church was not whether Jews could follow Yeshua and remain Jewish, but whether Gentiles had to become Jews to follow him? After all, he was the Jewish Messiah.

And did you know that Yeshua didn’t come into the world to establish a new religion called Christianity as much as he came to fulfill what was written in Moses, and the prophets?

Response:

The above points are generally known by all but the most ignorant of Christians. It is not clear how mentioning them becomes an argument for an Israelo-centric consciousness in Christians, when thinking of our Christian identity. To say Jesus did not start a new religion, while true, does not suggest that Christians and Jews now have the same, old, Jewish religion. That Jesus never planned for His movement to become a “religion” is probable, since He never mentioned any such goal. He always described His mission in terms of establishing a “kingdom”—something quite different from a religion.

As Dr. Brown said (above), Jesus came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. In doing so, He established a New Order (not a new religion).

The New Order was foreshadowed in the Torah of the Older Order. Therefore, it had “Jewish roots,” from the standpoint of history and origins. However, those loyal to the Old Order have officially and emphatically rejected the New Order and persist only in opposition to it to this day. In this respect, the Christian reality is not connected to its Jewish roots. It was not the Christians who severed themselves from the Jewish roots, but the Jews who quite vociferously and violently severed themselves from the actual Root of David (Rev.5:5)—the Messiah—who established His movement in spite of their disowning of Him. The Sanhedrin established itself as the official enemy of Christ and His people by killing Him and His early followers. The Jewish people had the choice, either to align themselves behind this anti-Christ authority, or with the Christ Himself. They still have this choice.

The New Order is the Kingdom of God, promised and anticipated by prophets of the Old Order (Mark 1:15). This is also known as the kingdom of David (Mark 11:10). Israel officially rejected David’s Scion, and his Kingdom (John 19:15). Christians embrace both Christ and His Kingdom. In doing so, we are not going back to Jewish roots, but to the God-Man who is the ultimate Root, even of David himself (and, we might add, of Israel). We might more aptly inquire, “How did Israel get cut off from her own Root?” It was and remains their decision.

The primary Stone that was given as the foundation stone of Zion was rejected by the builders. It became the foundation and cornerstone of a new structure, no longer built upon the old one (Psalm 118:22; Matt.21:42). The Foundation and Root of the redeemed community is Christ—not Judaism.

2. Dr. Brown:

How then did we end up with two totally distinct religions Judaism and Christianity? How did we end up with two totally distinct calendars with Judaism celebrating Passover and Christianity celebrating Easter?

The death and resurrection of Jesus took place during the Passover season, which is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians, saying that the Messiah, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, meaning the feast of Passover. And remember these Corinthians were Gentile followers of Jesus.

Response:

Paul is clearly saying that what Christians enjoy are the benefits of Christ, of whom the Passover was a mere type (1 Cor.5:7). Likewise, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (v.8). Yes, these things are spiritual, and celebrate the salvation provided by Christ (Col.2:16-17).

Jewish Passover, by contrast, is merely a national remembrance of a historical marker in their national past. Like our 4th of July. Why would a British Christian celebrate America's Independence Day? The Jews do not celebrate Jesus at Passover—meaning, their Passover has no actual likeness to ours—only a symbolic foreshadowing of it which they do not recognize. Christ is the reality pointed to by these Mosaic rituals, but the Jews in their religion do not come to Him (John 5:39-40)

Why do Christians not celebrate the Jewish calendar? Is there any New Testament basis for doing so? Paul was alarmed when Galatian (Gentile) Christians took an interest in observing the Jewish calendar (Gal.4:10). He saw this as a sign that his labor among them had accomplished nothing.

3. Dr. Brown:

- *Even in 325 A.D, the Emperor Constantine wrote to bishops throughout the Roman Empire, insisting that the celebration of Passover be separated from the celebration of Easter. 'We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jew', he wrote, 'for the Savior has shown us another way'.*
- *But this attitude didn't start with Constantine. Writing around 100 A.D, Ignatius of Antioch declared that it is wrong to talk about Jesus Christ and live like Jews.*
- *About 75 years later, in 177 A.D, Irenaeus declared that Jews are disinherited from the grace of God.*

Response:

On the first two of these points, Christian leaders were simply taking the decision of the Jerusalem Counsel, in Acts 15, to a next logical step. While the Apostles did not command Gentiles to avoid Jewish practices (whether Toranic or Talmudic), they did define the Gentile Christians as completely free from such practices. After A.D.70, and especially, after the Jamnia council in 135, the Jewish religious practices became officially those of an anti-Christ religion, no less than Hinduism, Buddhism, or (later) Islam. In today's religious environment, Christian leaders might reasonably urge converts from such religious communities not to practice Buddhist meditation, or prayers toward Mecca.

Following Jesus is not "Judaism 2.0," but adherence and loyalty to a radically different King, whose royal claims are strongly opposed by all religions (often, including Institutional Christianity). Why should followers of Christ identify with anything in a religion that hates Him?

Dr. Brown's third bullet point seems to complain about Irenaeus' essential paraphrase of Galatians 5:3-4). I am sure that the word "Jew," as conceived by Irenaeus, was not the ethnic Jew who became a follower of Christ, but was referring to the religious Jew, who held to anti-Christ Talmudism.

4. Dr. Brown:

- *Fast-forward to the Middle Ages, where Jews getting baptized into the Catholic Church were sometimes required to renounce any connection to their people, including observing the Sabbath, celebrating the Passover, or giving their children Hebrew names. In other words, they were told they could not live the way the original apostles lived.*

Response:

This may seem a bit extreme, but when one is converted from a heathen religion and culture, to which many may be tempted to return (see the Book of Hebrews concerning that danger), it does not seem excessive, and may be prudent, to require them to break with the practices and culture of that anti-Christian identity. Would we not follow similar recommendations for parallel circumstances in the conversion of witches, Satanists, and other overtly anti-Christian systems of belief and culture? Wouldn't we urge a Mormon converted to Christ to throw away his "magic underwear"?

5. Dr. Brown:

- *In the days of Hitler's Germany, things got so bad that Protestant theologians wrote whole books claiming that Jesus wasn't Jewish. They even produced a New Testament that removed all traces of Jewishness, including removing verses like John 4:22, where Jesus said that salvation is from the Jews.*

Response:

Hitler did not exactly follow the path of the Apostolic Fathers in his life or policies. Bringing him up in this connection seems disingenuous. German Christians, on the other hand, who allowed themselves to be allured into compromise, are another matter. However, even they—the ones who denied that Jesus was Jewish—have no affinity in this regard with any modern evangelicals—including those who are totally uninterested in "Jewish Roots." They thus become equally irrelevant to this particular discussion.

6. Dr. Brown:

- *To this day, there are Christians who will give new Jewish believers in Jesus a ham sandwich as a test of their faith. Eat some pork to prove you're really saved. How in the world did this happen?*

Response:

Did it? I have never heard of such a thing in my 50 years ministering in supersessionist circles. I suspect the stories are apocryphal. If they are not, they have nothing to do with the balanced Christian position. Anyone who really did such things would probably be Skin-Heads or Nazis. Of course, Dr. Brown often blurs the line in his rhetoric between these extremists and regular Christians who hold to the classic theological paradigm. There are wackos and cranks in every large theological camp. I have never met any such as Dr. Brown describes in any camp with which I am familiar.

7. Dr. Brown:

To this day, we read the New Testament through a Christian eyes filter thinking that Saul of Tarsus had a vision of Jesus and converted to Christianity, becoming Paul the Apostle. In reality, there was no such thing as Christianity at the time Paul became a follower of Jesus.

Response:

Reading through Christian eyes? Is there some better type of eyes through which we should read the New Testament?

It is true that there was no such thing as a religion called “Christianity,” but that did not prevent Paul from becoming a Christian, which was a term coined in his home church at Antioch and used to describe disciples of Jesus (Acts 11:26). I don’t like the term “Christianity,” only because it has come to refer to a religious system whose constituents are often not true members of the Body of Christ. However, the word “Christian,” meaning a disciple of Jesus, is a perfectly legitimate biblical word (1 Pet.4:16).

8. Dr. Brown:

And Paul would have had two names from birth as a Jew born in a Greek city. So his Hebrew name was Shaol, Saul, his Greek name Paulus, Paul. And even after he became a follower of Jesus, he was still known as Saul, and he was still a Jew. But when he began his mission to the Gentile world, he became known by the Greek name Paul. It’s that simple.

Response:

Which means that even he, a Jew, distanced himself from his “Jewish roots,” by favoring his “Gentile” name. He told the Philippians that he had come to regard his Jewish roots as “dung” (Phil.3:1-8).

9. Dr. Brown:

Ironically, it was Paul who warned Gentile believers in Rome not to reject the Jewish roots of their faith as he wrote in Romans 11, “remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.”

Response:

I’m pretty sure that Paul did not regard the “root” of the olive tree to be Jewish customs and culture—or even the Jewish race or religion. If he was thinking of race, then he could not speak of unbelieving Jews as being broken off from that root (since they would still be of the Jewish race in such a case). Those described as “broken off” were not abandoning their “Jewish roots”! They were remaining loyal to their Jewishness and rejecting their Abrahamic Root (John 8:39; Gal.3:7).

The “root” of the tree was almost certainly Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant. Every Christian should have no problem identifying with our roots in the Abrahamic Covenant—though this is not the same as “Jewish” roots since Abraham was not a Jew but a Semite of Babylonian extraction. There were no Jews in Abraham’s day (nor for several generations thereafter), so the Abrahamic Covenant was not specifically made with the “Jews,” but with all those having the faith of Abraham (Gal.3:7, 9).

10. Dr. Brown:

How then did the Church get cut off from its Jewish roots? How did it go from an exclusively Jewish movement to an anti-Jewish movement?

In the first stage, the great majority of Yeshua's followers were Jews, with only a small minority of Gentiles. But over time, as more and more Gentiles came to faith, they became the majority.

And when the National Jewish leadership continued to reject Yeshua as Messiah, the Gentile Church leaders concluded that God had rejected Israel. 'We are the new Israel,' they proclaimed, 'God is finished with the old Israel.'

Response:

This development was seemingly inevitable. The way the Church changed from being an exclusively Jewish movement was, simply, when Gentiles became a part of it. This was not a negative development, but one that all the prophets predicted and which was inherent in the wording of the original promises made to Abraham (Gen.12:3; 18:18; 22:18, etc.; Gal.3:8). Once a great number of Gentiles had received Christ the Church was no longer exclusively Jewish—nor was this a bad thing.

To put this on the “Gentile Church leaders” is misleading. The Church leaders who came up with this were Paul and Barnabas (two Jews), and their vision was confirmed by the Jews Peter and James, along with the rest of the Jewish leaders of the Jewish Church, in Acts 15.

To characterize the attitude of the Church as “God is finished with the Old Israel,” misses the point of their position. God is not finished with “Old Israel,” but only with the old *definition* of Israel. Old Israel was identified by race and religion, whereas Israel today is defined in terms of inclusion in the Messianic Community. There, neither race nor religion play any part in the definition.

With this definition race is irrelevant and no attempt is made by Gentile Christians to distance themselves from the Jewish believers—either those who originally founded the Church nor any Jewish believers since. There is no anti-Jew sentiment at all (if we are defining Jews racially).

On the other hand, if the word “Jew” is referring to those of the Jewish faith (whether ethnic Hebrews or Gentile proselytes), then there is a very legitimate distancing of the Church from them, just as there is from any other anti-Christian faith. While we love all men, regardless of race, we do not (and should not) identify with enemies of Christ. What would such identification be but a yoking of ourselves together with unbelievers—which is strictly forbidden (2 Cor.6:14f)?

As per Galatians 3:28, we do not identify with any ethnic, gender, or economic grouping—nor with any religious community that rejects the King.

11. Dr. Brown:

They failed to remember Paul's words in Romans 11:25 that Israel was only hardened in part, meaning that in every generation there would be a remnant of Jews who would follow Yeshua. And at the end of the age, the Jewish people would turn and in mass to Yeshua, as Paul wrote, and so all Israel will be saved.

Response:

It's not so much that we have “failed to remember” what Paul said there, but that we have failed to follow the unjustifiable interpretations of those who prefer to add new words and concepts to the texts that change Paul's meanings. For example, Paul never says a word about Jews being saved “at

the end of the age.” I think the dispensationalists “failed to remember” that we are not supposed to add to the word of God.

12. Dr. Brown:

As a result, the church quickly forgot its Jewish roots separating itself from the biblical calendar, declaring the Jewish people forever damned, and telling Jews who wanted to follow Jesus, they had to choose between following the Messiah or being Jewish. Talk about turning things upside down.

Response:

Yes, let’s talk about this turning of things upside down.

Since no Christian believes that Jewish believers are damned, Dr. Brown must be referring to the belief that unbelieving Jews are “forever damned.” I wonder if Dr. Brown believes that unbelieving Jews who die in that condition are “damned,” and how long he believes that damnation continues.

Christians like me (I can speak for no others) have indeed abandoned the Jewish calendar—and many of us have not adopted any other festal calendar in its place. Paul made it clear that any such calendar observance is strictly unnecessary for either Jewish or Gentile believers (Rom.14:5), and when Paul learned that Gentile believers were beginning to follow Jewish feasts, he was so grieved over this news as to think that all the benefits of their former conversion had been lost (Gal.4:10).

13. Dr. Brown:

- *Does this mean that Gentile Christians should live like Jews? Absolutely not.*
- *Does that mean that Jewish followers of Jesus are superior? God forbid.*
- *Does it mean that it’s wrong for Gentile followers in Jesus to develop their own traditions? Certainly not.*

Response:

In other words, “Is there any sense in which an awareness of ‘Jewish roots’ should impact our Christian lives?” I agree with Dr. Brown. The answer is “no.”

14. Dr. Brown:

But it does mean that:

- *the Church should honor its Jewish roots,*
- *that the Church should recognize that God is not finished with Israel, and*
- *the Church should not require or expect Jewish believers to live like Gentiles.*

Is this too much to ask?

Response:

Is it too much to ask that we examine these propositions before endorsing them? Let’s look at each of them more closely:

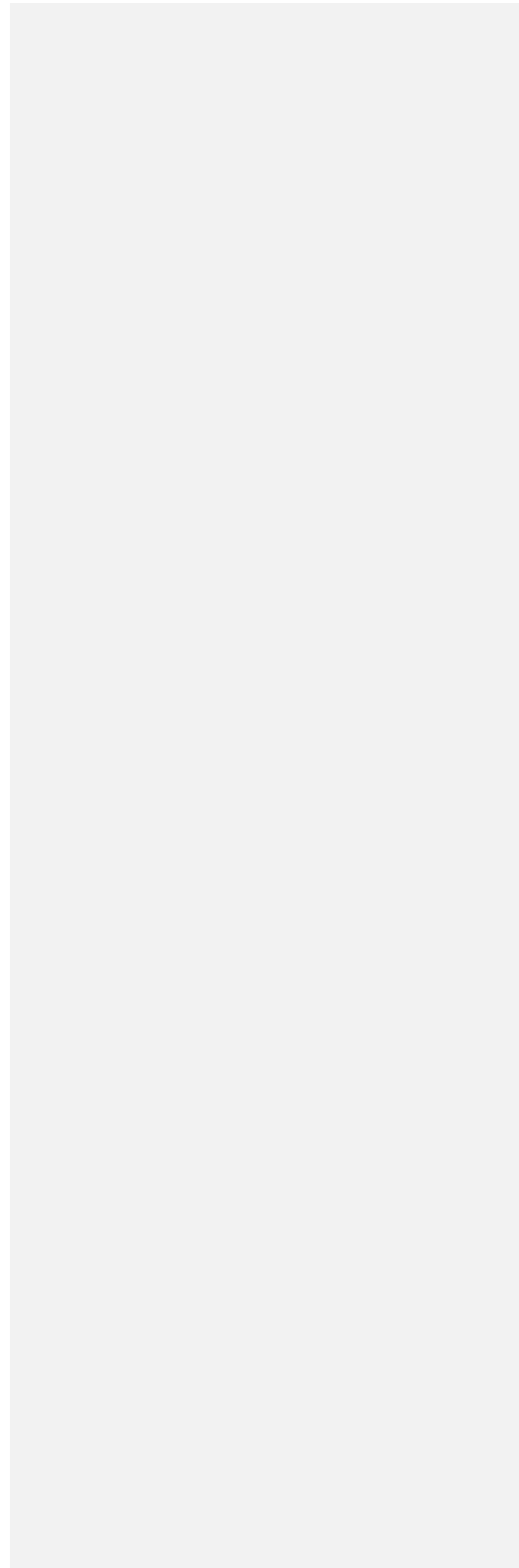
- Practically speaking, what does it mean to “honor” our “Jewish roots”? What are we supposed to do about these? When we are told to honor our parents, or honor the king, there is a specific reference to our behavior toward these divinely instituted authorities. If one wishes to “honor [one’s] Jewish roots,” what does this look like? Putting an Israeli flag on the stage of our churches? Wearing *yarmulkas* and *tzitzit*? Parading Torah scrolls before the congregation? Sounding the

shofar in our gatherings? Where do we find evidence that any early Gentile Churches did such things—or that Paul would even have permitted it?

Does it refer to championing the cause of unbelieving Israel over even the Christians among the Palestinians, and assuming that the former owns the Land which was taken from others against their will? What, exactly, are we talking about? Or are we not talking about anything in particular, but only engaging in a form of merely verbal virtue signaling?

How can we agree to this obligation without any concrete understanding of what it entails? Does it mean simply not being anti-Semitic? But how is this an aspect of appreciating Jewish roots, when simply following Jesus in itself would prevent all forms of racism? This obligation is unclear (and, apparently, without biblical warrant).

- The Church should recognize that God is not finished with Israel—only in terms of the biblical teaching on this. However, any such recognition would not arise from a sense of Jewish our roots, but from our biblical interpretation and a belief in the Jewish roots of the Israelis. If such an obligation exists, it means we are obligated to adopt an eschatological program that has been held by relatively few Christians throughout history and for which no solid exegetical basis has yet been presented. What does God’s future plan for the nation Israel have to do with the “roots” of my life as a follower of Christ? My family has Irish roots, but the future of Ireland has zero impact upon me personally. If Ireland should cease to exist—or should become the dominant superpower in Europe—my Christian life would not be in any way affected.
- I don’t know anyone who has ever required Jews to “live like Gentiles.” Paul described Peter (a Jewish believer) as “liv[ing] in the manner of Gentiles” when he was being authentic and uncompromising in his Christian behavior (Gal.2:14). It was when he departed from doing so that Paul had to rebuke him for his hypocrisy. The Church is a multicultural melting pot embracing all races, and unconcerned about non-moral cultural preferences (Rom.14:1-5). The only time I would see fit to confront or inquire into a believer’s “living like a Jew” would be if I became concerned that that person was in the same danger as those to whom the books of Galatians and Hebrews were written.



Document 18

Excerpted from: "A Loving Challenge to My Palestinian Christian Friends"

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

...to be clear, I'm not here to defend all the actions of the Israeli government, or to defend the behavior of all Israelis, or to whitewash Jewish failings. As a Jewish follower of Jesus, I'm more than aware of my people's shortcomings.

But as I understand, it is Palestinian Christians, you feel forsaken by evangelical Christians in the West, especially in America. In fact you may even feel that they were against you.

To quote Reverend Dr. Isaac, "We are secondary to Christians in America. These Christians do not think or care about us".

As I understand your grievances, you cannot see how evangelical Christians can support a nation that you believe treats you unfairly rather than standing in solidarity with them. You cannot see how evangelical Christians can support a nation that you believe treats you unfairly rather than standing with you. You wonder how fellow Christians can side with non-believing Jews while you were suffering at their hands.

So that's another reason I'm here. I generally want to help you gain the support and solidarity of evangelical Christians in the West, but I can't help you unless you do three things. I'm not making a demand. You have your own lives and consciousness and convictions. I'm saying, I can only help to the extent that you embrace what I'm saying, that's all I'm saying. To the extent you hear what I'm saying, I can help. To the extent you reject what I'm saying, I can't help as much as I'll try, and you'll understand that as I go on.

- 1. Number one, you must openly express your disagreements with the Palestinian Authority in Fata and Hamas, where they exist. Otherwise, the feeling is that you're in harmony with them. If I was here last night and knew nothing about you, I would not have the picture of all of you that you want me to have. I mean everything from the talking about Nakba, and the occupation, and the Palestinian anthem, and the presentations that went forth in the praising of President Mahmoud Abbas, I would not know that you had deep differences with some of the things that have happened over the years, and they're happening to this day.*
- 2. Secondly, abandon any form of replacement theology.*
- 3. Thirdly, genuinely put Jesus at the center of the conflict demonstrated in a heart of love with Israeli people.*

Again, I'm not making demands on you, you have your convictions before God, you have to sort out things in the word, I'm simply saying where I understand the deep differences are. And because of these things, you are not getting the solidarity of evangelical Christians in the West that you so desire.

And these are the same Christians, so you know it, evangelical Christians in America are famous for standing with Israel, not monolithically, but largely. Also, famous for having a heart for persecuted Christians around the world. You think, well, why don't we fit in that category, we're being persecuted

by Israel, that would be your mentality or hurt by Israel, and I'm saying it's because of these three things that the perception is where it is...

Response:

To put this in context, this is a portion of a speech that Dr. Brown gave at an anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian conference called Christ at the Checkpoint, in 2018. This was held in the non-sympathetic setting of Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. It took courage for Dr. Brown to actually show up and critically address this group, which he did with grace and humility. In the wake of his presentation, the conference posted their response, wherein they said, in part:

Dr. Brown's opinions are vastly different from our own and we felt his understanding of the causes and reality of the injustices of our daily life have not been addressed adequately. We even disagree on some of the assessments he has made about the conference, yet we want to prove that dialogues based on the principles of Jesus are the best way to move forward. We want to reflect positively on our time and discussion together:

- We can truly claim that we have found a new friend. We look forward to future discussions and even disagreements.
- We appreciate the honesty, openness, and courage that Dr. Brown displayed during his session. This was particularly evident when he apologized for his interview with Israel Today, although to be honest we were already aware of their lack of journalistic professionalism and integrity.
- We are grateful for the time he invested in the Palestinian Christian young adults.
- The political and theological points that Dr. Brown presented are not new to us, yet we take his criticisms seriously and plan to chew on them for a while. We are not immune to "blind spots" and want to be as self-aware as possible.

We do however have some serious concerns with the rhetoric used before and during the conference. There were strong aspects of this which we perceived as enforcing the ongoing process of dehumanization of the Palestinians (and Palestinian Christians) that is often heard from Christian Zionists. The speech contained a generalization of the Palestinian society, the Arab world and the Muslim global community that we find extremely problematic. This overlooks the history and contemporary diversity that exists amongst the Palestinian people and commitment to nonviolence. (<http://www.comeandsee.com/view.php?sid=1360>)

There is no need for me to respond to most of the speech, though I have been asked to respond to the portion where Dr. Brown spoke of "Replacement Theology." The following citations will include the whole of that portion of his presentation.

2. Dr. Brown:

[Replacement Theology] has an ugly history, undeniably it opened the door to so-called Christian persecution of the Jews throughout history.

So undeniably in history, Replacement Theology, the idea that in some way shape or form, promises that were given to Israel have been transferred over to the Church, and no longer apply to Israel.

And remember the whole message, Isaiah 42, we just heard quoted, the only way that Jesus, Yeshua, is the savior of the world is because he's the Messiah of Israel. If he is not the Messiah of Israel, he is not the Savior of the world. That is a message confirmed through all of Scripture.

So replacement theology opened the door to Christian persecution of the Jews through history, made the Holocaust possible in Europe, and undeniably creates hostility towards Israel today. I run into it probably daily.

Response:

Two things I would observe here:

First, Dr. Brown has been informed numerous times that those who hold to *Supersessionism* find the nickname “Replacement Theology” to be inappropriate because: a) it serves only as a pejorative, not a descriptor, and b) it misrepresents the affirmations actually made by the proponents. To say that “the Church replaces Israel” is to obscure the actual teaching of the viewpoint, and this has been pointed out to Dr. Brown numerous times.

Imagine that I had adopted a habit of referring to Dr. Brown’s view as “*Hebrew Supremism*” or “*anti-Goyism*.” Let’s say Dr. Brown had repeatedly indicated that such labels misrepresent his position, and repeatedly suggested a more accurate label. Suppose that I nonetheless continued, in all discourse with him, to use the offensive term. Would not my doing so cast me in the light of a provocateur?

Dr. Brown frequently admits that supersessionists have suggested a variety of more accurate labels for their view, the use of which would remove much of the gratuitous offense incurred by the use of the wrong terminology. It seems that his continued use of a term of which no one holding the view approves can be interpreted only as a deliberate attempt to offend or provoke his opponents. I wonder when Dr. Brown, in the context of this debate, will begin to show basic respect for those who hold to the view which has the dignity of having been that held by most Christians over the past 2,000 years.

Second, Dr. Brown continually tells us that “Replacement Theology” has opened the door to racism, anti-Semitism, the holocaust, and pogroms throughout history. In other words, by denying that Jews bear the special status of God’s favorite race, one somehow unleashes exceptional prejudice and hatred against them. This makes as much sense as saying the historic mistreatment of Africans, Uighurs, and Kurds has nothing to do with sinful tribalistic attitudes in their persecutors, but is the specific result of a theology that fails to identify these races as God’s uniquely chosen people.

It is possible to identify many Jew-haters in history—some of whom may also have held to *Supersessionism*, Islam, White Supremism, economic jealousy, or simply irrational prejudice—but to attribute their hatred to a specific interpretation of scripture is disingenuous. This is especially so when *Supersessionism* is almost the only religious position that would remove any excuse for any race’s disparaging of another. *Supersessionism* declares all races equal in God’s sight and disrespects no race or nation in particular. How can such a belief be linked to anti-Semitism or any form of racism.

By contrast, Dr. Brown’s view that the Jewish race enjoys a unique racial status over all others “*for the sake of their fathers*” might well be seen as a doctrine that could logically lead to racism—since it essentially fits the actual definition of that word. What if we were to allege that dispensational Zionism opens the door to Christians turning a blind eye to Israel’s operating as an apartheid state? Could we make a better case for connecting this belief with these results than Dr. Brown can make for connecting the historic Christian theology with outbreaks of anti-Semitism? Let any rational reader judge.

3. Dr. Brown:

Unfortunately, as a friend I have to say that many who come to this conference leave embittered towards Israel. I will find this as a common root when I talk to people who are hostile to Israel in an angry way and look at Israel as demonic in some way. When I find out where it goes back to, it was this conference, and I don't believe that's your heart or intent.

So it grieves me to see participants of the conference returning home with outright hostility towards Israel, produced in part by this dangerous theology. You can call it "Fulfillment Theology" or "Inclusion Theology," but in the end, the results are the same: 'There are no national promises remaining for Israel, and God has not brought the Jewish people back to the land'. This is Replacement Theology, plain and simple.

Response:

Dr. Brown might do well to consider that those who leave the CAC conference and find themselves embittered toward Israel have not become so due to any particular theology but due to the information they receive about modern Israeli-Palestinian relations. It may be that their adopting Dr. Brown's theology, which seems to give Israel a divine mandate to take Palestinian homes from their former occupants without warrant, would help to whitewash the injustices but is this what Dr. Brown is recommending?

Is he suggesting that a theology that counts all races as equal before God releases Christian observers to objectively judge the justice or injustice of individual acts of Israel, as well as all other nations? If so, then how is this a bad thing? If the only way that criticism of Israel can be averted is to adopt a theology giving *carte blanche* to the Jewish Israelis then that theology seems *de facto* to be at odds with the interests of impartial justice.

Ironically, the Hebrew Prophets and Jesus Himself were not slow to criticize Israel for their unjust actions toward the stranger, the poor and the oppressed. I hardly think that Dr. Brown would include the Prophets and Jesus among those who "open the door to anti-Semitism."

Is it true that the only way to avoid the blight of anti-Semitism is to avoid a theology that sees Jews and Gentiles as equals? I would request that Dr. Brown rethink the implications of his assertions before he makes himself seem irrational in the constant repetition of this nonsensical talking point.

4. Dr. Brown:

And to tell a Jewish refugee, fleeing from anti-Semitism that Jesus is the land, it's like telling a hungry person that Jesus is the bread. This is one big difference, while both are in practical responses that ignore real issues, the New Testament does teach that Jesus is the bread of life. It does not teach anywhere that Jesus is the land of Israel.

Here's what the theology that Jesus is the land sounds like to a Jew, it sounds like me telling you as Palestinian Christians, 'why so concerned about your living conditions, you are seated in heavenly places'? Both have a misuse and misunderstanding of Scripture.

Response:

I am not familiar with those who say, "Jesus is the Land," though such a statement might conceivably arise within the ranks of *supersessionists*. I can even see how, in a sense, it is a true statement since the Land was the inheritance of God's people in Old Testament times whereas Christ is our inheritance as Christians.

But the comparison to bread is strange. All people need bread and to deny available bread to one who is starving is indeed callous. If there is no bread available except what can be gotten by theft, we might comfort the dying Christian that he is going to a greater reward where Christ will be the full satisfaction of all unfulfilled earthly desires. However, the best-case scenario would be to provide the hungry with physical bread, and with Christ too!

But land is not bread. People cannot live without bread, but they can live (as I did for many years) without owning any land. What has Zionism to do with Jewish “refugees” today? Probably relatively few who are coming to Israel are fleeing current dangers abroad. For those who are, other options have always existed—America being one alternative which has attracted many. As the availability of bread affects our ability to feed the hungry, so the availability of a vacant land affects our ability to house refugees.

To say that the desire of refugees to own *somebody else’s* land suddenly creates a moral obligation for Christians to approve of their seizure of the same when other lands might be more available simply makes no sense. How would this differ from some misguided politician having pity on the homeless, and deciding to give them your house?

The position of non-Zionist Christians is that land should be obtained, if at all, justly. To have a third-party (like the United Nations) take land from others on your behalf does not make it a legitimate transaction, any more than Naboth’s vineyard, taken from him (along with his life) by force by a pagan queen’s treachery renders the land legitimately Ahab’s.

“Replacement Theology” has nothing to do with one’s thinking about the Palestinian Question—since there is no theology anywhere that says that Palestinians have “replaced” Jews as having divine rights to the Levant. The rights of Palestinians are asserted on the same basis as Israel’s rights often are—by dint of centuries of prior occupation. Of course, if centuries of prior habitation, in itself, determined current land ownership, then the land of North America would rightly belong to native American tribes—or a succession of them, going back to the very original occupants from whom it was taken by successive tribal groups. When we consider legitimate title to lands, we start with the most recent owners, and assess whether a just, mutually agreeable, transaction has resulted in transfer of ownership. Such considerations have nothing to do with theology—unless, of course, we adopt a theology that exempts one race from normal ethical standards imposed on all others.

5. Dr. Brown:

And why is it the other nation can have their own land to dwell in, but not the Jewish people despite the tiny overall size of their territory, despite their need for land from which they can defend themselves and despite the many promises in Scripture?

Response:

Since Dr. Brown is said to be critiquing “Replacement Theology,” perhaps we should assume that he does not realize that the viewpoint that he thus characterizes makes no pronouncements bequeathing any piece of land to any people—Jewish, Palestinian, Sioux, Apache, Anglo-Saxon, etc.

6. Dr. Brown:

God’s not a liar. By some accounts, Scripture has at least 170 references to the land that God gave to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God promised the land of Canaan to the people of Israel as an unconditional covenant. Under the law, we’d be punished and exiled for sin, but the Covenant came before that, God can bring us back in his mercy anytime he chooses.

Response:

There is no unconditional promise made to Israel or any other nation (Jer.18:7-10). The conditions for remaining in covenant privilege were communicated to Israel at the time that they came into existence as a nation (Ex.19:5-6; Lev.26; Deut.28).

Dr. Brown may be confusing Abraham with Israel. The latter was a nation created in terms of a completely conditional covenant. Abraham was a man from whom many nations arose, the promises to whom were offered to his descendants only in terms of their obedience to God, and upon their just and righteous behavior (Gen.18:19).

There have been a remnant of Abraham's offspring (and of Gentiles, as well) who met these conditions, and the final step of obedience qualifying one to be "Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise" was to embrace and belong to Christ. Those who fulfill this requirement will indeed inherit the land, along with the whole planet earth (Rom.4:13; Ps.2:8-9; 72, Matt.5:5; Rev.5:10).

7. Dr. Brown:

Twelve times it is stated that the Covenant was everlasting. This cannot be undone by any New Testament author, nor would any of them think of undoing it. Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets, not to abolish.

Response:

Correct. Jesus came and fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. To claim any "jot or tittle" of the Tanakh has remained unfulfilled is to claim Christ's failure to do what He came to do (contra. John 17:4).

8. Dr. Brown:

And it's ludicrous to argue that the Jewish Messiah nullified God's promises to the Jewish people, the Messiah confirms, not cancels.

- *Romans 15:8-9 Paul makes clear the Messiah came to confirm God's promises to the patriarchs, not cancel them.*
- *He made it clear in Galatians 3:17 and 18 that the law which comes 430 years after the promises, can't annul those promises. God still blesses those who bless Israel. It still holds true.*
- *And Numbers 24:8-9 applies it to the whole nation, even in sin and disobedience with all its imperfections and blemishes.*
- *Paul is emphatic about this, in Romans 9:4, "They, the Israelites, speaking of unbelieving Jews to them belong," present tense, "the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple services, and the promises."*

Regarding the gospel, Paul writes there, "Enemies for your advantage, but regarding election, they are loved because of the patriarchs since God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable."

Response:

The points listed here have been addressed at length in my responses to the same assertions in previous documents in this series (see, especially, #11).

The main flaw in this part of the argument is the suggestion that the New Covenant cannot supersede the Old Covenant. Promises made to Israel were given at Sinai when national Israel first came into existence. With the passing of this covenant we can reasonably speak of both its stipulations and its privileges as having passed or been annulled. The New Covenant is based upon “*better promises*” (Heb.8:6). If my son defaulted on a conditional privilege I had offered him, which included the promise of an old Volkswagen, but I then offered him a new opportunity which included the promise of a new Mercedes, would anyone think he had been cheated?

As for the Abrahamic promises, made to his Seed, the Bible emphatically declares that these have been fulfilled (the opposite of “annulled”) in Christ (Gal.3).

9. Dr. Brown:

Then the question of who he gathered? The Jews. When God blesses, no one can curse, when he curses, no one can bless. When he opens the door, no one can shut it. When he shuts the door, no one can open it. Only God regathered his ancient people. God scattered us in his anger, no human being, no nation has the power to undo God's scattering. No, it is God who regathered the Jewish people in our unbelief, just as Ezekiel 36 said, and he had mercy on us.

Response:

Dr. Brown brings up this argument (which he says no one has yet been able to answer) in very many of the previous documents, which I have answered *in situ* [4:16-17; 5:32; 6:14-16; 9:4, 17; 16:6; 19:21]. The main problem is that his conclusion rests upon a vacuous premise. The Bible nowhere states or implies that “*When God blesses, no one can curse, when he curses, no one can bless...God scattered us in his anger, no human being, no nation has the power to undo God's scattering.*”

God may indeed have cursed all who reject Christ (1 Cor.16:22), no one is suggesting that man can reverse that curse—nor that a return of Jews to any particular spot of land somehow reverses that curse. There is no scriptural basis for thinking that people cannot be gathered against His will (Isa.54:15), nor that what He desires to gather cannot remain apart (Isa. 66:4; Matt.23:37).

For the record, Ezekiel 36 makes no mention of unbelieving Jews being gathered or shown mercy. Unbelieving Jews are just like unbelieving Gentiles. There is no partiality (Rom.2:6-10).

10. Dr. Brown:

That's my heartfelt conviction that when you reject this, you're not fighting with Christian Zionists or dispensationalist or Messianic Jews, you're fighting against the sovereign and merciful actions of God.

Response:

Why is the returning of Jews to Palestine viewed as a particularly “merciful” action of God? Many Jews have had every bit as comfortable circumstances—and even more secure—in places like America. What advantage is seen in their relocation to a small and continually endangered location in the Middle East?

Some might say it is His mercy because He intends to use their regathering as a prerequisite to their turning to Christ. However, far more Jews, *per capita*, turn to Christ while living in America than in Israel. Jewish believers in America have a thriving Christian community of which they are a part. When they move to Israel as Christians, they are part of a tiny, largely despised minority there.

Whether considered in material terms, or spiritual, it would seem that the more merciful thing for God to do for the Jews would be to move them to America, not Israel.

11. Dr. Brown:

I see clearly in Scripture that a Jewish controlled Jerusalem will welcome the Messiah back in Matthew 23:37 to 39. I see clearly in Scripture in Zechariah 12 through 14, "And at the end of the age, all nations will come up against a Jewish controlled Jerusalem."

Response:

As a matter of record, Matthew 23 never alludes to a Jewish-controlled Jerusalem. Some think it refers to the conversion of Jews to Christ, but national conversion is not specifically predicted. To say, "You will no longer see me until you do such-and-such" is merely stating a condition for seeing Him, not predicting either their inevitably seeing Him or their meeting the condition. While one may read such things into the text which are not actually there, it is a dangerous thing to form an entire theology around texts of scripture that require such *eisegetical* procedures.

The same can be seen in Dr. Brown's insertion of "at the end" in Zechariah 12 through 14. I have dealt with this section in previous documents of this series [2:8; 4:25-26]. Suffice it to say that the inspired writers of the New Testament cited or directly alluded to this section of Zechariah at least half a dozen times. In every case, they identified the fulfillment as occurring in the first century—never "*at the end of the age.*"

Document 19

Will There Be a Third Temple?

1. Dr. Michael Brown:

Will the third temple be rebuilt before Jesus returns? Is this something we should even worry about? Does the New Testament tell us there will be a temple rebuilt before the Messiah returns? Do the Old Testament Scriptures point in that direction? Or perhaps, there will be a third temple built, but it will be after the Messiah returns when Yeshua rules and reigns out of Jerusalem, and that's when the temple will be rebuilt. Or perhaps, that's when there'll be a fourth temple with the third temple being destroyed in an end-time war.

Here's what I would say is central, whether or not a third temple is built before Jesus returns is not central to our faith. Even the question of a millennial temple, a temple being built during the thousand-year reign of the Messiah on the earth, that many of us expect as premillennialists that the Messiah is coming prior to, before the Millennial Kingdom.

Well, even that is not something central to our faith. What is central to our faith is that the one true God sent his Son into the world as the Messiah to die for our sins, and to rise from the dead. And that atonement for sin, forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God as found exclusively in the Messiah's shed blood, and that is central, that is crucial.

I also say it is central to our faith that he will return to this earth, that there will still be a future second coming at which point, we God's people, will receive resurrected bodies, and go on living in a perfect world with the Messiah forever and ever and ever, that's central.

Response:

My view is that scripture nowhere mentions a third temple. The first, of course, was that built by Solomon a thousand years before Christ. Solomon's temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. but a second temple was built after the exile under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, in 520 B.C. This temple was destroyed by Rome in A.D.70. No third temple is mentioned in scripture.

I find myself in agreement with Dr. Brown that the building of a third temple prior to the return of Christ is not central to our faith. In fact, it is not relevant in any way to our faith since any temple built in Jerusalem will have the purpose of restoring animal sacrifices. It will have nothing to do with Christianity but with Judaism—a religion that hates and blasphemes Christ, even more than do most other non-Christian religions.

On the other hand, such a temple would have one thing to do with our faith as Christians. It would be a major middle finger being given to our belief that the death of Jesus was the atoning sacrifice that brought an end to all other sacrifices of Judaism. Christians believe that God allowed the second temple to be destroyed by the Romans in A.D.70 as an indicator that such a temple was of no value now that Christ had replaced the entire sacrificial system of Israel. The rebuilding of a temple, if it were to occur, would be the Jews' way of saying to God, "We do not accept your decision about this. Christ is no atonement of ours. We shall resume doing things our own way."

The alternative idea of a temple in the millennium has two basic problems—one exegetical, and one theological. The exegetical problem is that there is no clear teaching of scripture that a millennium will occur after the return of Christ, and if one is seen to be predicted in Revelation 20, there is at the very least no basis there for believing in a future temple, since none is mentioned.

The theological difficulty with a millennial temple is that God would not approve of it since Christ did away with the sacrificial system once for all (Heb.10:10). It seems inconceivable that when Jesus returns He would restore the shadows which He did away with once and for all at His first coming.

2. Dr. Brown:

Within Israel itself, as I've mentioned, many times, this is not something of major focus for your average Israeli. In other words, there is far more talk about this, and speculation about this in evangelical Christian circles in America than there is for your average Israeli in Israel, so that should tell you something.

Among the very religious Jews, there is a small group among them, who believe that they should work together to rebuild the temple, and this is part of the preparation for the revealing of the Messiah. The vast majority believe it as the Messiah himself who will build the temple, not meaning every single piece of stone, but that he will direct the building of the temple, that he will initiate it, and that this is one of the signs that he is in fact the Messiah.

Response:

It is not surprising that the rebuilding of the temple is a non-starter in Israel, since less than 20% of the population are religious Jews—the only people who would find such a temple meaningful. If there were to be a future conversion of the Jews *en masse* to Christ, no one there would care about the temple. On the other hand, if the Jewish masses should convert to historic Judaism, the temple would be a central concern for them. However, the likelihood of the Jews all converting to Judaism does not strike me as very great, and it is not the kind of thing that would be in God's interests to bring about.

3. Dr. Brown:

So first, let's start with the Hebrew Scriptures. Where did traditional Jews get the idea that the Messiah will rebuild the temple? Obviously, since the year 70 A.D., there has not been a temple standing in Jerusalem.

So, with the Jewish people waiting for restoration to come with the Messiah, expecting him to regather the exiles, expecting to lead the nation into Torah obedience, expecting him to fight the wars of the Lord and defeat the enemies of God, expecting him to bring about the rule and reign of God on the earth, part of that would obviously include the rebuilding of the temple.

Response:

Well, if Christianity is true, that won't be happening. This vision could only materialize if the Messiah is going to be someone other than Jesus of Nazareth.

4. Dr. Brown:

Where do they get those ideas?

Well, one clear passage would be Zechariah 6:12 through 15. It's a prophecy about the man called the branch, Tzemach in Hebrew. And the branch is referenced elsewhere in the Book of Jeremiah. For example, chapter 23:5 and 6, and then chapter 33:13 to 16, and Tzemach there, is associated with the son of David, who will rule and reign at a time of peace and safety for Israel.

In other words, Tzemach branch is a name for the Messiah. He's referenced as well in Zechariah 3, but in Zechariah 6, he is spoken of, and one of the things it says of him is that he will build the temple of the Lord.

Now is it possible, it was meant in a metaphorical way that he will build the spiritual temple, that he will bring those who were near and those who were far because they're mentioned in that text as well, those others from afar, that he will bring together a spiritual people and build a spiritual temple?

It's possible, but it's unlikely, especially given the context, where at that time, Zerubbabel was involved, he was a son of David himself, and the governor of Judah that he was involved in rebuilding the second temple.

There are some rabbinic commentaries that suggest that the branch referred to Zerubbabel, but clearly, it is not fulfilled in his lifetime. The things that were prophesied that the branch would do in delivering Judah and Israel from trouble and establishing the reign of God on the earth.

Well, obviously that did not happen in the reign of Zerubbabel, but it does mention him building the temple of the Lord. This branch, this Messiah will build the temple of the Lord.

Response:

Dr. Brown thinks it unlikely that the Messiah is here predicted to build a spiritual temple, rather than a physical one. Yet *our* Messiah specifically is said to be building a spiritual temple, which is His Body. He said He would raise His physical body as a temple, referring to His resurrection (John 2:19-21). However, the raising of His individual human temple/body was simply the first step to His ascending to heaven, pouring out His Spirit upon His followers and incorporating them into His corporate body—which, is (as was His individual body) *“the temple of God”* (1 Cor.3:16; 2 Cor.6:16; Eph.2:20-22; 1 Tim.3:15; Heb.3:6; 1 Pet.3:15). Since this is exactly what took place, why would Dr. Brown see this as an unlikely interpretation of the prophecy?

We are assured that God does not live in man-made buildings (Isa.66:1-2; Acts:7:48) but rather in His people (John 14:23).

5. Dr. Brown:

Now there are other things in that passage very important that indicate that the branch, the Messiah will be a priestly King, and the Messiah as priestly King we know makes atonement for our sins, that's a major takeaway from that passage.

It is Joshua, also called Yeshua, the high priest who is typified or is the type of the branch. Here is the high priest sitting on a throne wearing a crown, and he is a type, a symbol of this man called the branch.

But we won't focus on that so much right now, except that the branch, the future Messiah, will build the temple of the Lord. We also look, for example, at the end of Zechariah in the 14th chapter that speaks of all the nations coming to worship God in Jerusalem after the final battle, where Israel's enemies are defeated.

And at the end of chapter 14, it specifically mentions sacrifices and sacrifices being brought. So it's telling us there will be a temple where sacrifices are being offered in a future temple during the Millennial Kingdom in Israel, where God rules and reigns over the entire earth.

Response:

Dr. Brown and I disagree about Zechariah 12-14. He thinks the end times and the millennium are described there. I am more inclined to go with the New Testament writers who frequently quote from this last section of Zechariah and invariably apply it to first century fulfillment. Since no New

Testament writer gives the slightest support to the notion that these chapters are about the end times, it seems best to go the apostolic route in our interpretation.

The destruction of Jerusalem described in the opening verses of chapter 14 would then be predicting what actually happened shortly after the Messiah was betrayed (ch.11), was abandoned by His disciples (13:7), and was crucified, opening a fount of cleansing for the remnant of Israel (13:1), and pouring His Spirit upon them (12:10). In other words, 14:1ff describe A.D.70. Otherwise, we have to assume that Zechariah, who had encouraged and witnessed the building of the second temple, reveals nothing of the incredibly significant destruction of that temple (A.D.70), and focuses upon the destruction of another temple whose existence has never been mentioned previously or since.

The temple where (spiritual) sacrifices are offered, at the end of chapter 14, is the spiritual temple which replaced the physical one. The language in this part of Zechariah is all apocalyptic. Ignoring this fact leads to hopeless confusion.

6. Dr. Brown:

Also, if Ezekiel 40 to 48 are taken as being messianic, if we understand that this is a prophecy of what will happen when the Messiah rules and reigns on the earth, although it doesn't specifically mention the Messiah in that context. If we understand that this is part of the messianic era, that is telling us that there will be a future temple.

Response:

The idea that Ezekiel is describing a millennial temple (that is, one that Jesus will build when He returns) is riddled with overwhelming theological difficulties such as accompany any Christian theory of a future temple approved by God. That the Jews might build a temple before Jesus returns is not impossible, but it would be an act of blatant defiance against Christ, and nothing for Christians to celebrate.

7. Dr. Brown:

You might say, well, how does that jibe with the idea that the Messiah is the final sacrifice, that in him the meaning of the sacrificial system is summed up? That's a very important question, that's a question that counter missionaries often bring to argue that our position about the Messiah is wrong, and it's a question that we'll get to in a little while.

Response:

That is one of the several problems with the idea of a millennial temple and those who read Ezekiel 40-48 that way have more than that to worry about, as we shall point out.

8. Dr. Brown:

But these Old Testament texts seem to point to building of the temple by the Messiah in the Millennial Kingdom.

If so, that is separate from the question of whether there will be a third temple before the Messiah returns. In other words, none of these texts address the question of what happens before Jesus, Yeshua, returns to earth. They only speak of what will happen in the Millennial Kingdom, the time when God rules and reigns over the earth through his Messiah in Jerusalem. The time spoken of in passages like Isaiah 2:1 through 4, or the whole of Isaiah 11.

So, where do we get the idea that there will be a third temple before the Messiah returns?

This is now where we have to go to the New Testament text because the New Testament texts are going to address that perhaps in more detail than the Old Testament texts do.

Response:

The New Testament, as we shall see, knows of only two temples: The one that was doomed to be destroyed in A.D.70 and the spiritual temple of God which is the community of Messiah, not built with human hands, but constructed of living stones.

9. Dr. Brown:

Well, we can look, for example, in 2 Thessalonians 2. 2 Thessalonians 2 says this, "Now concerning the coming of our Lord, Jesus the Messiah, and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed either by a spirit or by a spoken word or letter seeming to be from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, elsewhere called the Antichrist, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called God or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?"

So there, Paul is saying emphatically, strongly, clearly that the Messiah will not come until this apostasy, this rebellion occurs, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. And he will set himself up in the temple of God proclaiming himself to be God.

Now is it possible that there it is a metaphorical meaning, that it's speaking of the spiritual temple that he will somehow set himself up in the Church, in the family of God among the believers, and declare himself to be God.

Although the New Testament elsewhere speaks of us being a spiritual temple, the idea that the Antichrist could set himself up in our midst and proclaim himself to be God is an unlikely teaching.

Response:

Paul used the expression "temple of God" three places in his writings. The use in 2 Thessalonians, standing alone (if it *did* stand alone) might be ambiguous. The other two occasions, however, are very clear. He says to the Church in Corinth, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God?" (1 Cor.3:16; 2 Cor.6:16). In agreement with the rest of the New Testament, Paul believed that God does not live in temples made with hands but in His people.

Since most of God's people for many centuries were in the institutional Church, comprised of a spiritually-mixed multitude, it is not the least unlikely that a boastful, self-deifying person or entity might rise to power in their midst. In fact, this historically occurred. The Reformers, and even many Catholics before the Reformation, all had no doubts that Paul's words had come to pass in the early centuries of the Church, with the falling away (beginning, probably, with the influence of Constantine's "conversion") and culminating with the papal chair, which they all agreed was the seat of the Man of Lawlessness, sitting in the temple of God.

Paul never referred to the Jewish temple as the "temple of God"—and Jesus had ceased to acknowledge it as such prior to His crucifixion. Note the contrast between "my Father's house" (John 2:16) and "your house" (Matt.23:38).

There are theoretically three conceivable referents in Paul's "temple," in 2 Thessalonians: 1) the temple then standing in Jerusalem; 2) that which he consistently called the "temple of God" elsewhere—i.e., the Church; and 3) a future temple, about which neither he, nor any New Testament writer, ever exhibited any awareness elsewhere. My money is on #2. Why not approach Paul as exegetes, rather than innovators?

10. Dr. Brown:

And unless we have compelling evidence, we should assume that it was referring to a physical temple because, after all, when Paul wrote those words there was a literal temple of God, the one and only place that was the temple, the dwelling place of God on the earth in a physical sense, there was that temple. And therefore, it would be the most likely natural reading of the text that the Antichrist, this man of lawlessness, the final rebel who will try to draw the whole world in a revolt against God, that he would set himself up in a literal, physical temple, the temple of God.

Response:

Dr. Brown thinks that, unless we have compelling evidence for believing Paul held to Pauline theology, we should assume that he held to a dispensational eschatological scheme, which Paul never affirmed.

I am going to assume that Dr. Brown was only being careless (not heretical) when he wrote: "*there was a literal temple of God, the one and only place that was the temple, the dwelling place of God on the earth in a physical sense.*" That Dr. Brown believes that God was living in the Jewish temple when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (despite the fact that Jesus had dramatically left the temple with the pronouncement, "*Your house is left to you desolate!*") is, I confess, too much for me to fathom. Especially so, when Paul and the rest of the New Testament declare that God now dwells in the temple of His people, and Jesus said He and His Father would make their dwelling place in the disciples who loved and obeyed Him (John 14:23). How could a Christian teacher claim "the one and only...dwelling place of God on the earth in a physical sense" was the temple standing in Jerusalem in Paul's day?

11. Dr. Brown:

Now in the book of Revelation, there are references to a temple, and this is before Jesus has established his kingdom. Now some would argue that it's referring to once He's established his kingdom on the earth. But others would say no, it's referring to a future temple that will be here.

The problem is that the book of Revelation is filled with symbolism. The problem is that it's very, very easy to read the book of Revelation and to come to all kinds of conclusions, for example, that there will be a literal seven-headed beast with ten horns that comes out of a bottomless pit, and that is now worshipped by the world as the Antichrist, is it literally going to be that, or is that symbolic of a man?

So you could argue that Revelation predicts a future literal temple that will be here that's spoken of, and I think there's much to commend that interpretation. However, if you can, you [should] want to base your doctrine outside of the book of Revelation on many essentials of faith, and then coming to Revelation with that as a foundation rather than drawing some doctrine in the midst of symbols, and types that are filling the entire book of Revelation.

Response:

I agree with most everything that Dr. Brown said in this segment.

12. Dr. Brown:

Really, the passage that is the most important passage of all when it comes to the question of will there be a future temple, is Matthew 24. And you say, "No, no, no, that has to do only with the temple in Jerusalem that was destroyed in the year 70. And any other way to read that text is disingenuous, and it's putting other ideas on it."

Well, I beg to differ. I believe the best way to read Matthew 24 along with the parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21 in what's called the Olivet discourse that the best way to read this passage is as something that happened with the destruction of the temple in the year 70 A.D, and something that is still to happen with the Messiah's return at the end of this age.

Let me say this, it would be very similar to other key passages in the Bible from the Old Testament, that indisputably were initially addressed to something in their day, but not only referred to that day, but also to a future time.

Response:

It is commonplace for futurists, after discovering that Jesus was talking about the destruction of the temple in the first century, to speculate whether the Olivet Discourse might have a secondary fulfillment in the end times (Dr. Brown appears to have confidence in this suggestion).

The argument goes: "Many Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in Old Testament events, but also had a fulfillment in New Testament events." This fact is said to justify the entirely gratuitous application of this principle to the Olivet Discourse (and sometimes to the Book of Revelation), seeing an initial fulfillment in A.D.70, but a secondary fulfillment in the end times.

This simple comparison with Old Testament examples is tenuous on several grounds. Consider:

- There is a difference between the idea of "second" fulfillments, on one hand, and partial Vs. complete fulfillment, on the other. For example, Ezekiel 37 describes a two-fold restoration of Judah from the Babylonian exile. The first is the physical return to the land (symbolized by bones assembling into bodies). The second is the pouring out of His Spirit upon them (symbolized by breath coming into the dead bodies and making them alive). The first portion of this prophecy was fulfilled in the return of the exiles, beginning in 538 B.C. The second occurred 570 years later, at Pentecost. In this instance, the return of the exiles is not an initial fulfillment, to be repeated with another return of the same kind in the end of the world. It is a partial fulfillment of a two-part prophecy, whose second phase occurred in New Testament times.
- What some may call "secondary" fulfillments of prophecy may involve little other than "Type" and "antitype." Many Old Testament events and people were "types" of New Testament events or people. Thus, Adam, the Flood, Isaac, the Passover, Feast of unleavened bread, Moses, the Exodus, the rock that yielded water, David, Solomon, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, and Elijah were all identified by New Testament writers as Old Testament types—either of Christ or of other New Testament realities. I believe that there are numerous indications in the New Testament that the return of the exiles, like the Exodus before it, stood among the types of salvation in Christ, in the minds of the apostles [see 7:5-7].
- Even knowing that such types exist, we are not at liberty promiscuously to create typical relationships between a fulfilled event and some imagined future *antitypical* event, never mentioned in scripture. The only *types* in scripture that we can be sure of are those identified as such by biblical writers. All others are speculative and imaginary.

- As far as we know, the Old Testament was the era of *types*, while the New Testament was the era of fulfillment, or of *antitypes*. We have no known and identified case of any New Testament thing being a type of some later thing. The New Testament writers invariably saw their own day as the fulfillment of all types and shadows (Col.2:16-17; Heb.8:5; 9:23-24).
- The *typical* events in the Old Testament do not bear a one-to-one correspondence with the New Testament phenomena foreshadowed by them. Physical events and rituals foreshadow spiritual events and rituals, not repeats of physical ones. There is no compelling evidence in scripture that the destruction of Jerusalem is a *type* of some future physical destruction of the world. It may be, but if so, it is the only known example of an event occurring in the Christian Era that foreshadows or that typifies another physical event, rather than a spiritual phenomenon. When it comes to biblical exposition, we must not make up the hermeneutical rules as we go along.

When it comes to Matthew 24, it seems clear that Matthew has combined two separate discourses (a normal procedure with Matthew) which speak of two separate divine judgments. One is not the type of the other, but they are two prophecies about two respective events (or, alternatively, two phases of one event occurring at different times in history). The first of these (Matt.24:1-34) was to occur in that very generation, resulting in not one stone of the temple remaining atop another (Corresponding to Mark 13 and Luke 21). The other discourse, I believe, was about the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the world (Matt.24:35—ch.25). This discourse was given on an entirely separate occasion, and is elsewhere recorded only in Luke 17:20ff.

Thus, Matthew 24 is a composite of two prophecies about two different events (like the two parts of Ezekiel's dry bones prophecy). The first part (vv.4-34) was fulfilled in the Jewish War of 66-70. The second part (vv.35ff) has yet to be fulfilled when Jesus returns. This is not a case of "double fulfillment" at all. It is a case of *partial fulfillment* of a two-part prophetic passage.

Seen this way, Matthew 24 does not speak entirely about the fall of Jerusalem, but the part that does speak of this is not a type or shadow of similar events in the end. Those also happen to be covered in Matthew 24, but not in the same verses of the chapter.

13. Dr. Brown:

I'll give you an example. Read Ezekiel 36 and 37 and the chapters that follow. There is no question that when Ezekiel was prophesying, the return of the Jewish people from exile, he was prophesying the return of his own people among whom he lived in exile at the end of the Babylonian captivity. That there was a clear time that Jeremiah had prophesied by the inspiration of the spirit that they would be in exile for 70 years, after which, they would return to their land.

The same with a passage like Jeremiah 30 – 33. When it talked about the time of Jacob's trouble that was prophesied by Jeremiah, surely, it was speaking of the destruction of the temple in his day and the exiling of the people. When he spoke of 70 years in captivity, surely, that's what he was speaking of.

Response:

Yes. Quite correct.

14. Dr. Brown:

And yet with the return from exile, read about it in Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 30-33, some of the things prophesied did happen, but other things did not. There was a promised scope of the return, a promised

glory associated with the return, a promised spiritual renewal and revival so that the whole nation would turn to God and serve him with one heart and one soul that didn't happen.

Did tens of thousands of Jews return from exile? Yes, but not all returned.

Was the temple rebuilt in Jerusalem as prophesied? Yes.

Were there great things God did during that time? Yes, but as a fraction of what was described by Isaiah, who spoke of a new creation and the new Exodus by Jeremiah, by Ezekiel. What was prophesied only came to pass in part.

Response:

Yes, “in part”! Ezekiel’s prophecy was partly fulfilled in the return of the exiles. The latter “part” was not fulfilled until the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. As for Jeremiah’s prophecy, the return of exiles from Babylon is there treated as a *type* of the Kingdom salvation through the Messiah that was realized when He established a New Covenant with the remnant of Israel and Judah at the Last Supper.

15. Dr. Brown:

You say, well, were they false prophets? No, because much of what they said came to pass supernaturally, and with divine confirmation. For example, Ezekiel had been struck dumb by the Lord. When the temple fell in Jerusalem, that’s when he was able to speak, the prophesied things came to pass.

Well, certainly, the things he prophesied after that some of them came to pass as well supernaturally. As same with Jeremiah, the 70 years fulfilled, the temple rebuilt, all those things happened just as they prophesied, but much of what they prophesied did not happen.

It’s like they prophesied one to ten, and one to five happened. What does it tell you? That six to ten will also surely happen, that it surely as God did the first part, he would do the second part.

Response:

Exactly, but the “second part” is not a *replay* of the “first part,” but its *sequel*. That second part occurred at Pentecost. It was the spiritual part, which Ezekiel said would follow the regathering. His prophecy was right on the money and fulfilled just as predicted.

Commented [DG10]:

16. Dr. Brown:

You say, yeah, but it sure looked like it was all supposed to happen at once. Yes, that’s often the way prophecy is given. It’s almost like saying the Lord says that you will marry, and you will have three children, and your first child will do this, and your second child will do this, and your third child will become the President of the United States.

And you do get married, and you have child number one, and you have child number two, but 30 years goes by, and then you have child number three, or you have child number one, child number two, and the prophecies on their lives are fulfilled dramatically as promised, and then child number three is 90 years old, and then they become the president.

In other words, what was prophesied happened, but not in the expected timeframe, part happened here, and the rest will happen there.

Response:

The analogy is an apt one. However, it illustrates what I called “partial” fulfillment, or what might be called “progressive” fulfillment—but not “double” fulfillment. After the third child had become

president, nothing in the prophecy provides any grounds for expecting another child of the same couple to become president years later.

17. Dr. Brown:

That's how it is with Matthew 24 and Mark 13 and Luke 21. Many of the things prophesied happened in those days in that generation. The rest will happen with the final generation, which would indicate that there will be a third temple before Jesus, the Messiah returns.

Response:

Wrong reasoning. If the second part of the Olivet Discourse remains to be fulfilled (i.e., the part about Christ's Second Coming), this does not mean there is to be a replay of the first part. Only one destruction of one temple is predicted (Matt.24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6). This was fulfilled. No second temple is mentioned in the discourse. In fact, even the first temple is never mentioned again. After the prediction of the fall of Herod's temple, there is not a peep about any temples in the discourse. How does Dr. Brown see a future temple here?

18. Dr. Brown:

I have never been inside the actual school of the Temple Mount Faithful as they are called, where those of priestly lineage learn how to function as priests in the third temple, and review the various laws, where the priestly garments have been made in anticipation of the building of the temple, where various priestly pieces of equipment, you could say, things that are used in the temple, and the lampstand, where these things have been built. I've never been inside that school. I have seen the replica of the lampstand that's been built. I've read enough about these religious Jews. Now they are a very small minority of religious Jews in Israel.

The vast majority of religious Jews are waiting for the Messiah to be revealed, and one of the ways they will know that he is the Messiah according to the way Moses Maimonides laid this out in the 12th century is one of the things that he will do is rebuild the third temple.

Now when you realize what it would take for that to happen with the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, right on that territory. And bear in mind that the Dome of the Rock was built shortly after the rise of Islam, and it was there then hundreds and hundreds of years by the time of Maimonides.

The only way that the third temple could be rebuilt would take some type of divine backing, it would seem. How else could it happen? How could you build where there was a Muslim shrine and one that in Islamic tradition becomes sacred because it is from Jerusalem that Muhammad allegedly ascended to heaven on his stallion. So how is it going to happen?

Well, this would be one of the signs that this individual would be the Messiah that he does these very things. So, it is interesting from the traditional Jewish perspective.

Response:

Yes, the Jews have many traditions that have no bearing upon Christian theology. If Maimonides had been a Christian, he no doubt would have seen all "third temple" indicators of the prophets (few as they are) as being fulfilled in Christ and His Body, the temple of God.

19. Dr. Brown:

It's also interesting from a New Testament perspective because as I understand Matthew 24 along with Mark 13 and Luke 21, all these passages speak of the destruction of the Second Temple which took

place about 40 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, took place in 70 A.D, and also speak of a future destruction of a future temple.

Response:

As I said above, this statement is half true. Those predictions do find their fulfillment in A.D.70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple there. What is nowhere hinted at anywhere is a third temple or a later destruction of the same.

20. Dr. Brown:

But let's just say this, for centuries it was easy to say this is obviously not going to happen. The Jewish people have been scattered by divine judgment, they're scattered around the world, the temple remains destroyed, it's not going to be rebuilt. God can save individual Jews, but he's clearly not dealing with the Jewish people as a nation anymore. They rejected Moses, they rejected the law, they rejected the prophets, they rejected the Messiah, it's all over for Israel. It was easier to argue that, although there was a mountain of Scripture speaking against that view, but it was easier to argue that before the Jewish people were restored to the land, and out of the ashes of the Holocaust at that. It was easier to argue for that before there was a Jewish controlled Jerusalem.

Response:

Dr. Brown has just mentioned that the presence of the Dome of the Rock is an obstruction that seems to render the third temple an impossibility apart from a divine miracle. In other words, the rebuilding of the temple today is no less impossible (apart from divine intervention) than was the case before 1948. The presence of millions of Jews in the Land (most of whom have no interest in the temple project at all) in no way renders an impossible event more probable. The whole prospect rests upon the question of whether God will make it happen or not.

Yet, it is strange for a Christian to think that God would have an interest in the construction of an anti-Christian shrine in a secular country. There seems no reason to expect this, unless there is unambiguous proof from scripture that this is what He will do. Thus far, no such unambiguous scriptural evidence has been presented.

21. Dr. Brown:

And I just asked you, who did it, who brought the Jewish people back to the land?

If we were scattered under divine judgment, scattered under divine wrath, how then could we be regathered without God doing it? Otherwise, that would mean that we could overthrow a curse by our own will, or that the devil could overthrow a divine curse and divine judgment by his own will. No, that's unscriptural.

So just as God opens doors that no one can shut, and shuts doors that no one can open, and those he blesses cannot be cursed, and those he curses cannot be blessed. So when he scatters a people, no one can regather them, and when he gathers them, no one can scatter them.

The God that scattered Israel is the God who regathered Israel. So, this puts under tremendous scrutiny the idea that more events of prophetic significance will not happen in the land of Israel. Why not?

Response:

We are very aware that Dr. Brown thinks this a compelling argument. However, we have dealt with it previously, and have noted that the premises he repeatedly cites are not scriptural—which would seem to invalidate the argument as a whole.

It is true that the curse God placed upon those who rejected Christ included the loss of their land-lease but there is nothing in that fact that prevents any Jews from later living there, with or without God's blessing. Suppose a man were to tell his son that he had disinherited him for his continual rebellion, crimes, and immoral behavior. This means that he must find a new home and has no inheritance in his childhood homestead. It does not mean that, after the home has been sold and resold to a series of owners, the son may not acquire the property and live there. He still has been disinherited, whether he again lives in his childhood home or not.

22. Dr. Brown:

We go to Matthew 24, where the disciples with Jesus are walking away from the temple, and the disciples just still, it's a stunning place, and just pointing out to him the buildings of the temple.

And he says, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Well, clearly, that happened. Clearly, that's a prophecy of what happened to the second temple, that's indisputable.

Now look at this, verse 3 says this, and this is where it gets critically important. Notice here what the disciples ask Jesus all right. "As he sat down on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Now in their minds, all three of these things were one and the same, right. When will these things be? All right, so when is this going to happen? And obviously, it's a cataclysmic event, this must be the end of the world. What will be the sign of your coming at the end of the age?

I was with a colleague one time, a fine teacher of the word, and he believes that all of this was fulfilled in 70 A.D when the temple was destroyed. That is the coming of the Lord, that is the end of the age.

And I remember when he quoted the verse to me, this is how he said it: "tell us when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age 'of sacrifice'?" No, no, no, no, don't add in, 'of sacrifice' under your breath because it's not in the text, and that's not what they were saying, and nowhere does the term end of the age refer to just the end of animal sacrifices or the age of animal sacrifices.

No, they understood that the return of the Lord, the coming of the Lord signified the end of this age, the end of this world as we know it, that's what they understood, all right.

Response:

I agree with much of the above analysis, including the probability that the disciples, at that time, may well have confused the destruction of the temple with the end of the present world order.

What is a bit more complicated, though, is the addition of the term, "*the end of the age*" to the disciples' question in Matthew, when it forms no part of their question in Mark 13:2 or Luke 21:6. In both of the latter, there were two specific questions—both having to do with Jesus' prediction of the temple's destruction: 1) *When will these things be?* And 2) *What sign* will herald the nearness of these

things (“*these things*,” in both cases, referring to the destruction of the temple in A.D.70—the only event Jesus had mentioned).

Observe that Matthew 24:3 also contains two questions, as is the case in Mark and Luke: 1) “*When...?*” and 2) “*What sign...?*” In Mark and Luke “*What sign...?*” is about the same subject as is the “*When...?*” (viz., “these things,” or the temple’s destruction). But how do we account for the different wording of the second question in Matthew?

There would appear to be only three possibilities, Either:

- A) The idea of a divine judgment being symbolically referred to as the divine “coming” would be familiar, not only to the disciples, but also to anyone familiar with Old Testament prophecy (e.g., Isa.19:1; Mic.1:3; Matt.21:40-41).

“*Your coming and the end of the age*” could be a Hebraic manner of referring to a divine judgment occurring at the end of Second-Temple, Jewish age. Such had been predicted by Jesus as recently as Luke 19:41-44 and Matthew 22:7. On this view, the disciples, being Jewish and employing Jewish idioms, worded their question as Matthew records it, but meant the same thing as the paraphrased version found in Mark and Luke. It seems indisputable that synoptic evangelists sometimes paraphrase Hebraisms for the sake of their Gentile readers. Luke replaced the Hebraic phrase, from Daniel, “*the abomination of desolation*” (Matt.24:15; Mark 13:14), with the phrase “*Jerusalem surrounded by armies*,” apparently for the benefit of Theophilus (Luke 21:20). Likewise, Mark and Luke both replace every instance of Jesus’ use of the Hebraic term “*kingdom of heaven*” with the less confusing equivalent “*kingdom of God*.” or,

- B) Alternatively, Matthew, knowing that he was going to combine two discourses on two different topics—one about A.D.70 (vv.4-34), and one about and the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world (vv.35ff), may have, in anticipation of these two topics, paraphrased the disciples’ question to include an inquiry about both subjects; or
- C) The disciples’ question did include questions about both subjects, but in their minds they had mistakenly joined the two as one event. If so, this does not explain the absence of the latter question in the synoptic parallels, but may explain Matthew’s reason for adding the material from Luke 17, so as to deal with both judgment events as two separate ones—the timing of the first was predicted to be in their generation (v.34), but that of the second was unknown to all but God (vv.35-36).

23. Dr. Brown:

So, they ask him this question of two separate things all in one, when will these things be? In other words, when is the Second Temple going to be destroyed? Right, and assuming it all takes place at the same time, again that limited understanding, right.

This is pre-resurrection still. They still didn't even understand his resurrection yet. So, they have limited understanding about this. When he kept talking about his coming, his coming, his coming, so they thought somehow, he is going to be revealed in power. He is going to do whatever he's talking about, but they had limited understanding of this. And it is fully understandable why they did.

So, he now begins to unpack this, and he begins to warn them, and speak to them directly about the destruction of the temple, and the events that are to come. But in doing this, just like the Old Testament

prophets did time and time again, he speaks of things about to happen in their day and things that also pertain to the future and speaks of it all as if it's all for them.

Response:

Ewell's likening Jesus' prophecies to those of Old Testament prophets has limited validity, since most Old Testament prophecies did not have double fulfillments and the ones that did seem to have been identified for us by New Testament writers. No New Testament writers have ever identified the things in the Olivet Discourse as having more than one fulfillment.

Dr. Brown is correct in saying His disciples at this time did not even understand the resurrection. More than that, they hadn't the slightest inkling of Christ's impending ascension and His subsequent return to earth. I doubt that what we call the "Second Coming" had any place in their thinking (since His intervening absence was not yet grasped) until the announcement of the two angels at the time of the ascension (Acts 1:11).

If I am correct, then their question, "*What will be the sign of your coming?*" would not be about a distant *Parousia* but would probably be using the common terminology of God's "*coming*" as the prophets did—to refer to a temporal divine judgment (*viz.*, upon apostate Jerusalem). It is possible that a second advent of Christ at the end of the world was absent from their conception of the future at that time.

24. Dr. Brown:

Here, tell you what. Read through Ezekiel 42 to 48, something that clearly has not happened yet. The rebuilding of a temple with the glory of the Lord, and the stream of God's flowing out into the world so that it brings healing to the nations, that physical temple in that way to those specifications and with that glory that has never happened, that has never been built.

But if you read it, you'll see that Ezekiel was supposed to show the plans of that temple to his contemporaries in exile so that they would be ashamed. This was God showing what he was going to do and having them reflect about their misery in exile and be ashamed of their sins because of the glory he was going to reveal in the future.

And then, as you read the instructions through these chapters, you'll see that during the various rituals that are being laid out, God says, Ezekiel, and you'll do this, and you'll do this, and you'll do that.

If I was Ezekiel, I would have thought, damn good, yeah, exactly, that I'm going to live to see the end of the exile, and I'm going to be part of the rebuilding of that temple, and as a priest, I'm going to be working there side-by-side with the high priest in this new temple. That's not what happened though.

And traditional Judaism sometimes says this proves the future resurrection of the dead because Ezekiel will have to participate in those temple rites. It would have been expected at that time, he's being addressed throughout as if it's speaking of something that he's going to live to see, but it was speaking of something in the future.

Response:

The mystery of Ezekiel's temple vision has occasioned much speculation. I wrote an article on the subject for the *Christian Research Journal*, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.equip.org/articles/making-sense-ezekiels-temple-vision/>

The problems are numerous. On the one hand, elaborate descriptions of the building and the priestly rituals are given, as in the tabernacle of Moses, giving the impression of a literal temple. On

the other hand, there seem to be symbolic or supernatural aspects, as with the river flowing from the temple which becomes more abundant in water the further it gets from its spring (Ezek.47:1-12). This river is also mentioned in Joel 3:18 and Zechariah 14:8 (as well as Rev.22:1-2). Jesus seems to be referring to this river of "living water" (using Zechariah's terminology) in His reference to the Holy Spirit's ministry through the Church (John 7:37-39).

If Ezekiel's was to be a literal temple, it could not apply to any time after A.D.30, because both the sacrificial system and the Levitical priesthood became defunct when Jesus died (Ezek.43:26-27; 45:15, 17; Heb.9:12; 10:8-10), as did the requirement for physical circumcision (Ezek.44:9; Gal.5:2-4).

It especially cannot be referring to a time after the Second Coming of Christ, because marriage is still practiced in the vision, which will not be the case after the resurrection (Ezek.44:22; 47:22; Mark 12:25). Also, though some of the imagery of the temple, from Ezekiel 47, recurs in Revelation 22:1-2 and the description of the New Jerusalem, we are specifically told that there is no temple there (Rev.21:22). The Levitical priesthood cannot be reinstated after Christ returns, because He has completely and permanently replaced this order with His own priesthood "forever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps.110:4; Heb.7).

These features guarantee that Ezekiel cannot be describing or predicting a temple that would pertain to any time during or after the inauguration of the New Covenant Era in A.D.30—not a divinely sanctioned end-time temple, nor a millennial temple, nor a literal building in the New Earth.

The best way to understand the vision is, no doubt, suggested in Dr. Brown's observation that the plans were to be shown to the exiles on the condition that they should be ashamed (i.e., repentant) of all their sins (Ezek.43:10-11). The fact that very few of the exiles chose to return with the temple builders in 538 B.C. when they had the chance strongly suggests that the nation was not sufficiently repentant or concerned about the things of God to warrant His giving them this stunning temple. Instead, they had to settle for a lesser temple, such as could be built with the limited financial and human resources available to Zerubbabel. Thus, Ezekiel's temple was the temple that "might have been" had the Jews cared more about it.

Chapter 47, about the river, might then be seen as a stand-alone chapter, symbolically describing (like Joel, Zechariah, and Jesus) the flow of the Spirit's ministry out of His redeemed community to the whole world.

25. Dr. Brown:

So that is why Matthew 24 weaves together what happened in the years of the disciple's lives, seeing the temple destroyed, and what will happen at the end of the age.

And for example, where it says verse 27, "For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man immediately, after the tribulation of those days, the Sun will be darkened, then the moon will not give its light, the Stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Then will appear in heaven, the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn.

And they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and he will send that his angels with a loud trumpet call. And they will gather his elect from four ends, from one end of the heaven to the other."

Look, I am familiar with the Preterist interpretation of this passage. Preterist meaning past, that all of this refers to things that have happened in the past, but I don't buy it. Yes, I believe that much of Matthew 24 happens in the days of those disciples, and that generation sees those things happen as he prophesied, but there are other things clearly that have not happened.

And to try to make this into something that already happened, that this sign of the Son of man coming in the clouds refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. That somehow when the rest of the New Testament talks about the coming of the Lord and the return of the Lord that it's speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem. You just have to twist a massive portion of Scripture, and I'm not willing to do that to uphold the view that the earliest followers of Jesus didn't hold.

Response:

Eusebius believed this discourse applied to the Jewish War (*Ecclesiastical History; Book 3; Chap.7*). The view has a venerable past.

A Full-Preterist believes that every reference to the *Parousia*, the end times, the resurrection, etc., are referring to A.D.70. Partial-preterists do not believe this. They (we) believe that some parts of the prophetic scriptures have been fulfilled in A.D.70—but not all. In this respect, Dr. Brown actually is a partial-preterist, because he believes (correctly) that part, but not all, of the Olivet Discourse was fulfilled in A.D.70. I have written a book-length refutation of Full-Preterism (*Why Not Full-Preterism?*).

26. Dr. Brown:

Those are after the destruction of the temple. They were looking forward to his return and quoted these very passages with anticipation of his return, not looking back to the destruction of Jerusalem.

And think of it! When Jesus returns what's going to happen? We are going to receive our resurrected bodies, the dead in the Messiah will rise, and then after them, we will be caught up to meet them in the air, and we will receive resurrected glorified bodies, never to be sick, never to die, never to sin again that hasn't happened yet, friend.

In case you haven't realized, we have been dying since Jesus came into this world, we have not yet received our resurrected bodies, the new heaven and new earth are not yet here where there's no mourning or sighing or pain. There's still mourning and sighs and pain.

This view that the second coming, and everything associated with it happened in A.D. 70 is a view to be categorically rejected. It's growing in popularity and took a big hit when the Jewish people came back to the land, and that smashed a lot of this theology.

Response:

The view called *Full-Preterism* pretty much had its beginning with Max King, in the 1970s. It has since become a large (mostly online) phenomenon. Its roots go back to a couple of authors in the 19th century (J. Stuart Russell and Milton Terry), but it never caught on until Max King, Don Preston and Ed Stephens more recently started the *Full-Preterist* movement. This is the only view that Dr. Brown is describing in the above paragraphs. *Partial-Preterists* (like Dr. Brown and myself) do not hold that view.

It is clear that a movement beginning in the 1970s didn't exactly "take a hit" in 1948. Some would suggest that amillennialism and postmillennialism were damaged by the return of some Jews to Palestine, but neither of those systems actually denied the possibility of such a development.

27. Dr. Brown:

But Jewish people are back in the land long enough that people make it as if it's of no significance. And friends, let me tell you something. I've seen this teaching that all of these prophecies were fulfilled in A.D 70, I've seen it lead to real, real significant error in other ways.

And in fact, some of the people with some of the most bizarre hyper-grace teaching, and even some anti-Israel teaching, and some even Universalist teaching that everybody eventually, gets saved or everybody's already saved through the blood, I've seen that many of them also hold to this type of Full-Preterist teaching, which I find to be very dangerous.

Response:

Amen to that! *Full-Preterism* is now a "big tent" embracing many theological odd-balls, and even some fringe guys who advocate moral errors. My advice: Stay away from those *Full-Preterists*. However, do consider the merits of *Partial-Preterism*, which is the only system that takes all the prophecies seriously in their respective contexts.

28. Dr. Brown:

What does Jesus say in verse 36 concerning that day and hour?

"No one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the son of man," and he goes on from there.

So he is not there talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, he's talking about something future. But after all, the disciples asked him a three-fold question, and they put together something that was going to happen in the next generation, it was something that hasn't happened yet in almost 2,000 years.

So he answers them all as one, and in their understanding, it was all going to happen as one. Now we who have the advantage of looking back after two thousand years can more fully understand what the Savior were saying.

Response:

I can agree with this.

29. Dr. Brown:

You say, what's this got to do with the Temple in Jerusalem?

Well, it presupposes that there's a Jewish Jerusalem and a Jewish temple and that it comes under attack again. And Zechariah 14 even talks about in the final war, half of the city of Jerusalem going into exile, but then God coming and fighting for his people.

So, to me, this is the best way to read Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, not only so, but Luke 21 seems to break it down even a little bit more clearly as you read it, this refers to the second temple. Now this refers to a future coming of the Lord.

Response:

As I mentioned earlier, after the first few verses of the Olivet Discourse, the verses about the destruction of the second temple, there is no mention of any temples again. To say that the later

section “presupposes that there is a Jewish Jerusalem” has no basis in the passage. I would like to see, once you get beyond Matthew 24:34, where any allusion to Jerusalem, or any temple, can be found.

30. Dr. Brown:

So, as I understand things, but I'm not dogmatic on this, and it's not a matter of faith: There will be a third temple built. Somehow it will happen, despite the presence of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the immediate proximity of where we'd expect the temple to be rebuilt.

We do expect, and again, can't be dogmatic on this, but I understand there will be a third temple built before Jesus returns and that it will come under great attack, and then it will be gloriously rebuilt, or will it be something completely new built, don't know.

But that there will be a physical temple in the Millennial kingdom with Jesus, the Messiah, ruling and reigning out of Jerusalem for a thousand-year period. Again, we can divide on these issues, and still be brothers and sisters in the Lord. There's no reason to castigate each other over differences here or attack each other in harsh terms.

I'm not going to go attacking someone, saying you don't really believe the Bible, you're not really believing what the Bible literally says if you don't hold to this. And the same way there is no reason for you to castigate me.

“Well, you're being hyper-literal, you're just taking these things too seriously, it's all spiritual metaphor...” Whatever. We can have our differences here and still be brothers and sisters in the Lord, but this is what I understand and expect to see happen.

Response:

Dr. Brown could certainly be right. The Bible does not preclude the possibility that the Jews will someday build another temple. They might.

What the Bible does preclude is that God would ever approve of such an enterprise. Also, no passage in scripture unambiguously predicts such a temple. All the passages that I have ever been shown to prove the thesis involve significant theological and exegetical flaws on the part of the advocates.

31. Dr. Brown:

And it's interesting if you read Luke 21:20 (and following), because he says a few things a little bit differently. Here's where you can kind of get the idea of, okay, something happened then, and something for the future.

It says this, some of the great distress that's going to come against the Jewish people in those days,

Verse 24, “they'll fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive among all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

Okay, so it's speaking of something happening then, destruction of the second temple, but with implications for many years thereafter.

Why? Because “the Jewish people will be laid captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

This is the period we've been in since the destruction of the second temple until the regathering of a Jewish Jerusalem, the times of the Gentiles. And you might say, “They're coming to an end,” or “They're right at the end.” That's what's being spoken of.

"And there will be signs, and Sun and Moon and stars and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because the roaring of the Seas and the waves, people fainting with fear, with foreboding of what is coming on the world for the powers of heaven. The heavens will be shaken, and then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

So, Luke seems to lay it out there, and it reads as if it's all one account, but just like so many of the prophecies of the return of the Jewish people from exile, it describes

- *Something's that happens in the days of those prophets or the next generation, and then*
- *Something's for thousands of years later,*

and they're all put as if it's one straight narrative.

The same here, first, what's going to happen with the destruction of the second temple, and then the final coming of the Lord at the end of this age.

Response:

These comments reflect one view of the verses near the end of Luke 21. There are a number of other possibilities in interpreting them, but this is not a hill to die on. I would say, however, that the words in Luke 21, generally parallel those of the first section of Matthew 24...the part about A.D.70.

32. Dr. Brown:

And when Jesus then says, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all this has taken place," you read it in two different ways and each one is applicable.

- *There is the generation that Jesus addresses in Matthew 24 that sees the things he spoke of come to pass. And those who see the beginning of those things, they see the rest of them happen. And there's the generation, the same way Luke 21, speaking of the final generation.*
- *The final generation that begins to see these things happen that he spoke to them of, they will see the rest happen. And it makes perfect sense when you look back at it.*

Response:

I believe that the reference to "this generation"—something that Jesus mentions five times in Matthew—points in every case to the time of His own contemporaries. The statement in Matthew 24 summarizes and closes the Olivet Discourse and refers only to A.D.70.

As I said above, Matthew 24 adds to the Olivet Discourse material from another discourse, given on another occasion, on another subject (i.e., the Second Coming of Christ), which Luke records in Luke 17:22ff. Matthew transitions from one subject to the other with the statement *"Heaven and earth shall pass away...but of that day and hour, no one knows..."*

Having just spoken of the timeframe of the destruction of Jerusalem (*"this generation will not pass..."*) He now disclaims any knowledge of the timeframe of the end of the world.

33. Dr. Brown:

But what about the big question (and we've addressed this before): If Jesus is the final sacrifice, why will there be a Millennial temple after he returns with animal sacrifices?

Again, it's possible that all these descriptions are spiritual and metaphorical. When it speaks of sacrifices, it doesn't mean literal sacrifices, just like the psalmist could say his prayer is like the lifting up of hands, or the lifting up of his hands be like a sacrifice, or his prayer be like incense. It's possible it's

all metaphorical, but the language seems to be speaking of something literal that's expected to happen. So, what do we do with that?

Response:

Spiritual sacrifices would be suited to a spiritual temple (see 1 Peter 2:5) and may well be what Zechariah 14:20-21 is referring to.

Ezekiel, on the other hand, describes a physical temple, with physical priests and animal sacrifices. Of course, as I said above, that was a temple that would have been built had the exiles been sufficiently repentant. It would have been built instead of the one Zerubbabel built, and would ultimately have been destroyed in A.D.70 as an obsolete system.

34. Dr. Brown:

Well, if that is the case, then it'll be similar to the sacrifices that were done in the first and second temple that they had their role, that they had their purification purposes, but that ultimately they were types and shadows of what was to come, that the Messiah himself would be an ashama, guilt offering as spoken of in Isaiah 53 that it was a foretelling, a foreshadowing of the atoning power of the death of our righteous Messiah. So that just as the people of Israel did certain things looking forward to certain events, or they did other things, commemorating certain events, so also, it is with animal sacrifices.

It could be that even though the temple purpose finds its fulfillment in the Messiah, that there'll be a future temple. And as the previous animal sacrifices look forward to his death on the cross, the later animal sacrifices look back to his death on the cross.

Response:

This is the typical dispensationalist answer to this dilemma: "Old Testament sacrifices foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice; whereas millennial sacrifices will memorialize His sacrifice." This is impossible.

The details in Ezekiel 40-47 simply do not allow for this understanding, because Ezekiel plainly describes sacrifices that are offered "to make atonement" (Ezek.45:15, 17)—not as a mere memorial.

The Bible teaches that God never had any pleasure in the sacrifice of animals (Ps.40:6-8; 51:16-17; Heb.8-10). Animal sacrifices were a necessary, temporary expedient serving to initiate Israel into the concept of blood sacrifice and substitutionary atonement, which are fulfilled in Christ. When Christ returns, such a function will, of course, be unnecessary.

In fact, Christ has already established for His people a memorial of His death in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor.11:24-25). If a ritual of remembrance will be needed in the New Creation, why substitute the one Christ appointed with a system that God never liked in the first place?

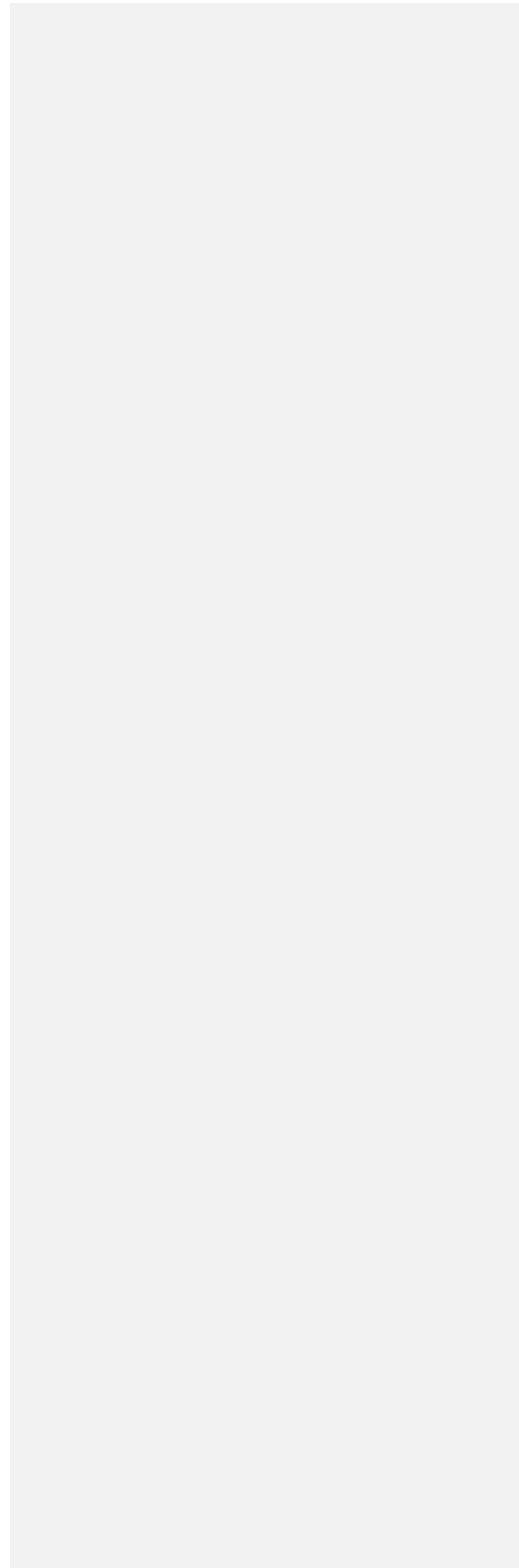
35. Dr. Brown:

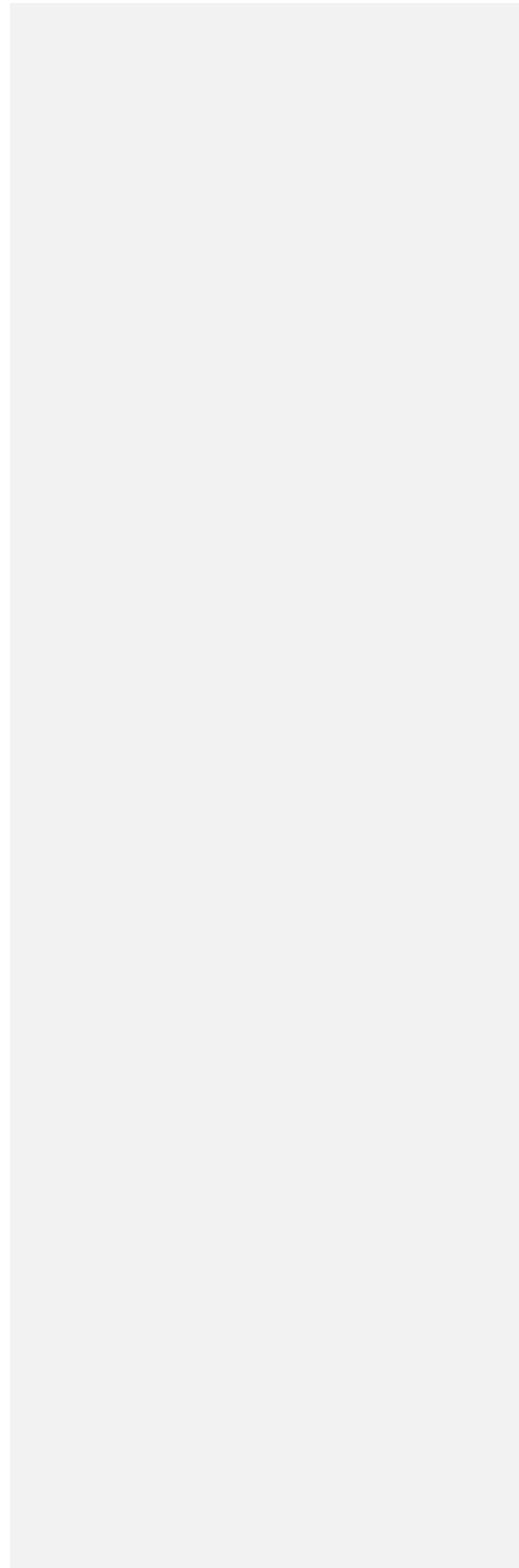
Again, it's very possible that these images are metaphorical images and spiritual images, but with the literal restoration of the Jewish people back to a literal Jerusalem, and with the Messiah coming back to a literal Jerusalem, I expect that these things will happen literally.

If that's the case, then the sacrifices once looked forward to the Messiah's work, they will now look back to the Messiah's work. And if it unfolds differently, so be it.

Response:

Yes, so be it.





Document 20

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Salvation of Israel

Introductory Response:

This sermon was quite a bit longer than the document as presented here. Because there was not that much for me to respond to I omitted much of the material. A few scriptures are mentioned in it, but the sermon was largely comprised of stories illustrating the special working of the Holy Spirit in various revivals and personal experiences. These accounts are very inspiring and I share with Dr. Brown an eagerness to see genuine revival again in our lifetime. I obviously have no need to respond to the abundance of illustrative material (since there is nothing in it with which I can disagree). For that reason, I have edited the original document as it was sent to me, omitting the anecdotal portions, and retaining only the portions to which I would like to respond.

○ **Dr. Michael Brown:**

Isaiah 32 paints this picture, and it speaks of a terrible time of judgment. We will start at verse 11:

"Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your clothes put sackcloth around your waists. Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briars—yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry.

The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks," it is a miserable picture.

"Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high."

Now look at how everything changes,

"And the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever."

Desolation, destruction, barrenness of land, people under judgment, and suddenly this picture is transformed to beauty, and to fruitfulness, and to glory and to righteousness.

What made the difference? The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It would be just as if the natural land was parched, and the plants had died, and the cattle was dying, and the people were dying, and then torrents of rain and showers of rain and down-pourings of rain came, and next thing, everything is fertile and flowing and fruitful, and people and animals are thriving again, that's a natural picture of what happens when the Holy Spirit comes.

I want to be honest with you, friends. We often think of the outpouring of the Spirit, and we think just in terms of the Church, or just in terms of world missions, or just in terms of supernatural signs and wonders in the Muslim world, and we often don't think of it in terms of Jewish ministry, in terms of Israel.

Response:

Dr. Brown seems to be applying the passage in Isaiah 32 to an eschatological outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel. I have argued, in previous documents in this collection, that the promised outpouring of the Spirit mentioned in several of the Old Testament prophets was fulfilled at Pentecost, in the first century, and that nothing in any of the predictions identifies the time of the fulfillment with the end times.

Isaiah 32:15 is simply one of many such prophetic passages, the most famous of which is Joel 2:28ff (discussed below in another segment). We have unambiguous New Testament authority—Peter’s first sermon, in Acts 2—telling us that the Joel passage was fulfilled ten days after the Messiah’s ascension to the throne. There is not the slightest reason to believe that all the various Old Testament prophecies about the outpouring of the Spirit in the Messianic Age describe more than one event—just as the many prophecies of the Messiah refer to a single individual and all the prophecies of the return of exiles from Babylon refer to the same return of the exiles in the days of Cyrus. An enormous burden of proof would rest upon the disputant who sees multiple fulfillments of these prophecies, rather than one Messiah, one return of the exiles, and one outpouring of the Spirit.

The case of Isaiah 32 is an important case-in-point. We are told that the wilderness will remain a wilderness until the Spirit is poured out like water, resulting in the desert becoming fruitful. The fruit that is named is *justice* and *righteousness* (v.16).

The Age of the Messiah was frequently predicted to be the Age of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Isa.11:1-2; 32:15; 42:1; 61:1; Ezek.36:27; 37:4; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech.12:10; cf., John 1:33; 3:5-6, 8). In several instances, the Spirit is likened to a river (Joel 3:18; Ezek.47ff; Zech.14:8; cf. John 7:37-39).

One of the most frequently recurring themes, particularly in Isaiah, is the familiar image of waters, rivers or springs breaking forth upon an uncultivated wilderness, resulting in the abundance of “fruit” springing up in the desert (Isa.27:6; 29¹⁷; 32:15-16; 35:1-2, 6; 41:18-19;43:19-20; 55:1-2, 13; 51:3; cf., Ezek.36:35). In Isaiah 32:15 this symbolism is unmasked and revealed to be a reference to the promised outpouring of the Spirit.

Earlier in Isaiah, Israel was compared with a vineyard that failed to produce fruit for God, and which is then threatened with the removal of its protective hedge, its being trampled by wild beasts (i.e., Gentiles), and its becoming an uncultivated wilderness (5:1-6). The fruit that God was disappointed not to have received from Israel was “*justice*” and “*righteousness*” (v.7). This is obviously the same fruit that is predicted to spring up in the desert at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in Isaiah 32:16. There is a recurring narrative here:

- 1) God planted and cultivated a vineyard (Israel) from whom He desired to receive the fruit of justice and righteousness.
- 2) Israel failed to produce justice and righteousness, and was delivered to be trampled by the Gentiles. They were no longer a vineyard at all, but a destitute and uncultivated wilderness, full of thorns and briars.
- 3) God is still determined to obtain His fruit in a just and righteous society.
- 4) To accomplish this, God would pour out His Spirit, like rivers in the desert, resulting in the creation of the fruit that He had originally sought.
- 5) The passages that speak of this are describing the Messianic Age, which is, therefore, also the “Age of the Holy Spirit.”

I am assuming that Dr. Brown knows and agrees with all of this. However, he appears to have postponed the “Messianic Age” and the “Age of the Spirit” until the end times. In this, he has zero support from the New Testament (or the Old, actually), which everywhere identifies the fulfillment of these prophecies with the present era which was inaugurated in the first century.

In Matthew 21:33-44, Jesus tells a parable that begins as a verbal parallel to Isaiah's vineyard parable of Isaiah 5:1-7. In both parables, God is seeking "fruit" from His vineyard, and in both cases, He is disappointed.

None of Jesus' biblically literate hearers would fail to recognize Jesus' reference to the vineyard and the fruit as an allusion to Isaiah's parable. Israel is the vineyard; justice and righteousness are the fruit God seeks.

Isaiah's parable is silent as to why the fruit was not forthcoming from the vineyard. However, Jesus' parable attributes the failure to the crooked "tenants" (the leaders of Israel), who rejected the prophets and killed the owner's son.

Jesus concludes with the announcement that God was taking the kingdom-identity from Israel and giving it to "another nation [*ethnos*]." Dr. Brown has said in the beginning of these documents [See 1:1] that the Kingdom was not taken from one nation and given to another (contra. Jesus' own words), but rather that God simply replaced Israel's corrupt leaders with righteous leaders—namely, the apostles.

While this seems to do violence to the wording of Jesus' statement we will allow it, momentarily, for the sake of argument. Dr. Brown is then acknowledging that the leadership of Israel was given to the apostles. The only *Israel* that was ever led by the apostles was the faithful remnant—that is, the Church.

Jesus says that the fruit of justice and righteousness will not be produced by Israel as a whole, but by the remnant, which is the Church, to whom the Kingdom has been transferred (Col.1:13; Rev.5:10). Of course, Jesus' vineyard parable also referred to His coming as Israel's last chance to get it right ("*last of all, He sent His Son*"—Matt.21:37; cf., Luke 13:6-9). This agrees admirably with the most-probable meaning of Jesus' denunciation of the fig tree: "*No one shall ever eat fruit from you again.*"

The point is that God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, would produce in the earth the fruit of justice and righteousness that God has always sought from His people. This spiritual fruit-bearing began at Pentecost and has continued for the past 2000 years. Isaiah 42:1-4 speaks of the Messiah, possessing the Spirit of God and establishing *justice* (that is the fruit!)—not specifically among the Jews but among the Gentiles. This passage speaks three times (in four verses) of justice coming to the Gentiles. This passage is cited by Matthew and identified with the first-century ministry of Jesus (Matt.12:17-21). There is no biblical prediction of yet another outpouring of the Spirit upon Israel in the end times. If there is, where is it found?

2. Dr. Brown:

But friends, Israel's salvation is just as dependent on the Holy Spirit as anyone else's salvation. And just the same, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will bring the same supernatural results among the Jewish people that it brings in the Gentile world.

Response:

Of course, salvation for both Jews and Gentiles is totally dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit, but Dr. Brown's use of the future tense with regard to the outpouring seems to have missed the only fulfillment of that predicted event in history. Will there be future revivals of the Holy Spirit throughout history to the end of time? We may hope and pray, though none of them is specifically predicted in any passage. Will there be a special revival among the Jews, separately from that which comes on "all flesh"? Again, let's pray that this may be—but it is not predicted in scripture.

3. Dr. Brown:

Reinhardt Bonnke's autobiography, "Living a Life of Fire," he tells extraordinary stories of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit. Here God calls this German evangelist as a boy to be a missionary, an evangelist to Africa. And God gives him this word that Africa shall be saved.

But hear me, the same God that healed the deaf and the blind and the dumb in Africa, and the same God, doing these extraordinary miracles around the world, is the same God who has promised to pour out his Spirit on Israel, on the Jewish people. God's moving in extraordinary ways, and I believe God spoke that to Bonnke 'Africa shall be saved'.

But how much more did God say, all Israel shall be saved? How much more is that a promise written in the word? And as much as we have promises in Scripture about the Holy Spirit moving all over the earth, we have specific promises that the Holy Spirit will be poured out in the Land of Israel. And this is of critical importance because we do everything we know how to do.

Response:

I have always been impressed with Reinhardt Bonnke's work, but I take it with a grain of salt when anyone tells me that God told him or her something—especially if the message was something very generic and also something immensely desirable to the reporter. As a charismatic believer myself, for the past 50+ years, I have heard many people report that the Lord told them things. I do not suggest that the Lord does not speak to us, only that there is a certain promiscuity of claims to that effect in charismatic and Pentecostal circles. When someone says the Lord told him or her that something will happen, and then, when it doesn't happen, it is often the case that the memory of the prediction's having been made quietly goes away, and the Church then awaits the next revelation from the same source.

Suppose we take the claim at face value, "Africa will be saved."

Are we to believe that this refers to every African person being converted? Or to more than half? Would it require the complete abolition of animistic paganism and ancestor worship from the whole continent? Only most of the continent? What percentage of conversions could be recognized as the fulfillment of this prediction? Dr. Brown takes this claim at face value (which anyone is entitled to do), but then makes it the springboard into his own, quasi-Pauline, "how much more" type of argument: "If Africa will be saved, how much more can we expect Israel to be saved?"

If this were only an argument from logic, it could be dismissed without serious consideration, since there is no logical reason that God would be more apt to save any one racial group of unbelievers than another.

However, Dr. Brown's prediction about Israel's salvation is not based on a subjective God-told-me sort of argument, but upon the basis of a text of scripture—or perhaps several texts—primarily Romans 11:26. Paul's statement in Romans no doubt alludes to a number of Old Testament texts saying that the Messianic Age will result in the salvation of Israel (e.g., Isaiah 45:17; Jer.23:5-6; Hos.3:5).

There is no reason for me to answer these texts here, since we have earlier spent adequate time doing so (3:27; 10:15,19,33; 11:37-39; 17:11). The exegetical question that must be answered in correctly interpreting these verses lies in the determination of who it is that is referred to as "Israel" in such verses. I doubt if Dr. Brown believes this means every last Jew will be converted (even few

dispensationalists are willing to take the prediction to that extreme). The same ambiguity is in this prediction as in the prediction that “Africa” will be saved.

Most dispensationalists (and, I am assuming, Dr. Brown as well) will tell us that only the remnant—though, perhaps, a very large remnant—of the Jews will be saved in the end times. Paul, citing Isaiah, wrote: *“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved”* (Rom.9:27 NIV)—so it is clear that the “Israel” who will be saved refers to the “remnant” of Israel only.

If this is who Paul and the prophets are referring to as “Israel” in such verses, then we need not postpone the fulfillment to the end times. Paul himself is explicit in saying that this has already occurred, and (by implication) continues to occur, ever since the first coming of Christ. Paul says, *“at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace”* (Rom.11:5). He doesn’t mean there is an unsaved remnant waiting for the end times to get saved (since any unsaved Jew living in his time has not lived to the end times). He is speaking about the believing Jews like himself. There is no mention of end times here—only *at this present time*. Paul clearly claims to be a part of that remnant (*Ibid.*, v.1) living in the first century.

4. Dr. Brown:

And if there are any people that the Scripture says require a sign, it's Jews. In fact, it's a fascinating thing, but if you will check cults, false religions, you will find a disproportionately high percentage of Jewish people involved.

The number one leading group in terms of converts to Buddhism in the Western world in recent decades has been Jews. Despite our small numbers, people looking for more, thinking there's got to be more. There's even a term some of you know it, maybe some of you were this, Jewboos, it's actually a term.

I spoke to a leader of Hari Krishna movement over a decade ago in New York City, and he told me at the height of the Hari Krishna movement, 75 percent of the world leaders were Jews. I think, “How in the world would something like that happen?”

People looking for more, people knowing there has to be more, but looking in the wrong places. We alone have the ability through the Gospel to bring people into a living encounter with the real, true God, where God shakes a life, where the conviction of sin gets so intense people can't run from it, and they can't drink it down, or drug it down because the conviction is too intense. And then something happens, where the Holy Spirit opens hearts, open minds, and moves supernaturally.

Response:

It is indeed tragic that Jewish people seem to be looking for meaning in all the wrong places. It is as Jeremiah said:

*For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Jer.2:13).*

Most tragic of all, Christ is the One to whom they seem least inclined to turn in their blind-folded search. Turning to Jesus is viewed as a greater betrayal of their Jewish heritage than would be turning to Hinduism, Islam, or Atheism. One of my Hebrew Christian friends was Buddhist prior to his conversion to Christ. He told me that it was more difficult to tell his mother that he had turned to Christ than it had been, earlier in life, to tell her he had become a Buddhist.

When Dr. Brown says the Jews require a sign, he is quoting Paul (1 Cor.1:22), and pointing to a fact illustrated in the Gospels when Jews demanded that Jesus give them a sign. Jesus described them as an evil and adulterous generation because of this propensity in them (Matt.12:38, 39; 16:1, 4). Jesus did not say that this national demand for a sign would be accommodated in the last days, but He said that it would not be accommodated at all—with the lone exception of “the sign of Jonah” (Matt.12:39-40; 16:4). That is, the resurrection of Christ was the only sign God intended to give them. It is hard to know upon which scripture one would claim that such additional signs as the Jews demand will be given to them in the end times.

5. Dr. Brown:

Look at what's written here, in Acts the second chapter, you know the account, the Holy Spirit has been poured out, the Ruach has been poured out, and people are now speaking in languages and the Jewish crowd that's gathered for Shavuot, one of the feasts that they'd be in Jerusalem for. They're hearing the message of their own language, but something, what's going on? People are drunk, they don't know what to make of it.

"Then Peter stood up," beginning in verse 14, "with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

And when he's trying to find out what's happening, what's going on, he goes back to the Scriptures. Now in Hebrew, in Joel 2:28 or it is 3:1 in Hebrew, it says, "a-ḥā-rê- kên, 'eš-pō-wk 'eṭ- rū-ḥî," "and after this, I will pour out my spirit."

But Peter wanting people to understand what's happening now, he puts in the words "in the last days." He wants them to understand, this is the last day's outpouring. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy," yes, all people, but first and foremost, tell them about the Jewish people, "Your sons, your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."

And it goes on, and then in verse 21, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Wow, as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit, people will be crying out to God, left and right, and coming to know him, and getting saved.

Response:

This last sentence uses the future tense, as if something in the scripture cited renders it a prediction of the end times. On the contrary, Peter said that the outpouring of the Spirit in the first century was the fulfillment of this Old Testament promise (Acts 2:16ff).

It is true that Peter inserted the words “in the last days” into the citation, but this was not to turn the prophecy into a prediction of the end times. “The last days” (or equivalent language) are mentioned as being present in the first century by almost every New Testament writer (e.g., 1 Cor.10:11; Heb.1:2; 9:26; James 5:3; 1 Peter 1:20 [Acts 2:16-17; 3:24]; 1 John 2:18).

In other words, the Age of the Spirit prophesied in Joel and other prophets had arrived at Pentecost, signaling the onset of “the last days.” Nothing in any passage singles out a period near the end of the world in which there will be an additional outpouring upon the Jews or anyone else. It is

clear that there have been seasons of spiritual revival—"times of refreshing"—at various times and places punctuating Church history from the apostolic era to the present. Such revivals, including any future revivals that may yet occur, cannot be said to have been individually predicted in any canonical prophecy.

6. Dr. Brown:

And friends, I know it's going to happen in ways we've ever dreamed of or imagined. And I know God's going to save the best for last. But the ultimate work of the Spirit, if there's one place where I know that I know where I can be guaranteed and sure there will be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit with radical transformation and salvation, it is in Israel and in Jerusalem.

A Jewish Jerusalem is going to welcome back the Messiah. Religious Jews are going to be crying out his name. And all over Israel, every part, people are going to be dramatically touched.

Response:

I hope Dr. Brown is correct. However, it is not helpful to read his saying that he "knows" this will happen, unless he is claiming personal divine revelation to that effect. Even such a claim is not helpful, given the number of sincere Christians who think that God either spoke to them directly or that He gave them a correct understanding of biblical prophecies that are unable to be derived exegetically.

There is not one prediction in scripture that Jesus will return to a Jewish Jerusalem (although He might). The Bible says not a word about such a thing. Dr. Brown thinks that Matthew 23:39 provides a basis for this idea: *"for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"*

The problems with resting such a specific hope upon such a statement are multiple:

- The same statement can be said about any people, not simply those in Jerusalem: they will not see Jesus until (that is, unless) they embrace Him as their Lord and Messiah. There is no prediction here, only a standing condition applicable to all people.
- There is no clear reference to His Second Coming in this passage. He is not speaking of literally seeing Him with their eyes. If that was His meaning, then He falsely prophesied, since many of the Jews, still in unbelief, saw Him at His trials and at His crucifixion a day or two later.
- Jesus told His disciples (immediately after this) that He would be taken from them, but that He would reveal Himself to them (through the Spirit). In saying this, He said, *"the world will see me no more, but you shall see me"* (John 14:19). The concept that the *"world will see me no more"* parallels the statement that Christ applied to His enemies in Matthew 23:39.

When the disciples said, essentially, "How will we see you, but the world will not?" He answered, "I will manifest myself to you (i.e., through the Spirit), not to them." Though many of the unbelieving Jews would, in fact, see Him with their eyes several more times after this announcement, yet they would not see Him as believers do. They would not receive the revelation of Him in the Spirit, by which believers can say, *"But we see Jesus"* (Heb.2:9). Jesus is not predicting His Second Coming in Luke 23:39.

7. Dr. Brown:

When the Holy Spirit is poured out, impossible things happen. And you can read about revivals in past history... you can talk about the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, or the prayer revival of 1857-1858, or the Hebrides Revival 1949-1952, or the Brownsville Revival 1995-2000. You can look at these things in tangible ways because the moving of the Spirit is real and definite, and tangible, and God delights in doing impossible things.

In fact it's a way that he receives the glory, not us, and he works through unlikely vessels so that none of us could ever think it's us, it's all him, it's all by his power.

Response:

True enough.

8. Dr. Brown:

Friends, we need a fresh move of the Spirit in Jewish ministry. We need a fresh move of the Spirit in the nation of Israel. We need a fresh outpouring so that as the gospel goes forth, it goes forth as Paul said to the Thessalonians, not just in word, but in power. Boom, there's a punch to it. There's a force to it. There are arrows of conviction. There's life that comes with it, there's hope, there's transformation.

Look, when Yeshua starts his ministry in Luke, the fourth chapter, and begins his public work after coming out of the wilderness, forty days of fasting and being tested by the enemy, he quotes, this is Jesus, quotes from Isaiah 61, "rū·aḥ 'ā·qō·nāy Yah·weh 'ā·lāy; ya·'an mā·šāḥ Yah·weh 'ō·tī." "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me."

Peter speaking to Cornelius and the other Italians, the Gentiles in Acts 10, explains how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the enemy.

Yeshua himself, because he emptied himself of his divine privileges and prerogatives, worked miracles, healed the sick, preached, and ministered by the anointing and power of the Spirit. He was anointed by the Spirit.

And he said to his disciples in Luke 24:49, "Don't leave the city until you're endued with power from on high." And that's what he reiterates again in Acts 1:8, "You'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you," and that's how they did what they did by the same power, the same Spirit that was on Jesus on them.

When Paul was preaching to the Corinthians, he explains afterwards in 1 Corinthians 2, he said, "My preaching, my speech, and preaching were not with persuasive words and human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power so that your faith would not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God," nothing has changed.

Can we do a better job than Jesus? Can we do a better job than Paul? If they relied on the power of the Holy Spirit, how much more do we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit? But hang on, if God worked through Paul, God can work through you, and God can work through me.

And Paul learned one great secret that God's strength was made perfect in his weakness, just regular human vessels, regular people.

Response:

This is all good preaching, and biblically sound. What it does not do is advance the eschatological claims that seem to be at the heart of this sermon.

9. Dr. Brown:

So, number one, pray, pray for the outpouring, pray for the moving of the Spirit. If you look at other texts, Ezekiel 36, as God brings the Jewish people back to the land out of captivity, what happens? He takes the stony heart out, he puts a fleshly heart in, he puts a new spirit, the Holy Spirit at work in the hearts and minds of people.

He's doing it, and as much as the harvest in Israel is still very small in terms of those who've come to faith, it's night and day from what it was in the early days.

Response:

We have discussed Ezekiel 36 in earlier documents [See: 9:18; 10:5, 9; 15:18; 20:9] and need not do so again here.

Dr. Brown is the very definition of an optimist (which anyone is entitled to be, of course). He sees the glass as <1% “full” and not as >99% “empty.” In terms of Jewish believers living in Israel, it is both. The Jewish converts to Christ in Israel comprise less than 1% of the population. Of the approximately 2% of Israel’s population who are Christians, 75% of them are Arabs.

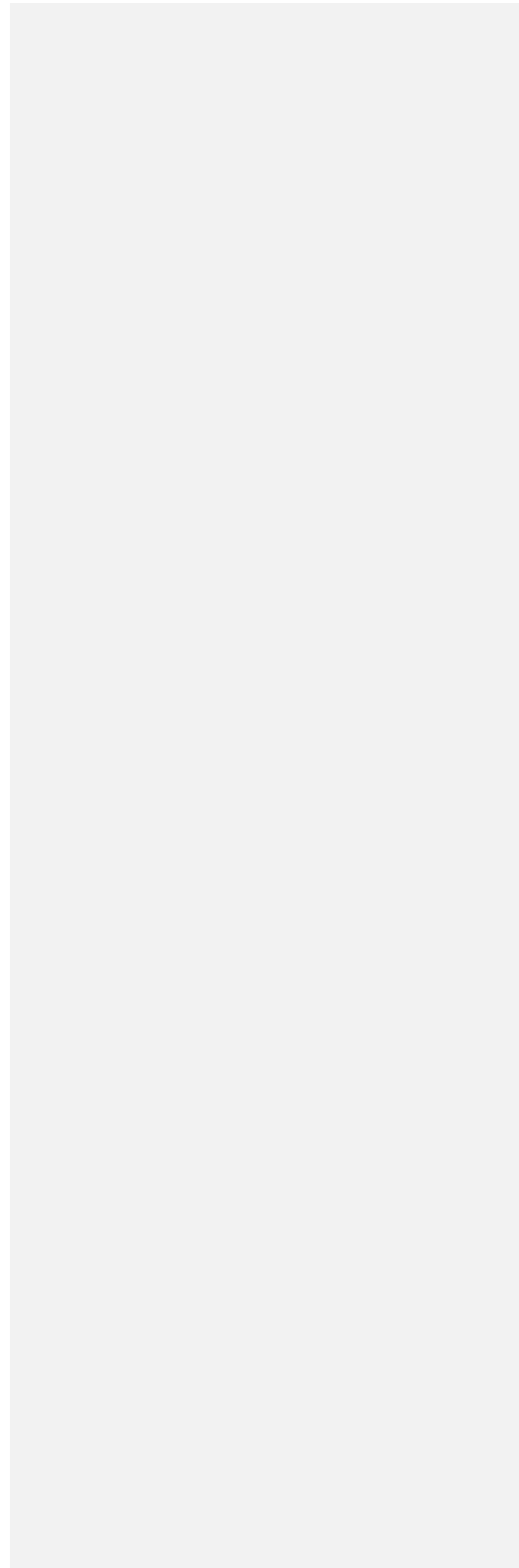
Dr. Brown believes that his optimism is warranted by scripture. However, he has not yet provided an exegesis of any passage that predicts the influx of masses of Israeli Jews into the Kingdom of Christ. As I have repeatedly said, we may only hope and pray, which is the final appeal of the sermon.

10. Dr. Brown:

What if this is just not addition, but multiplication? What if it's going to begin to intensify and intensifying and intensify, not just in Israel, but around the world? I feel it in my bones as I'm speaking. Time for the harvest. So pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for the moving of God, for God to reveal himself in signs and wonders, and dreams, and supernatural ways, and for the anointing of the Spirit to be on these Hebrew speaking congregations.

Response:

Amen!



Epilogue: My Position on the Modern State of Israel

Much of the disagreement between Dr. Brown and myself relates to our diverse interpretations of developments in the Middle East over the last three-quarters of a century, and the prophetic status of the creation of the modern secular State of Israel. Dr. Brown (in agreement with very many other Christians, primarily dispensationalists) believes that the Bible predicts the regathering of the Jews to their ancestral land in the times just prior to the return of Christ. It is a major feature of popular eschatology and what has occurred since 1948 is often touted as “the most significant fulfillment of prophecy” and “sign of the end times” ever to happen.

My position is—regardless whether the reestablishment of the modern nation Israel is a good thing, a bad thing, or an entirely neutral thing—it is not a thing predicted or endorsed in scripture. I do not say this without having spent the last 50+ years as a Bible teacher who has expounded verse-by-verse through the entire Bible no fewer than 20 times (and who began as a convinced dispensationalist).

The *supersessionist* position does not in any sense automatically predict for a negative attitude toward the existence of the State of Israel but simply places the matter in the category of ordinary, secular geo-political theory—since Zionism is not a specifically religious movement and modern Israel is not a religious entity.

Many Christians will react violently to any consideration that modern Israel is not a prophetic necessity since those of tentative faith often lean heavily upon claims of contemporarily fulfilled prophecy to stave off their chronic doubts about the Bible and Christ. To be sure, fulfilled prophecy provides the best proof of the inspiration of the prophets and there is an abundance of good examples of that phenomenon in scripture. Some believe that the very best evidence of the prophetic accuracy of scripture lies in the establishment of the modern State of Israel, though no prophetic passage can be shown to predict the emergence of such a secular State. A reaction against my position probably also arises from the fact that we have constantly been told that those who doubt this prophetic interpretation show themselves to be anti-Semites.

Belief that the success of the Zionist cause is an indicator of the end times also helps those who are faltering, and tempted to defect from their Christian commitments, to hang on a little longer, and not to give up on Jesus. After all, if prophetic developments in our time suggest that Jesus is coming soon, it follows that those who otherwise would choose a path less demanding than that of Christ may find motivation to tough it out for the few years that remain. If the finish line is in view, one might seem to get a second wind.

Those who would find their faith shaken if they discovered that nothing happening today in the Middle East has any correlation to Bible prophecy are no doubt the same people who would find their faith increased by the credible discovery of Noah’s ark or the skeletons of antediluvian giants. In other words, their confidence is not in God and His Word alone but must be bolstered by as many tangible “proofs” as possible. All my life I have heard the (probably apocryphal) account of the monarch who challenged one of his subjects to provide proof of God’s existence, and who received the succinct reply: “Sire, *the Jews*.” If the scriptures were more accurately interpreted to show that the survival of Israel as a people or nation is irrelevant to prophecy then many tentative believers might find that one of their favorite props for faith (the modern Jewish state) has been removed. They would then have to learn to trust Jesus on His own merits. I suspect that, for many, this would be asking too much!

Dr. Brown joins many others in assuring us that to abandon his view of prophecy and of Israel is to tread dangerously upon the precipice over which one might fall into the damnable sin of anti-

Semitism. There being no logical connection between my view and any form of racism, this strikes me as a disingenuously alarmist tactic. To view Israel as one views any other secular nation (for that is what Israel is) strikes me as the furthest thing from racism of which one could conceive.

My views on Bible prophecy in no way predict for opposition to the existence of a Jewish state, *per se*—nor, certainly, for the adoption of anti-Semitism. Too often, a failure to accept Zionism is confused with hostility toward Jewish people. This is like saying that disapproval of the way Indian lands were appropriated by America requires one to be hostile toward modern white Europeans. Race is one thing. Politics is a separate issue. One may even object to how the modern State of Israel violated the rights of other non-Jewish people in the territory without this requiring hostility to modern Jews—the majority of those now living—who have been born since those things occurred.

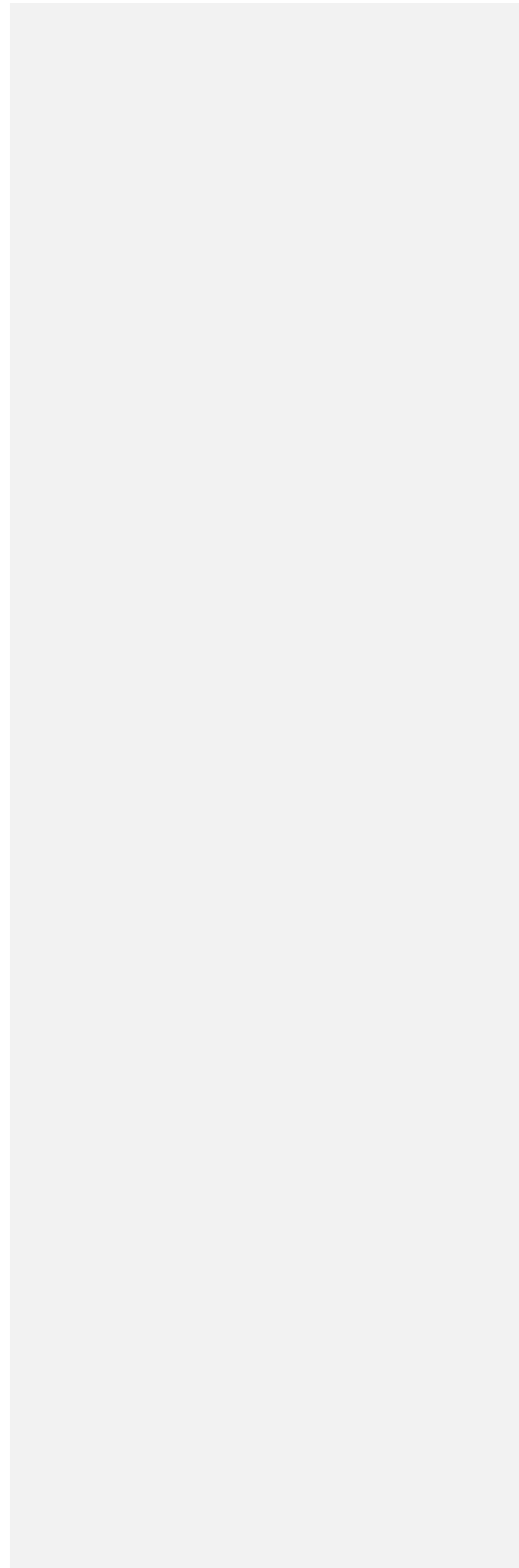
A more responsible approach to exegesis may change our interpretation of the prophecies, but this is an entirely different matter from our support for, or criticism of, the people or government currently occupying modern Israel. A more-biblical view of things allows for the following results:

- 1) The Christian having this opinion is free to assess the policies and behavior of all parties in the Levant on the basis of the justice or righteousness of those policies, rather than being forced to take sides by default with one side or the other. The prophets of old, and the New Testament writers, certainly did not hold back from giving honest criticism of the injustices of their own nation. Yet, the idea that what is happening in Israel is God's doing, and is prophetically inevitable, inhibits one's ability to assess Israel's merits or demerits impartially.
- 2) The belief that Israel's existence is a prophetic sign of the end times (if it is not) renders the weak Christian's faith vulnerable to shipwreck if it should ever happen that the Zionist cause would face serious reversals, or even destruction—e.g., by (God forbid!) a nuclear attack from Iran or other hostiles leaving Israel uninhabitable for generations. How would such a development affect the average Christian's faith in the Bible? Harold Camping, in predicting the date of the Second Coming, told his followers, "If Jesus doesn't come on this date, then the Bible is not true." Whether stated outright or not, many Christians may have the same opinion about the outcomes their teachers have caused them to expect to occur in the Middle East as a prophetic necessity. If they don't proceed as predicted, many may conclude that it is the Bible that is at fault, rather than the interpretations of their teachers.
- 3) Being disabused of false perceptions about the Middle East allows one to treat news from that sector with the same degree of interest or disinterest as one views events elsewhere in the world. There may be concerns that arise there, as elsewhere, but they are not central to the Christian's hope or mission. Seeing Israel for what it is—just another secular democracy and ally of the West—can allow the distracted Christian to put away the fascination with "all things Israel," and to refocus on the Great Commission (which, unlike affairs in Israel, actually is relevant to the timing of the Second Coming of Christ).
- 4) It should cause us to invest our resources (human, financial and emotional) as good stewards in projects that are consistent with our Gospel priorities—rather than with non-Christian projects, like the rebuilding of the temple or the transporting of Jews from Europe to Israel.

Christian Zionism has tended to identify the fulfillment of Israel's hopes with a certain set of developments in the Middle East, which have not yet materialized. The New Testament makes no reference to any such development, and always identifies Christ, at His first coming, as the fulfillment of Israel's hopes. Too many Christians have thus replaced Jesus with the modern State of Israel as the

true fulfillment of Abraham's dream. This is the ultimate "Replacement Theology"—replacing Jesus with an earthly political nation—and is difficult to distinguish from idolatry.

I am persuaded that many Christians have made this substitution entirely unintentionally. It seems that a wrong interpretation of biblical prophecy renders such a replacement almost inevitable. May God bless all who have the diligence and the love of truth to consider these things with objectivity and openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



About Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg's teaching ministry began in Southern California, near the beginning of the "Jesus Movement" revival, in 1970. Throughout the ensuing half-century, he has taught around the world on every continent, directed a small Bible school (called *The Great Commission School*), in Oregon, for sixteen years, as well as numerous small, summer-long discipleship programs, in Santa Cruz, CA.

Steve has been the on-air host of a daily radio talk show entitled *The Narrow Path*, since 1997. As of 2022, this program airs weekdays on about 45 radio stations nationwide and is streamed worldwide over the Internet from the website: www.thenarrowpath.com. The program's format is one of real-time, call-in, Bible questions and answers.

He has also authored many magazine and journal articles, including several for the *Christian Research Journal*. These can be found online at www.Matthew713.com.

Over 1,500 of Steve's recorded, classroom Bible lectures are posted online. These can be downloaded free of charge from www.thenarrowpath.com. The catalogue of lectures includes in-depth verse-by-verse expositions through the entire Bible, as well as hundreds of in-depth topical lectures on biblical subjects of interest to believers. He has also engaged in formal public debates with Christians and atheists throughout his ministry career. These lectures, debates and every resource at the website, may be downloaded free of charge.

There is also a free mobile app available for Android and iPhones from which the radio program can be heard (live or in archives), and where the lectures from the website can be streamed (search: thenarrowpath.com).

Several YouTube channels contain libraries of videos of Steve's lectures. The main one can be viewed at www.youtube.com/user/Biblegate.

Based upon his lifetime teaching labors, Steve was offered and awarded an honorary D.Div. from Trinity Theological Seminary (Evansville, IN), in 2017.

Previous books by the same author:

- *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Thomas Nelson, 1997, revised 2013)
- *All You Want to Know About Hell: Three Christian Views of God's Final Solution to the Problem of Sin* (HarperCollins, 2013)
- *Empire of the Risen Son, Book One: There is another King* (Xulon Press, 2020)
- *Empire of the Risen Son, Book Two: All the King's Men* (Xulon Press, 2020)
- *Why Not Full-Preterism?* (Xulon Press, 2022)

