Replacement Theology: Has the Church Replaced Israel?

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<http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/12-tribes-of-israel/replacement-theology/>

Replacement Theology claims that all the promises given to Abraham have been transferred to the Church in the New Testament. Is this true?

God is calling peoples of all nationalities into His Church.

Some people acknowledge that God made many promises to Abraham and believe that all of these [promises](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/12-tribes-of-israel/promises-to-abraham/) have been fulfilled. God did indeed bless Abraham, and all nations have been blessed through Christ (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16).

Recognizing that God is now working through His Church, many believe that [the Church](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/change/the-church)has replaced Israel. Commonly referred to as Replacement Theology, this way of thinking perceives the prophecies of the Bible directed toward Israel as now being for the Church. As such, some believe that understanding who the physical descendants of the ancient Israelites are no longer has any relevance.

So has the Church of God replaced Israel? The answer is both “Yes” and “No.”

Yes, God is now calling people from all nationalities into His Church

When the New Testament Church began on the Day of [Pentecost](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/life/plan-of-salvation/pentecost/), those present were primarily Jews and proselytes—people who wished to become Jewish in their worship of God (Acts 2:5-10).

In time, God dramatically demonstrated to Peter and the New Testament Church that He was also calling gentiles—people who were not of Israelite heritage—into His Church (Acts 10 and 11). God revealed to the Church that male circumcision, which was a sign of Israel’s Old Covenant relationship with God, was not required for gentile converts (Acts 15). Circumcision under the [New Covenant](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/bible/covenants/the-new-covenant/) was of the heart—meaning a repentant spirit.

Explaining this change, Paul wrote: “For he is not a [spiritual] Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28-29).

The ethnic barriers that had separated Jews and gentiles were now torn down within the Church. Continuing this topic, Paul explained: “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” (Galatians 3:28). Because gentiles and Jews had now become one, Paul called this body of believers “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

No, Bible prophecies still refer to the physical descendants of Abraham

While God’s Church is now open to people of all nationalities, the physical blessings God promised Abraham’s descendants continue. The Bible does not teach Replacement Theology.

Prior to his death, Jacob—also called “Israel,” the father of the 12 sons from whom would arise the 12 tribes of Israel—called his sons together and told them what would happen to their descendants “in the last days” (Genesis 49:1-2).

Speaking of the special blessings that would come upon Joseph and Joseph’s two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob said, “By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with [blessings](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/america-in-prophecy/blessings-of-abraham/) of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers” (verses 25-26).

Based upon historical and archaeological evidence, the people of Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are primarily the descendants of Ephraim, and the people of the United States are primarily the descendants of Manasseh. (See our articles “[12 Tribes of Israel Today](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/12-tribes-of-israel/12-tribes-of-israel-today/)” and “[Who Are the United States and Britain in Prophecy](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/america-in-prophecy/united-states-and-britain-in-prophecy/)?”)

In addition to the blessings prophesied to come to these peoples, the Bible also warns that just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, the descendants of these peoples will be punished for their disobedience to God’s laws and then restored (Jeremiah 30:3, 7-11, 15-17).

The biblical explanation

Rather than supporting Replacement Theology and saying that the New Testament Church replaced Israel, the Bible speaks of gentiles being “grafted in” to Israel. Speaking to gentiles, [Paul](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/bible/holy-bible/new-testament/epistles-of-paul/) wrote: “And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear” (Romans 11:17-20).

As we noted earlier, a gentile—a non-Jew—who becomes part of the Church is now considered a “Jew” (Romans 2:28-29). Speaking of both Jews and gentiles who comprised the New Testament Church, Paul said that Abraham was “the father of us all” (Romans 4:16) and “those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

Jesus spoke of this Himself in Matthew 21:42-44, where He told the Pharisees that “the [kingdom of God](http://lifehopeandtruth.com/prophecy/kingdom-of-god/) will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” Jesus said that the Kingdom was to be open to gentiles as well as Jews—to all those who responded to the message of the Kingdom.

In summary, God is calling peoples of all nationalities into His Church. When we become part of this Body of believers, the Bible describes us as being the “sons of Abraham.” Even so, the Bible does not teach Replacement Theology. God remains faithful and the promises He made to Abraham and this patriarch’s physical descendants continue.