

A Future for National Israel?

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A Future for National Israel?

- This is a major disagreement regarding what God will do at the end.
- Is God finished with the nation?
- Yes – this view called "supersession," that the church has superseded Israel as God's people.
- No – view called "restoration," Israel will be restored as God's people at the end.

The Case for Supersession

- The Abrahamic promises were fulfilled; God is under no further obligation.
- God has divorced Israel, so the covenant has been broken.
- Like any covenant, that with Abraham had some "fine print."
- The benefits of this covenant have been handed over to Christians.

The Case for Supersession

- In God's view, "true Jews" are believers, who are today predominantly Gentiles.
- "The seed" to whom the Abrahamic covenant was promised is singular, namely Christ.
- Let's look at Scriptural support for each of these in turn.

The promises to Abraham were fulfilled

Joshua 21:43 (NASU) So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. 44 And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. 45 Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.

The promises to Abraham were fulfilled

1Kings 8:56 (NASU) Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.

God has divorced Israel

Isaiah 50:1 (NASU) Thus says the Lord,
"Where is the certificate of divorce By
which I have sent your mother away? Or
to whom of My creditors did I sell you?
Behold, you were sold for your iniquities,
And for your transgressions your mother
was sent away."

God has divorced Israel

Jeremiah 3:6 (NASU) Then the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. 7 I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. 9 Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. 10 Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception," declares the Lord.

The "fine print" in the covenant

- The acted parable of the potter (Jer 18:1-10): the pot is marred in the potter's hands, so he makes it into another pot.
- The lesson: God can do the same to Israel or any other nation.

Jer 18:9 (NASU) "Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant [it]; 10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it."

Benefits come to Christians

- Matthew 21:19 – Jesus curses the fig tree with the comment, "May you never bear fruit again."
- Matthew 21:43 – Jesus says, "I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."

True Jews are believers

Romans 2:28 (NASU) For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

The "seed" is singular, Jesus

- Who is the seed to whom the Abrahamic covenant was promised?
- If Galatians 3 is taken at face value, then the seed was (in the mind of God) always singular – Christ – with the benefits going to those who are "in Christ."

The Case for Restoration

- The "seed" passages are not all singular.
- Some passages sound anti-supersessionism.
- Some more passages on God's divorce of Israel.
- Several OT prophecies have very literal sounding descriptions of prosperity; they often start with the re-elevation of Israel.

The Case for Restoration

- Several OT prophecies seem unnecessarily Jewish, unless Israel is going to be restored.
- Some features of biblical prophecy indicate a "silver age" before the "golden age" of the eternal state.
- Let's look at the Scripture relevant to each of these points.

Seed not always singular?

Genesis 15:13 (NASU) [God] said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants [seed] will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years."

Seed not always singular?

2 Sam 7:12 (NASU) When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant [seed] after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,

Anti-Supersession Passages?

Psalm 89:30 (NASU) If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, 31 If they violate My statutes And do not keep My commandments, 32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod And their iniquity with stripes. 33 But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. 34 My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

Anti-Supersessionism Passages?

Leviticus 26:44 (NASU) Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. 45 But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the Lord.

More on God's Divorce

- God's divorce of Israel in Jeremiah 3 is bad, but the book ends more positively. God opens his arms to Israel in chapter 4 and this culminates in the new covenant of chapter 31 with Israel:

Jeremiah 31:31 (NASU) "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah..."

More on God's Divorce

- The book of Hosea is an even more telling example of how God will respond to adulterous Israel:

Hosea 3:4 (NASU) For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or [sacred] pillar and without ephod or household idols. 5 Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days.

Re-elevation of Israel?

Isaiah 2:1 (NASU) The word which
Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning
Judah and Jerusalem. 2 Now it will
come about that In the last days The
mountain of the house of the Lord Will
be established as the chief of the
mountains, And will be raised above
the hills; And all the nations will stream
to it.

Re-elevation of Israel?

Isaiah 11:10 (NASU) Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. 11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. 12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

Unnecessarily Jewish?

Ezekiel 36:8 (NASU) But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come.

Ezekiel 36:24 (NASU) For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Unnecessarily Jewish?

Zechariah 8:20 (NASU) Thus says the Lord of hosts, "[It will] yet [be] that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. 21 The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will also go.' 22 So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord." 23 Thus says the Lord of hosts, "In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.' "

Silver Age Features?

- The "ruling with a rod of iron" in Revelation 2:27, 12:5 and 19:15.
- The preservation of the 1st-3rd beasts of Daniel 7 after the destruction of the 4th.
- The threat of no rain for any of the peoples of the earth who do not go up yearly to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles (Zech 14:16ff).

Conclusions

- I can sympathize with those who think that God is finished with Israel, for Israel has been very unfaithful to God.
- But the same can be said of Christians!
- I think it is fair to say that God has divorced Israel, but that the Scriptures indicate He is going to bring her back.
- Romans 9-11 is particularly important.

The End

...of this talk, but not, I think, of Israel's relationship to God.