

## APPENDIX 1: THE HERMENEUTICS OF SUPERSESSIONISM

This would be the hermeneutics of CT... there is agreement on the hermeneutic between supersessionism, CT, etc.

Models of eschatology and hermeneutics are the ground 0 foundation for where the issues are in this study.

We begin our study with a survey of the hermeneutical beliefs most closely linked with the supersessionist view. Doing such an examination is important since the hermeneutical foundation of a theological perspective has an important influence on how people who hold that perspective approach and interpret biblical texts. As Hans K. LaRondelle correctly observes, “Correct biblical principles of interpretation are ultimately far more crucial than the exegesis of isolated texts and words, not only because such principles affect and guide all exegesis, but also because they determine how false exegesis and misinterpretation can be corrected.”<sup>1</sup>

- So according to CT, NT exegesis will trump OT exegesis

More specifically, for our purposes here, a person’s hermeneutical assumptions may influence his or her perspectives concerning the relationship between Israel and the church.

Three hermeneutical beliefs are linked with supersessionism. They are: (1) belief in the interpretive priority of the New Testament over the Old Testament;<sup>2</sup> (2) belief in nonliteral fulfillments of Old Testament texts regarding Israel;<sup>3</sup> and (3) belief that national Israel is a type of the New Testament church;<sup>4</sup> These three hermeneutical beliefs

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<sup>1</sup> Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>2</sup> See George Eldon Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 20; LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 3; Anthony A. Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium*, 55; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941; reprint 1991), 699; Bruce K. Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 264; Robert B. Strimple, “Amillennialism,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 99–100.

<sup>3</sup> See Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” 172; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 713; Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 24; LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 107; Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 270; Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 211; O. Palmer Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 107; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 310; Raymond O. Zorn, *Christ Triumphant: Biblical Perspectives on His Church and Kingdom* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 5; Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB, vol. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 250.

<sup>4</sup> See Strimple, “Amillennialism,” 85–86; Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” 282; LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 45; Gerhard Von Rad, “Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Donald K. McKim, trans. John Bright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 28–46; E. Earle Ellis, “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I

often have an important bearing on how supersessionists approach biblical texts related to the church and Israel.

### **\*\* Interpretive Priority of the New Testament \*\***

One important hermeneutical issue in the debate over supersessionism concerns the relationship between the Old and New testaments. Just how do these two testaments relate to each other and how should their relationship influence our understanding of Israel and the church? In particular, how should the connection between the testaments influence how we understand texts that speak about Israel's identity and function in the plan of God? Can one rightly use a grammatical-historical approach to Old Testament passages apart from the New Testament to get a sufficient understanding of these texts? Or, should the student interpret the Old Testament primarily through the lens of the New Testament?<sup>5</sup> Also, does the New Testament expand or modify the original meanings of Old Testament passages?

One common hermeneutical belief among supersessionists is that the New Testament has interpretive priority over the Old Testament. Supersessionists often argue that the proper starting point for understanding Old Testament texts, including their prophecies and promises related to Israel, is not the Old Testament but the New Testament. Thus, the New Testament is the interpreter or reinterpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures.

LaRondelle, who has offered an extensive hermeneutical presentation and defense of the supersessionist view, affirms that "the New Testament is the authorized and authoritative interpreter of the Old Testament."<sup>6</sup>

With this assumption of New Testament priority, supersessionists argue that the New Testament writers sometimes introduced change, alteration, or expansion to the original meaning of Old Testament texts, including those that speak of national Israel's restoration. This is the view of George Ladd: "The fact is that the New Testament frequently interprets Old Testament prophecies in a way *not suggested by the Old Testament context*."<sup>7</sup> Responding in agreement to Ladd's statement, Anthony A. Hoekema writes, "I agree with him that the Old Testament must be interpreted in light of

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Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 210; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 140–51; Mark W. Karlberg, "The Significance of Israel in Biblical Typology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31:3 (1988): 259; W. G. C. Murdoch, "Interpretation of Symbols, Types, Allegories, and Parables," in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington D. C.: The Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 215; William E. Cox, *Amillennialism Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1966), 45–46.

<sup>5</sup> John Feinberg has identified this as the key issue between dispensationalists who are non-supersessionists and nondispensationalists who are often supersessionists. "Nondispensationalists begin with NT teaching as having priority and then go back to the OT. Dispensationalists often begin with the OT, but wherever they begin they demand that the OT be taken on its own terms rather than reinterpreted in the light of the NT." John S. Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 75. See also Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," 28.

<sup>6</sup> LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," 20. Emphasis in original. He also says, "Old Testament prophecies must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament to find their deeper meaning" (23).

the New Testament and that a totally and exclusively literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is not justified.”<sup>8</sup>

The result of this approach, as Ladd has argued, is that physical promises to Israel are *reinterpreted* and may find their spiritual fulfillment in the church:

The Old Testament must be interpreted by the New Testament. In principle it is quite possible that the prophecies addressed originally to literal Israel describing physical blessings have their fulfillment exclusively in the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the church. It is also possible that the Old Testament expectation of a kingdom on earth could be reinterpreted by the New Testament altogether of blessings in the spiritual realm.<sup>9</sup>

All supersessionists agree in principle with the concept of *reinterpretation*, while some prefer not to use the term.

As a result of this view concerning priority of the New Testament, Old Testament texts that speak of Israel’s restoration should not be understood literally. They should be read in light of the New Testament. As Louis Berkhof states: “It is very doubtful, however, whether Scripture warrants the expectation that Israel will finally be re-established as a nation, and will as a nation turn to the Lord. Some Old Testament prophecies seem to predict this, but these should be read in light of the New Testament.”<sup>10</sup> With his view that “the New interprets the Old,”<sup>11</sup> Bruce K. Waltke holds that “the kingdom promises are comprehensively fulfilled in the church, not in restored national Israel.”<sup>12</sup>

Some supersessionists have argued that New Testament reinterpretations of certain Old Testament promises to Israel are not violations of God’s promises. The reason is because God is now offering something that greatly transcends the original promises of the Old Testament.

To illustrate this perspective, Robert B. Strimple has offered a hypothetical example of a young man getting ready to enter college. In appreciation for his good work, the boy’s father promises him some “wheels” for his upcoming birthday so the boy will have transportation.<sup>13</sup> The son is happy because he thinks his father is going to buy him a motorbike. On the morning of the son’s birthday, though, the son hurries outside to find a \$200,000 Ferrari instead of a motorbike. Strimple points out that the boy’s reaction is not that of “You have robbed me of my hope!” The boy is overjoyed that the father’s promise is fulfilled in a way that is far greater than he anticipated. Strimple likens this to how spiritual blessings in Christ relate to the Old Testament promises. According to Strimple, “With regard to the reality of our spiritual blessings in Christ, the fulfillment by God’s grace . . . far transcends the terms in which the promise has been revealed.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” 55.

<sup>9</sup> George E. Ladd, “Revelation 20 and the Millennium,” *Review and Expositor* 57 (1960): 167.

<sup>10</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 699.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” 264.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>13</sup> Strimple, “Amillennialism,” 99–100.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

- But the gift goes to the man down the street... it is a different person!

Supersessionists are not opposed to studying Old Testament prophecies about Israel in their original historical-grammatical contexts. To them, however, the student of the Bible must not stop with simply reading the Old Testament texts apart from the New Testament. Nor should the student of Scripture use the New Testament to simply substantiate one's findings in the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> He or she must also turn to the New Testament to see if any alterations or expansions have been introduced to the Old Testament passages by the New Testament writers. As G. Ernest Wright explains:

It is agreed that in the case of an Old Testament passage, one must examine and expound it in relation to the revelation of God to Israel both before and after its own period. Then the interpreter should turn to the New Testament in order to view the passage in that perspective. In this procedure the Old Testament passage may receive limitation and correction, and it may also disclose in the light of the New Testament a new and more profound significance, unknown to the original writer.<sup>16</sup>

#### Nonliteral Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecies

Closely related to the supersessionist view of New Testament priority over the Old Testament is the belief that the New Testament indicates a nonliteral fulfillment of Old Testament promises, prophecies, and covenants, especially those related to the restoration of Israel. In fact, the belief that the New Testament has interpretive priority over the Old Testament is often based on the belief that there are examples in which Old Testament passages find a nonliteral fulfillment based on what the New Testament says.

A straightforward reading of certain Old Testament passages apart from other hermeneutical considerations predict a future restoration for national Israel. Amos 9:11–15, for instance, tells of a day in which God will restore Israel to her land. Zech 14:16 speaks of a time when Jerusalem will be the place where the kings of the nations come to pay homage to the Lord. Joel 3:17–18 predicts a time when the mountains of Israel “will drip with sweet wine” and the hills “will flow with milk.”<sup>17</sup> Together, the restoration texts in the Old Testament appear to predict a time when Israel will fully possess its land and have a special place of service among the nations. The fact that the Old Testament predicts a restoration of the nation Israel is beyond dispute, something to which supersessionists acknowledge.

But how do supersessionists deal with this predicted restoration of Israel? **They argue that these Old Testament texts that speak of a restoration of Israel have been fulfilled in nonliteral or other-than-literal ways.** Hoekema, for instance, asserts that while

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Waltke chastised Bruce Ware, a nonsupersessionist, and his article, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” for placing too much emphasis on the new covenant text in Jer 31:31–34 and not enough on Heb 8:8–13. According to Waltke, “Ware begs the issue by starting with the Old and uses the book of Hebrews selectively to substantiate his interpretation.” Bruce K. Waltke, “A Response,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 351. For Ware’s article see Bruce A. Ware, “The New Covenant and the People(s) of God,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 68–97.

<sup>16</sup> G. Ernest Wright, “The Problem of Archaizing Ourselves,” *Interpretation* 3 (1949): 457.

<sup>17</sup> Other restoration texts include Isa 2:1–4; 32:18; Ezek 36:22–36; and Zech 10:8–12.

“many Old Testament prophecies are indeed to be interpreted literally, many others are to be interpreted in a nonliteral way.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Berkhof states that, “the books of the [OT] prophets themselves already contain indications that point to a spiritual fulfillment.”<sup>19</sup>

Many supersessionists believe they have a solid scriptural basis for holding to a nonliteral fulfillment of certain Old Testament prophecies that teach a restoration of national Israel. They point to a series of texts in which some New Testament writers appear to apply Old Testament prophetic texts regarding Israel’s restoration in nonliteral ways to the New Testament church. Three important texts in this regard are Acts 2:16–21; Acts 15:15–18; and Rom 9:24–26.<sup>20</sup>

### Acts 2:16–21

One text sometimes used to support the idea of nonliteral fulfillment of some Old Testament promises with the church is Acts 2:16–21. In this passage, Peter quotes Joel 2:28–32, a text that speaks of national Israel’s restoration. But not only does Peter quote it on the day of Pentecost, he also says that Joel’s prophecy was being fulfilled:

But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says, ‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. ‘AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. ‘THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. ‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED’ (Acts 2:16–21).

What is the significance of Peter’s quotation of Joel? According to Raymond O. Zorn, “Pentecost is therefore merely a new aspect of Christ’s continuing reign . . . by which Old Testament prophecy concerning the messianic age is fulfilled (Acts 2:16–21).”<sup>21</sup> Commenting on Peter’s use of Joel, Joseph A. Fitzmeyer also states, “Thus God’s people will take a new shape under the guidance of the Spirit; Israel itself will be reconstituted.”<sup>22</sup>

= but what about the cosmic signs?

### Acts 15:15–18

Arguably, the primary text used by supersessionists to show that some Old Testament texts are fulfilled in nonliteral ways with the church is Acts 15:15–18. At the

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<sup>18</sup> Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” 172.

<sup>19</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 713.

<sup>20</sup> In this work, the order in which texts are treated is based on their importance to the supersessionist and nonsupersessionist views. When texts mentioned are of equal importance to either view we will follow their order within the New Testament canon.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond O. Zorn, *Christ Triumphant: Biblical Perspectives on His Church and Kingdom* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AB, vol. 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 250.

Jerusalem Council, as described in Acts 15, James promoted the message that God was “taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name” (Acts 15:14). To support this, he cited Amos 9:11–12:

“And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, ‘AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, IN ORDER THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,’ SAYS THE LORD WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM OF OLD” (Acts 15:15–18).

The Amos text, which refers to the restoration of national Israel, is viewed by James as somehow relating to God’s work among the Gentiles. What, then, is the significance of James’ quotation of Amos 9:11–12?

Hoekema argues that the Amos passage “is being fulfilled right now, as Gentiles are being gathered into the community of God’s people.”<sup>23</sup> To him, this is “a clear example in the Bible itself of a figurative, nonliteral interpretation of an Old Testament passage dealing with the restoration of Israel.”<sup>24</sup>

F. F. Bruce also views Acts 15 as evidence that members of the church were being identified as “Israel”:

James’s application of the prophecy finds the fulfillment of its first part (the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David) in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the Son of David, and the reconstitution of His disciples as the new Israel, and the fulfillment of its second part in the presence of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the Church.<sup>25</sup>

Robert W. Wall makes a similar point concerning the fulfillment of Amos’ prophecy: “Amos’s promise of a rebuilt ‘tent of David’ is fulfilled by this Davidic Messiah; and the prospect of Israel’s eschatological purification and the conversion of ‘all other peoples’ have been transferred to him.”<sup>26</sup>

## **Rom 9:24–26**

Yet another New Testament text in which promises to national Israel are referred to is Rom 9:24–26. In discussing the calling of the Gentiles, Paul quotes Hos 1:10 and 2:23:

Even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among the Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea, “I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, BELOVED.” “AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, ‘YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,’ THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.”

Ladd believes that Rom 9:24–26 is evidence that the Christian church fulfills promises made to national Israel. He states, “Paul deliberately takes these two prophecies

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<sup>23</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 210.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. See also O. Palmer Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 107.

<sup>25</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 310. See also I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980; reprint, 1989), 252.

<sup>26</sup> Robert W. Wall, “The Acts of the Apostles,” NIB, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 219.



about the future salvation of Israel and applies them to the church. The church consisting of Jews and Gentiles has become the people of God. The prophecies of Hosea are fulfilled in the Christian church.”<sup>27</sup> LaRondelle, too, makes a similar point when he writes, “He [Paul] joins Peter in citing Hosea’s prophecy of Israel’s restoration, in order to affirm its fulfillment in the universal Church of Christ (see Romans 9:24–26).”<sup>28</sup> According to Alan Richardson, the prophecy in Hosea means that “God had raised up a new Israel and made with her a new covenant, because the old Israel had failed to keep the promise.”<sup>29</sup>

### Typological Interpretation

Many theologians, whether they hold to supersessionism or not, believe in the existence of Old Testament types<sup>30</sup> that prefigure and point to greater corresponding New Testament antitypes. Many, for example, believe that the Old Testament sacrifices prefigured Jesus Christ’s ultimate sacrifice on the cross. Thus, belief in biblical types alone does not make one a supersessionist. Supersessionists, however, often argue for the validity of what is called *typological interpretation*.<sup>31</sup>

*Typological interpretation is a hermeneutical approach that attempts to understand the connection between the Old and New Testaments based on the type/antitype relationships found in the two testaments.*<sup>32</sup> According to Bernard Ramm, “typological interpretation” is “the interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two Testaments whereby something in the Old shadows, prefigures, adumbrates something in the New.”<sup>33</sup> Leonhard Goppelt points out that “the typological method” has “been part of the church’s exegesis and hermeneutics from the very beginning.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” 24.

<sup>28</sup> LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 107. See also Marten H. Woudstra, “Israel and the Church: A Case for Continuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 236.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, 270. See also Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament*, 211.

<sup>30</sup> According to Virkler, a type is a “preordained representative relationship which certain persons, events, and institutions bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions occurring at a later time in salvation history.” Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 184. Eichrodt refers to typology as “objectivized prophecy.” Walther Eichrodt, “Is Typological Exegesis An Appropriate Method?” in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. James Barr (Richmond, VA: Knox, 1969), 229.

<sup>31</sup> Typological interpretation is also called typological “method” or “exegesis.” For more on this approach in relation to Israel and the church see Goppelt, *Typos*, 140–51; D. L. Baker, *Two Testaments: One Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 114; G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London: SCM, 1957), 9–38; and E. Earle Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 126–135. See especially Von Rad, “Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” 28–46.

<sup>32</sup> According to Ellis, “Typological interpretation expresses most clearly ‘the basic attitude of primitive Christianity toward the Old Testament.’” E. Earle Ellis, “How the New Testament Uses the Old,” 210.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970), 223.

<sup>34</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, 4. For example, in his epistle, Clement said, “Moreover, they gave her [Rahab] a sign to this effect, that she should hang forth from her house a scarlet thread. And thus, they made it manifest that redemption should flow through the blood of the Lord to all them that believe and hope in

Those who hold to typological interpretation usually view the Christ-event as being the complete fulfillment of the Old Testament. They, as W. Edward Glenny observes, believe that “all biblical history moves forward toward Christ and his work of redemption and is fulfilled in Christ and the Church.”<sup>35</sup> With typological interpretation, as LaRondelle states, the relationship between Old Testament types and New Testament antitypes is that of “eschatological completion.”<sup>36</sup> Once the greater New Testament antitype is revealed, the Old Testament type is completed and is transcended by the greater reality.

- This is not an issue of one side believing in types and the other does not.
- The issue is whether the OT is primarily temporary inferior shadows that will give away to the permanent realities of the NT

What are some of these Old Testament types that allegedly find “eschatological completion” in the New Testament? According to Strimple, the concepts of the land of Canaan, the city of Jerusalem, the temple, the sacrifices, the throne of David, and even the people of Israel, were all “typological images” that found fulfillment in Jesus Christ.<sup>37</sup> Now that the reality—Jesus Christ—has been introduced, “the shadow passes away” never to be restored again.<sup>38</sup> Waltke, too, asserts that many Old Testament symbols have found a spiritual fulfillment in Christ:

With the transformation of Christ’s body from an earthly physical body to a heavenly spiritual body, and with his ascension from the earthly realism to the heavenly Jerusalem with its heavenly throne and the outpouring of his Holy Spirit, the earthly material symbols were done away and the spiritual reality portrayed by the symbols superseded the shadows.<sup>39</sup>

This perspective leads Waltke to conclude that “prophecies about Israel’s future kingdom that pertain to the church age, which began with Pentecost, find a spiritual fulfillment.”<sup>40</sup>

Essential to typological interpretation, then, is the belief that the grammatical-historical approach to Old Testament texts is not sufficient by itself to fully understand what God is communicating in these passages. According to LaRondelle, “More than a historical-grammatical exegesis of isolated parts of Scripture is needed.”<sup>41</sup> Instead, the

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God. Ye see, beloved, that there was not only faith, but prophecy, in this woman.” Clement, *The First Epistle of Clement* 12, ANF 1:8.

<sup>35</sup> W. Edward Glenny, “Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40:4 (1997): 629. Glenny is not a supersessionist.

<sup>36</sup> LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 45. According to Ellis, “The rationale of NT typological exegesis is not only the ‘continuity of God’s purpose throughout the history of His Covenant’, but also His Lordship in moulding and using history to reveal and illumine His purpose.” Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament*, 127–28.

<sup>37</sup> Strimple, “Amillennialism,” 85–86.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>39</sup> Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” 282.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 7.



“immediate and wider theological contexts” must take priority.<sup>42</sup> This means reading “the Hebrew Scriptures in the light of the New Testament as a whole.”<sup>43</sup> Supersessionists, who stress the importance of typological interpretation, claim that Old Testament texts must be understood within a larger theological framework. As Gerhard Von Rad declares:

Typological interpretation will thus in a fundamental way leave the historical self-understanding of the Old Testament texts in question behind, and go beyond it. It sees in the Old Testament facts something in preparation, something sketching itself out, of which the Old Testament witness is not itself aware, because it lies quite beyond its purview.<sup>44</sup>

Goppelt, too, states that there is more to understanding Old Testament texts than just gathering facts from the grammatical-historical method: “The typological use of the OT in the NT has always provided an example of a more profound interpretation of the OT and has motivated the search for a meaning that goes beyond the literal grammatical-historical explanation.”<sup>45</sup>

What, though, is the specific connection between typological interpretation and supersessionism? Supersessionists often argue that a type/antitype relationship exists between national Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. Origen, for example, stated that “corporeal Israelites” [Jews] were “the type” for “spiritual Israelites” [the church].<sup>46</sup> Augustine, too, believed that national Israel prefigured the Christian church: “For in the Jewish people was figured the Christian people. There a figure, here the truth; there a shadow, here the body.”<sup>47</sup>

According to Goppelt, whenever metaphors used for Israel in the Old Testament are applied to Jesus’ disciples, “it is an allusion to the fact that they, as the new people of God, are related typologically to the old people of God.”<sup>48</sup> That is why, for example, Goppelt gives great significance to Jesus’ calling of the twelve apostles, which has obvious parallels to the twelve tribes of Israel mentioned in the Old Testament. Goppelt believes that Jesus’ calling of the twelve apostles shows a typological connection between the old people of God (Israel) and the new people of God (the church):

The flock that Jesus gathers from Israel is not the nucleus of the people of the Old Covenant; it is a new people who are not related to the old people by natural descent, but are related to them in redemptive history and in a typological way. This is expressed most clearly in the call of the twelve, where it is stated, “He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach”. . . . The number twelve is clearly an allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel. . . . Jesus creates the new people of God in that he, like God, calls from the crowd the twelve who follow him in continuous fellowship and he sends them

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>44</sup> Von Rad, “Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament,” 43.

<sup>45</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Origen, *First Principles* 4.21, *ANF* 4:370.

<sup>47</sup> Augustine, *On the Gospel of St. John* 11.8, *NPNF<sup>1</sup>* 7:77. Augustine also stated, “In that people [the Jews], plainly, the future Church was much more evidently prefigured.” Augustine, *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed* 19.33, *NPNF<sup>1</sup>* 3:304.

<sup>48</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, 109.

forth to gather the twelve tribes. They are the representatives of and the active nucleus for the formation of the twelve new tribes.<sup>49</sup>

For some, **this typological connection between Israel and the church means that national Israel functioned as a type of the New Testament church. And like other types that pass away in significance when the greater reality or antitype comes, Israel's special role as a nation in God's plan has also come to an end.** That role has been superseded by the greater reality and antitype—the church.<sup>50</sup> Waltke, for example, believes that “the apostles taught that the type of national Israel and its law as a means of governing the nation were done away finally and permanently.”<sup>51</sup>

Mark W. Karlberg, too, has directly addressed what he believes is the type/antitype relationship between Israel and the church. Arguing against a future restoration of national Israel based on typological interpretation, he writes, “If one grants that national Israel in OT revelation was truly a type of the eternal kingdom of Christ, then it seems that, according to the canons of Biblical typology, national Israel can no longer retain any independent status whatever.”<sup>52</sup>

According to Karlberg, Israel's special place in the plan of God has been transferred to the Christian church, which is now “the true people of God with the privileges, the responsibilities, and the destiny of Israel.”<sup>53</sup> This belief that national Israel is a type of the church means that Old Testament prophecies and promises given to Israel find their typological fulfillment in the church. This rules out a literal fulfillment of these promises with national Israel.<sup>54</sup>

Karlberg claims his view is consistent with historic Reformed theology which views national Israel as having served “a symbolic and typological purpose in redemptive history.”<sup>55</sup> William E. Cox has gone even farther than Karlberg stating that the belief that national Israel was a type of the church has been the historic view of the church: “The

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<sup>49</sup> Goppelt, *Typos*, 108. Richard E. Menninger points argues that Matthew's use of the terms “kingdom of heaven,” “church,” and “twelve” is evidence that the church is “the new Israel.” Richard E. Menninger, “The Relationship Between Israel and the Church in the Gospel of Matthew” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991). Flew asserts that Jesus' choice of twelve was “deliberate” and thus “the community to be gathered was that of a new Israel.” R. Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of the Ecclesia in the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1938; reprint, 1956), 38.

<sup>50</sup> See LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 40. Goppelt writes, “Israel's salvation in its perfected form now belongs to the people of Christ (cf. Rom 9:4f.; Eph 2:12, 19). Consequently, there is a typological relationship between the people of God in the Old and New Testaments that reveals to the NT people of God the nature of their salvation.” Goppelt, 142.

<sup>51</sup> Waltke, “Kingdom Promises as Spiritual,” 279.

<sup>52</sup> Karlberg, “The Significance of Israel in Biblical Typology,” 259.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>54</sup> Summarizing this view of supersessionists, Glenny states, “Since the Church has replaced Israel in God's program, **specific and direct prophecies made to Israel are only fulfilled typologically in the Church—that is, there will be no application of even direct OT prophecies to ethnic, national Israel in the future.** . . . Such a fulfillment to Israel would require a move backward in God's program of salvation history and is not necessary since some OT prophecies for Israel are applied to the Church in the NT.” Glenny, “Typology: A Summary of the Present Evangelical Discussion,” 631–32.

<sup>55</sup> Mark W. Karlberg, “Legitimate Discontinuities Between the Testaments,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28:1 (1985): 16.

historic Christian teaching holds that national Israel was a type or forerunner of the church, and that the church replaced Israel on the Day of Pentecost.”<sup>56</sup>

According to adherents of typological interpretation, the church, which is identified with the ultimate Israelite, Jesus Christ, fulfills Israel’s mission and inherits the covenants and promises made with Israel in the Old Testament. As LaRondelle asserts, “The Church, as the eschatological Israel, with its new covenant in the blood of Christ, is the fulfillment of God’s plan with ancient Israel.”<sup>57</sup> W. G. C. Murdoch also offers a concise summary of what it means for the church to be the fulfillment of Israel:

Israel was God’s chosen people in the OT era. They were called to do a special work, but failed in their commission. In the NT God called another people, who were free from ethnic restrictions. Their faith and commitment centered in Christ. The OT promises are now fulfilled to them who are Jews inwardly (see Rom 2:29). The commission to take the gospel to all the world will be fulfilled by them. The church (spiritual Israel) consists now of those who will proclaim Heaven’s last message of mercy to the world.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Cox, *Amillennialism Today*, 45–46.

<sup>57</sup> LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, 40.

<sup>58</sup> Murdoch, “Interpretation of Symbols, Types, Allegories, and Parables,” 215.

## APPENDIX 2: EVALUATING THE HERMENEUTICS OF SUPERSESSIONISM

When dealing with any area of doctrine, hermeneutical assumptions and beliefs greatly affect one's views on that doctrine. This is true regarding one's views on the Israel/church relationship and it is true whether one is a supersessionist or a nonsupersessionist.

In this chapter we are going to critique the hermeneutical assumptions and beliefs that often accompany the supersessionist view. As will be shown, we believe the hermeneutical beliefs of supersessionism are inaccurate and have led to erroneous views regarding Israel and the church. Later, we will also offer hermeneutical beliefs associated with a nonsupersessionist view and show why they are to be preferred.

As mentioned earlier, the three hermeneutical assumptions of supersessionism are: (1) the interpretive priority of the New Testament over the Old Testament; (2) belief in a nonliteral fulfillment of Old Testament texts originally addressed to Israel; and (3) a view of typology that sees national Israel as a type of the church. We will now offer an evaluation of these points.

### New Testament Priority

In our view, the supersessionist view of New Testament priority<sup>59</sup> is beset with serious problems and is **the most critical issue within supersessionism that needs to be evaluated**. Barry Horner is correct when he states,

Our concern is now the hermeneutical principle that imposes the NT revelation of Jesus Christ on the OT in such a way that the new covenant (upper layer) has become the controlling hermeneutic whereby the old covenant (lower layer) is christologically reinterpreted.<sup>60</sup>

Before explaining why the supersessionist hermeneutic is not satisfactory, though, some important clarifications need to be made. Nonsupersessionists, too, acknowledge that there is a sense in which the New Testament has priority over the Old Testament, but their understanding of this concept is quite different from that of supersessionists. This difference needs to be explained.

First, Nonsupersessionists acknowledge the concept of progressive revelation in which God gives inspired revelation that adds to, clarifies, and expands on revelations previously given. **Nonsupersessionists, therefore, believe that the New Testament is a more complete revelation than the Old Testament and offers information and insight not found in the Old Testament.**

Second, **nonsupersessionists acknowledge the right of the New Testament to cancel or modify things revealed in the Old Testament.** For example, Leviticus 11 established various food laws for the nation Israel. These food restrictions have clearly

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<sup>59</sup> See Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 3; George Eldon Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 20–21.

<sup>60</sup> Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 179.

been revoked by the New Testament (see Mark 7:19). So today we are no longer bound by the food laws of Leviticus 11. How about the Mosaic Law? The New Testament clearly states that the Christian is no longer under the Mosaic Law (see Rom. 10:4; Gal. 5:18). So then, the Mosaic Law is not binding on the Christian today. Also, the New Testament is clear that a change in priesthood has occurred and that Jesus Christ is the final sacrifice for sins (see Heb. 9). Thus, Christians today do not have to offer animal sacrifices.

In addition, nonsupersessionists acknowledge **the right of the New Testament to add applications and referents to Old Testament revelation**. Clearly, there are times when New Testament writers use and apply the Old Testament in ways that were unforeseen by the Old Testament writers. This is not disputed.

But it may also be possible that the New Testament adds new referents to Old Testament promises, prophecies, and covenants. If an Old Testament promise or covenant is given to Israel in the Old Testament and the New Testament includes Gentiles or the church in that promise or covenant, then a new referent to the Old Testament promise or covenant has been added. In this case, there may be two referents to an Old Testament promise—the first referent is Israel while the second referent is the Gentiles and/or the church. The fact that an OT promise or covenant is applied/fulfilled with the church does not mean that the original referent—Israel—is no longer related to the promise or covenant. As Walton points out:

It is not helpful to list all of the places where the church or the Gentiles become heirs to promises made to Israel. There is no question that there are examples of this. **These examples, however, do not prove that all of the promises to Israel will find fulfillment in the church**, nor that the promises find their complete, or final, fulfillment in the church.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, nonsupersessionists understand that there is a strong typological connection between the testaments. There clearly are several Old Testament types that are superseded by superior antitypes as revealed in the New Testament. For example, there is a typological connection between Adam and Jesus Christ (see Rom. 5). There is a typological connection between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus Christ as Hebrews indicates. There is a connection between the Passover and the death of Christ (see 1 Cor. 5:7).

- It does seem that most of the type/antitype relationships were you see some type of cancellation were related to the Mosaic Cov., which was predicted to pass away anyway

As the points above show, there is a real sense in which nonsupersessionists believe in “New Testament priority.” Nonsupersessionists, though, disagree strongly with the supersessionist understanding of New Testament priority.

**For supersessionists, New Testament priority means that the New Testament must be the starting point for understanding Old Testament passages**. Thus, the beginning

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<sup>61</sup> John H. Walton, *Covenant* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 136.

point for understanding Old Testament passages is not the Old Testament passages themselves, but the alleged New Testament interpretation of those texts.

What makes this approach of supersessionists so significant is that it **abandons the historical-grammatical approach** for understanding the Old Testament. Supersessionists claim that to understand the primary meaning of an Old Testament text, one should not go to that Old Testament text itself; instead, one must go to the New Testament and read the Old Testament passage through the lens of the New Testament. Or to put it another way—to understand an Old Testament passage do not start with the Old Testament passage itself. Instead, see it in light of the New Testament.

It is this view of New Testament priority that is beset with serious problems. First, it has not been established that the apostles and the New Testament writers viewed their sayings and writings as replacing the original authorial intents of the Old Testament writers. Certainly they understood that the last days and the messianic era had begun in some way and that they were ministers of a new covenant. They also showed how Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and how what was going on was related to what was predicted in the Old Testament. But did they believe the New Testament overrode the original authorial intent of the Old Testament writers? This is highly debatable. **Certainly, there is no statement in the New Testament that the original authorial intent of the Old Testament writers had been superseded by the New Testament writers.**

Supersessionists often appeal to Acts 2/Joel 2, Acts 15/Amos 9, and Hebrews 8/Jeremiah 31 to show that the New Testament writers redirected, transferred or reinterpreted the original Old Testament promises. But as will be discussed later, it is highly questionable **whether these passages actually support the idea that the original Old Testament meanings have been altered or entirely fulfilled in ways not predicted by the Old Testament authors.**

While supersessionists may argue that some passages show that the Old Testament expectation for Israel has been entirely fulfilled in a different manner, their arguments are far from convincing and do not account for other possible alternative explanations. Perhaps in these passages the New Testament writers are appealing to principles found in the Old Testament without stressing a full and final fulfillment. Perhaps they are including other referents in a partial fulfillment of Old Testament passages (i.e. Gentiles) but not doing so in such a way that excludes a fulfillment with the nation Israel. Thus, new applications of Old Testament passages or new referents does not mean the original meaning has been jettisoned. As John Feinberg rightly observes:

No NT writer claims his new understanding of the OT passage cancels the meaning of the OT passage in its own context or that the new application is the only meaning of the OT passage. The NT writer merely offers a different application of an OT passage than the OT might have foreseen; he is not claiming the OT understanding is now irrelevant.<sup>62</sup>

The supersessionist hermeneutic is simply not satisfactory. Thus, we offer what we believe is a better approach that does more justice to the relationship between the

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<sup>62</sup> John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 77.



testaments. It goes like this: *Let us assume that whatever God instituted or promised in the Old Testament is binding unless the New Testament tells us that it is not. If the New Testament revokes a promise or institution found in the Old Testament then it is not binding. But if there is no revocation then what was promised in the Old Testament is still in effect.*

With this approach matters such as food laws, the Mosaic Law, and the primacy of the Levitical priesthood have been revoked because the New Testament clearly says so. But on the other hand, we see no evidence from the New Testament that promises to national Israel have been revoked or that the nation is no longer related to the covenants and promises of the Old Testament. In fact, the New Testament affirms the opposite.

We prefer this approach to the “interpret the Old through the New” approach that is too broad and sweeps aside the original historical-grammatical contexts of the Old Testament books. Our suggested approach *recognizes the authority of the New Testament and its right to apply and add referents to Old Testament promises in ways unforeseen by the Old Testament authors. Yet it allows the Old Testament texts to retain their integrity as revelation by paying heed to the original authorial intent of the OT authors.*

Part of our problem with the supersessionist view of “The New Interprets the Old” is that it is too simplistic and does not do justice to the nuances found in the relationship between the testaments. It defangs the Old Testament and does not allow it to speak to the issues it addresses such as God’s plans for the nation Israel. It also does not take into account partial fulfillments and multiple referents constructs that are found in Scripture.

Second, the supersessionist view of New Testament priority casts doubt on the integrity of the Old Testament texts. If the New Testament reinterprets the Old Testament or seriously modifies or transcends its promises and covenants, one may rightly wonder in what sense the Old Testament revelations were actually revelations in good faith to the original readers of the promises.<sup>63</sup> As David L. Turner explains, “If NT reinterpretation reverses, cancels, or seriously modifies OT promises to Israel, one wonders how to define the word ‘progressive.’ God’s faithfulness to His promises to Israel must also be explained.”<sup>64</sup> Turner also points out that *the supersessionist approach comes close to violating New Testament statements that uphold the truth claims of the Old Testament:* “It appears exceedingly doubtful that the NT reinterprets the OT. . . . This comes perilously close to conflicting with such NT passages as Matt 5:18 and John 10:35b.”<sup>65</sup>

Walter C. Kaiser points out that Christians “misjudge the revelation of God if we have a theory of interpretation which says the most recent revelation of God is to be

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<sup>63</sup> In response to George Ladd’s declaration that the New Testament reinterprets the Old Testament, Paul Feinberg asks some relevant questions: “If Ladd is correct that the NT reinterprets the OT, his hermeneutic does raise some serious questions. How can the integrity of the OT text be maintained? In what sense can the OT really be called a *revelation* in its original meaning?” Paul Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 116. Emphasis in original.

<sup>64</sup> David L. Turner, “The Continuity of Scripture and Eschatology: Key Hermeneutical Issues,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6:2 (1985): 281.

<sup>65</sup> Turner, “The Continuity of Scripture and Eschatology,” 282.

preferred or substituted for that which came earlier.”<sup>66</sup> He also argues that the assertion that the New Testament must be the guide for interpreting the Old Testament comes dangerously close to the idea that there is a canon within the canon. He states, “But why would a rule be imposed on the revelation of God that demands that the Old Testament passages may not become the basis for giving primary direction on any doctrines or truths that have relevancy for New Testament times? This is only to argue in the end for a canon within a canon.”<sup>67</sup>

Third, the supersessionist approach to testament priority also does not adequately account for Old Testament texts that explicitly promise the perpetuity of Israel as a nation. Jer 31:35–37, for example, declares that Israel’s status as a *nation* before God can never be canceled and is as sure as the continuation of the universe.<sup>68</sup>

In our view, the supersessionist understanding of testament priority is related to what R. Kendall Soulen’s calls “structural supersessionism” in which the Old Testament is not sufficiently allowed to address how God deals with his creation.<sup>69</sup> Since the New Testament is viewed as the starting point and the lens through which the Old Testament is understood, texts like Jer 31:35–37, which explicitly declare the perpetuity of national Israel’s place in God’s plan, are not given the proper weight they deserve.<sup>70</sup>

**\*\*KEY\*\*** Fourth, another weakness of the supersessionist understanding of testament priority is that **the New Testament explicitly upholds many aspects of Israel’s expectation as revealed in the Old Testament**. It teaches and reaffirms the Old Testament expectations concerning a future for national Israel. Rom 11:27, for instance, connects national Israel’s salvation to the new covenant promises of Isaiah and Jeremiah. In reference to Paul’s use of Isa 59:20, 21 and Jer 31:34 in Rom 11:27, John Murray states, “There should be no question but Paul regards these Old Testament passages as applicable to the restoration of Israel.”<sup>71</sup>

Plus texts **such as Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; and Acts 1:6 appear to reaffirm the Old Testament expectation of a future for national Israel**. Thus, it is difficult to accept that the New Testament transcends the Old Testament promises and prophecies of a future for Israel when a cluster of New Testament texts reaffirm the original Old Testament expectations for Israel.

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<sup>66</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6–12),” in *Israel, the Land and the People: An Evangelical Affirmation of God’s Promises*, ed. H. Wayne House (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 222.

<sup>67</sup> Kaiser, “The Land of Israel and the Future Return (Zechariah 10:6–12),” 219.

<sup>68</sup> Verses 35–36 of this passage reads: “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 the offspring of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.’” In this poem made up of two sayings (vv. 35–36 and 37), the Lord declares, what Ernest W. Nicholson has called, “the impossibility of Israel being forsaken forever by God.” Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26—52* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 72.

<sup>69</sup> See R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 31.

<sup>70</sup> See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Evidence From Jeremiah,” in *A Case For Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, eds. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 113.

<sup>71</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 99. Murray is referring to ethnic Israel.

Horner is correct when he states that “the hermeneutic of reinterpretation and transference is illegitimate, which takes the adapted quotation of the OT in the NT to be justification for nullifying the literal interpretation of that same OT passage.”<sup>72</sup> This is the case because “it not only ignores a fundamental, Hebrew hermeneutical frame of reference, but it also brings about a serious distortion of meaning, especially where the eschatological message of the Prophets is concerned.”<sup>73</sup>

### **Non-literal Fulfillment**

The supersessionist belief of New Testament priority over the Old Testament is closely linked to the belief that there are non-literal fulfillments of Old Testament passages. But this belief in non-literal fulfillments of Old Testament passages is not as strong as supersessionists claim. While there are added applications of Old Testament texts and perhaps added referents to Old Testament prophecies, **the case for non-literal fulfillments of promises to Israel is not strong.**

James’ use of Amos 9 in Acts 15 is evidence offered by supersessionists to show a non-literal fulfillment of an OT text.<sup>74</sup> With it a restoration passage from the OT is quoted in regard to the Gentile salvation that was taking place in the early church. This allegedly shows that the original prediction in Amos 9 was being entirely fulfilled in a non-literal way.<sup>75</sup>

### **Multiple Views of Acts 15**

1. Cov. Theo. → Davidic Kingdom is fully restored now with the Church, not w/ national Israel in future.
2. Trad. Disp. → Davidic Kingdom is still future, and comes after Gentile salvation (vs. 14b taking place now, and “*after these things*” Vs. 16ff is still future after the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming) / argues for a **chronology** of events.
3. Revised/Mod. Dispensational → OT predicted Gentile salvation without becoming a Jew; thus a pattern is set that we should not make Gentiles become Jewish (a **principle** is being made, but there is no fulfillment of Amos) / focuses on the agreement, rather than the fulfillment.
4. Progressive Dispensational → **Partial fulfillment** of Amos with Gentiles being saved as part of the Messianic plan, but full fulfillment of Amos 9 awaits the future. / emphasizes the Gentile inclusion soteriologically, without granting the reinstatement of the Davidic Kingdom.

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<sup>72</sup> Horner, *Future Israel*, 185.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> In his chapter “Hermeneutics of Continuity,” O. Palmer devotes his entire discussion to showing a supersessionist understanding of Acts 15/Joel 9. See *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 89–108). See also, Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 39.

<sup>75</sup> Robertson, “Hermeneutics of Continuity,” 107.

**Acts 1:3-5** To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

- So the pouring out of the spirit is linked to the kingdom purpose

**Acts 1:6-8** So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

- So the coming of the Spirit does not equal the coming of the kingdom
- The Spirit comes in brief days... the kingdom comes in an unknown future time.

But Acts 15 does not support the idea of non-literal fulfillments of OT promises to Israel. In sum, we will argue that there is an initial application/fulfillment of the Amos 9 prophecy with believing Gentiles today, but this in no way rules out a future final fulfillment with the nation Israel when Jesus returns.

In regard to Acts 15 and Amos 9, it should be noted that **James does not explicitly say that the salvation of Gentiles "fulfills" the Amos 9 prophecy**. James says that what is taking place in his day "agree"(s) with what the Old Testament prophets had predicted about the Gentiles (Acts 15:15). Thus, a case could be made that James is not claiming a fulfillment of the Amos 9 passage but is pointing to a principle found in the Old Testament that is relevant to the current situation in Acts 15. What is this principle? James could be appealing to a general principle found in the Old Testament "prophets" (note the plural) that Gentiles would some day be saved without becoming Jews and keeping the Mosaic Law.<sup>76</sup> Thus, James could be arguing that since the Old Testament prophets predicted a future day in which Gentiles would be saved without becoming Jews, Gentiles who are being saved presently should not be coerced into Judaism.

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<sup>76</sup> According to Homer Heater, Jr., "... we do not have here a citation of Amos, but of a theological idea derived from the OT concerning a time when Gentiles will be included in God's program for Israel." Homer Heater, Jr., "Evidence from Joel and Amos," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, eds. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 156.

Yet while acknowledging the possibility of this view, we believe there is another alternative that is preferable. That there is some initial application/fulfillment of the Amos 9 prophecy in the church is difficult to avoid. When James says, “And with this the words of the prophets agree,” the word “this” refers back to Acts 15:14 and the Gentile inclusion that Simeon witnessed. Thus, there is something going on presently which is related to what Amos predicted. **According to our view, it is the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God without becoming Jews that is being fulfilled/applied.** Yet, while this part of Amos’ prophecy that relates to Gentile salvation is being fulfilled/applied, we see no reason to believe that the restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel was being fulfilled with the events of Acts 15. Why do we say this? The answer is found in the context of the passage and the specific issue being addressed.

The primary issue at hand in Acts 15 is the salvation of the Gentiles and whether they need to be circumcised and become proselytes to Judaism. **The restoration of Israel is not the primary issue here.** This is not to say that what James is talking about is unrelated to the issue of Israel’s restoration, but it should be understood that the restoration of Israel was not the primary topic at hand. **Inclusion of Gentiles in the messianic plan is the main issue here.** Supersessionists want us to believe the OT expectation for Israel has been altered and reinterpreted, but is this not too much to conclude from a passage that is not directly addressing the restoration of Israel? Jesus had already told the disciples that the restoration of the kingdom to Israel was not going to take place soon (see Acts 1:6–7; cf. 3:19–21). In our view, supersessionists are asking us to accept too much from too little evidence.

The point James appears to be making is that the Jews should not require Gentiles to be circumcised and become Jews because in the Old Testament messianic texts it was predicted that Gentiles would become saved without becoming Jews. As I. Howard Marshall states, “God is making a people out of the nations and nothing in the text suggests that they are to become Jews in order to become God’s people. So there are no entrance ‘conditions’ to be imposed upon them.”<sup>77</sup>

This salvation of the Gentiles as Gentiles and not Jewish proselytes is consistent with Old Testament passages such as Isa. 2:4 and 25:6-7. Richard Longenecker points out that the salvation of Gentiles is consistent with God’s plans for the nation Israel:

In the end times, James is saying, God’s people will consist of two concentric groups. At their core will be restored Israel (i.e., David’s rebuilt tent); gathered around them will be a group of Gentiles (i.e., “the remnant of men”) who will share in the messianic blessings but will persist as Gentiles without necessarily becoming Jewish proselytes.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, what we probably have here is a case of *initial fulfillment* of Amos 9. There is a real sense in which Gentile inclusion in salvation corresponds with what was predicted in the Old Testament. But as Darrell Bock points out, **“Initial fulfillment is not**

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<sup>77</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 253. Marshall himself opts for a supersessionist position, but he is accurate on asserting the main point James is making in this passage.

<sup>78</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981): 9: 446.

exhausted fulfillment.”<sup>79</sup> The salvation of the Gentiles that Amos predicted is being fulfilled, but the future restoration of the Davidic kingdom to Israel is still future (see Acts 1:6).

But one could ask, “Is not the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God evidence that the restoration of Israel is currently being fulfilled?” Not necessarily. In Romans 11:25-27, Paul explicitly declares the “mystery” that a period of Gentile salvation would precede the salvation and restoration of the nation Israel:

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” “And this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.”

One of the truths revealed in the New Testament era is that the salvation of Gentiles would precede the salvation and restoration of Israel. But the salvation of Gentiles should not be taken to mean that believing Gentiles are part of a ‘new Israel’ or that the Davidic kingdom and restoration of Israel are fulfilled in the present age between the two comings of Christ.

Thus, Gentile salvation is not evidence that the restoration of Israel has taken place. According to Paul in Rom 11:25-27, the time period between the two comings of Christ is characterized by Gentile salvation, but when Jesus comes again, the nation Israel will be saved and restored. In our view, then, it is unjustified to assume that James reinterprets or redirects the entire Old Testament expectation for Israel with his words in Acts 15. Heater is correct when he declares, “I would hold that the citation is merely to show that the tenor of OT Scripture supports the idea of Gentiles coming to God without losing their identity. James was not ignoring the future restoration of Israel and equating the ‘hut of David’ with the church; he merely said that one element of what will happen in the future was happening in this day.”<sup>80</sup>

Also, we are not convinced that in every case where an Old Testament text is quoted in the NT that all details of that OT text are entirely being fulfilled. Sometimes the broader context of an OT passage may be quoted to draw attention to a main point at hand. For example, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quotes a major passage from Joel 2 to show that the certain events of that day were being fulfilled. There were events such as the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17) and the nearness of salvation that were being fulfilled presently in some way. But it is significant that Peter also mentions the Day of the Lord and the cosmic signs associated with the Day of the Lord (Acts 2:19-20). Yet the cosmic signs of the Day of the Lord were not fulfilled. The sun was not darkened and the moon did not appear as blood. It should also be remembered that Paul places the Day of the Lord as future in 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Thess 2:2. Peter also places the Day of the Lord as future as well (see 2 Peter 3:10). Clearly, the day of the Lord is a future event even though it was mentioned in the context of a fulfillment in Acts 2. There appears to

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<sup>79</sup> Darrell L. Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, eds. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 197

<sup>80</sup> Heater, “Evidence from Joel and James,” 156–57.



be cases of progressive fulfillment in Scripture. The Scripture has already/not yet and partial fulfillment constructs that must be taken into account.

To summarize, Acts 15 does not give warrant for believing that Old Testament passages regarding Israel are being fulfilled in non-literal ways. In Acts 15, James quotes Amos 9 to show that God's messianic plan for Gentiles, which has been inaugurated with the coming of Jesus, includes the idea that Gentiles can be saved without becoming proselytes to Judaism. Amos and other OT prophets affirm ("agree" with) this truth. This, in no way, means that the entire OT expectation of restoration of national Israel has been changed or altered.

Acts 2 also does not redirect the Old Testament expectation for Israel. Even if there is a fulfillment of some facets of the Joel 2 prophecy in Acts, this does not mean that the entire prophecy of Joel 2 has been fulfilled finally and perfectly. If the Day of the Lord which Joel 2 predicts is still future, so can the restoration of Israel still be future which is connected with the Day of the Lord. With Acts 2 the pouring out of the Holy Spirit partially fulfills the Joel 2 prophecy, but there is not enough reason to conclude that the entire prophecy of Joel 2 was fulfilled.

### Types and Typological Interpretation

The supersessionist understanding of typology in regard to Israel and the church is also problematic. Certainly, as Leonhard Goppelt's work has shown, there are significant typological connections between the two testaments.<sup>81</sup> Yet **belief in types and belief in "typological interpretation" are two different things.** We accept the former but not the latter. A historical-grammatical approach to the Bible indicates that there are many Old Testament types that pointed toward superior New Testament antitypes. Thus, types are a very real part of God's revelation. But we do not see the need, however, to argue that there is the need for "typological interpretation" that is in addition to historical-grammatical interpretation.

We also disagree with the assertion that national Israel itself was a type that has been forever transcended by a greater antitype, the church. The main reason to reject the supersessionist view of Israel being a superseded type is **that multiple New Testament texts reaffirm a future for national Israel. How can Israel be a type that has been superseded by a greater antitype when the New Testament affirms a future for the nation Israel?** If national Israel has truly been superseded by the greater reality, the church, the New Testament would not speak of national Israel as having a future because the nation has given way to the superior antitype. But texts like Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Acts 1:6; and Rom 11:26–27 affirm a future for national Israel.

As W. Edward Glenny has discussed, there may be a typological connection between the church and Israel in the sense that there are significant historical and theological correspondences between the two groups.<sup>82</sup> This kind of typological connection, however, differs from the supersessionist understanding that national Israel is

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<sup>81</sup> See Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).

<sup>82</sup> See W. Edward Glenny, "The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Zondervan, 1992), 179–82.

the lesser type that gives way to the greater reality—the church. Thus, there is not enough evidence to conclude that national Israel functioned as a type whose significance has been transcended by the church.

### APPENDIX 3: THE HERMENEUTICS OF NON-SUPERSESSIONISM

So far we have been critical of the hermeneutics of supersessionism, finding it inadequate to comprehend the biblical relationship between Israel and the church. At this point, though, we want to positively offer what we believe is the proper hermeneutical approach toward the Israel/church issue. The case for nonsupersessionist view regarding Israel and the church includes four beliefs:

- (1) The starting point for understanding the Old Testament is the historical-grammatical context of Old Testament passages.<sup>83</sup>
- (2) Progressive revelation reveals new information but it does not cancel unconditional promises to Israel.<sup>84</sup>
- (3) National Israel is not a type that is transcended by the church.<sup>85</sup>
- (4) Old Testament promises can have a double fulfillment or application with both Israel and the church.<sup>86</sup>

#### **Old Testament as the Starting Point for Understanding the Old Testament**

While affirming the concept of progressive revelation and that the New Testament is a more complete revelation than the Old Testament,<sup>87</sup> nonsupersessionists do not hold that the New Testament reinterprets or changes the original meaning of Old Testament texts, especially those that address eschatological issues regarding Israel. As Robert L. Saucy argues:

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<sup>83</sup> Those who hold that the New Testament does not reinterpret the Old Testament include: Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational & Nondispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 30; John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988), 75; Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity*, 124; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel, 1989), 203.

<sup>84</sup> Those who hold that progressive revelation cannot cancel unconditional promises to Israel include: John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 76; David L. Turner, "The Continuity of Scripture and Eschatology: Key Hermeneutical Issues," *Grace Theological Journal* 6:2 (1985): 279; Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 84; Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," 120.

<sup>85</sup> Those who believe Israel is not a type that is superseded by the church include: John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 76; Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," 124; and Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 32.

<sup>86</sup> Those who believe some Old Testament promises will have a double fulfillment with both Israel and the church include: Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," 125–27; Erich Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity: An Outline of Divine Purposes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 191; Kenneth L. Barker, "The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, eds. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 323; Darrell L. Bock, "Summary Essay," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 291; John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 77; John H. Walton, *Covenant: God's Purpose, God's Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 136.

<sup>87</sup> See John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 75.

Recognizing that the Old Testament prophecies speak of the eschatological times and events, including the inauguration of the new covenant, precludes our seeing all of the Old Testament as merely shadows and types that become outmoded with the coming of Christ. The fulfilled reality of the coming of Christ transcended many elements contained in the old Mosaic covenant; but this cannot be said of the promises of the new covenant and other eschatological realities.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, Old Testament texts, as understood within their historical-grammatical contexts, must be the starting point for understanding God's plans for national Israel. This is the only way to maintain the integrity of the Old Testament.

In defense of a nonsupersessionist approach to understanding the Old Testament, Paul D. Feinberg rightly states, "The sense of any OT prediction must be determined through the application of historical-grammatical hermeneutics to that text."<sup>89</sup> This approach places more emphasis on the historical-grammatical contexts of Old Testament passages for understanding God's plans for Israel than does the view of supersessionism.

John Feinberg observes that one key issue separating dispensationalists, who comprise a subcategory of nonsupersessionism, and nondispensationalists, who are often supersessionists,<sup>90</sup> is how each group approaches Old Testament texts. He states:

Nondispensationalists [supersessionists] begin with NT teaching as having priority and then go back to the OT. Dispensationalists [nonsupersessionists] often begin with the OT, but wherever they begin they demand that the OT be taken on its own terms rather than reinterpreted in the light of the NT.<sup>91</sup>

For nonsupersessionists, Old Testament texts must be understood in their own right, and the interpreter must not be too quick to superimpose an alleged New Testament meaning upon the Old Testament texts.

In developing a theology of Israel, therefore, nonsupersessionists view a historical-grammatical understanding of Old Testament texts as foundational for understanding God's plans for Israel. The New Testament builds upon Old Testament revelation concerning the nation Israel, but the New Testament does not transcend or alter the original intent of the authors who penned the Old Testament promises. Blaising and Bock correctly point out "that we cannot pit Old Testament revelation against New Testament revelation in such a way that the original author's meaning is totally redefined, even if the claim is that the redefinition is a heightening."<sup>92</sup>

We believe it is best, therefore, to view Old Testament promises and covenants about Israel as still having continuing relevance for national Israel. As Bruce A. Ware states:

There can be no question that the prophets meant to communicate the promise of a national return of Israel to its land. To the extent that our hermeneutics are regulated by the principle of authorial intent, we are given ample reason to accept

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<sup>88</sup> Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 30.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," 123.

<sup>90</sup> Within Christian theology, many nondispensationalists are supersessionists although some exceptions do exist.

<sup>91</sup> John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 75.

<sup>92</sup> Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, "Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: Assessment and Dialogue," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 391, n. 7.

this literal rendering of what God, through the prophets, originally promised to his people Israel.<sup>93</sup>

This belief that the New Testament gives foundational revelation that assumes and builds upon Old Testament revelation affects how nonsupersessionists respond to the charge that the New Testament is silent regarding national Israel's restoration and return to its land. For nonsupersessionists, the Old Testament has already revealed God's plans on this matter; thus, there is no need for this information to be repeated. In fact, *Israel's future restoration should be assumed unless the New Testament explicitly states otherwise*. Paul Feinberg makes this argument:

The fact that Israel does not have a more central position [in the New Testament] is due to the fact that the church becomes central in salvation history. But beyond that, why should something that is clearly a matter of OT revelation *have* to be *repeated* in the NT for it to have continuing validity? Should not the very opposite be the case? Should not the promises of the OT be regarded as still in effect *unless the NT states otherwise*?<sup>94</sup>

John Feinberg makes a similar point: "If the NT explicitly rejects an OT institution, etc., it is canceled. But if God makes a point once (the OT), why must he repeat it in the NT for it still to be true and operative? So long as he neither explicitly or implicitly rejects the OT teaching, why assume it is canceled just because the NT does not repeat it?"<sup>95</sup> It is not an argument from silence to claim Old Testament promises to Israel are still in force "*because God has already in the OT broken the silence and given us his thinking*."<sup>96</sup>

Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, too, asserts that a major Old Testament doctrine such as the restoration of Israel cannot be disregarded simply because the New Testament does not explicitly repeat it:

Even if Jesus had been totally silent, that would not disprove a national restoration. It may simply mean that there was nothing to add to what was already revealed about the topic. A major Old Testament doctrine such as the national restoration of Israel cannot be dismissed simply on the basis of an argument from silence.<sup>97</sup>

An essential factor for understanding the meaning and significance of Old Testament texts, including their promises to Israel, is the Old Testament texts themselves as understood within their historical-grammatical contexts. Thus, we should start with the Old Testament to understand God's plans for Israel. Then we should view the New Testament as adding complementary information regarding this matter. Horner is correct when he states that we need "A Christocentric Hermeneutic for the Hebrew Scriptures," and not "A Christocentric Hermeneutic against the Hebrew Scriptures."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Bruce A. Ware, "The New Covenant and the People(s) of God," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 93.

<sup>94</sup> Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," 124. Emphases in original.

<sup>95</sup> John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 76.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Emphases in original.

<sup>97</sup> Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 203.

<sup>98</sup> Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must Be Challenged* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 195, 186.

## Unconditional Promises Not Canceled by Progressive Revelation

Already	Not Yet
<b>New Cov. Was established w/ Christ's death</b>	<b>Physical blessings</b>
<b>Spiritual blessings poured out:</b> - <b>Holy spirit</b> - <b>Forgiveness of sins</b> - <b>New heart</b>	

In addition to emphasizing that Old Testament passages are foundational for understanding God's plans for Israel, non-supersessionists assert that the unconditional nature of Old Testament promises to Israel rules out the possibility that these promises could be fulfilled in a way that excludes national Israel. **Because God is true to his word and cannot lie, what he promises unconditionally to a specific people must come to pass.** He may certainly add to his promises or even add other people groups to his promises, but he can never do less than what he promised. In other words, God may do more than what he promised, he cannot do less. Thus, Moo is correct when he states, "Israel still has a place in God's plan because God is faithful."<sup>99</sup>

John Feinberg addresses this issue of the unconditional nature of certain promises for Israel and its implications for the concept of progressive revelation. As he states, "The crucial point is *how we know* whether something in the OT (especially prophecy about Israel's future) is still binding in the NT."<sup>100</sup> If an Old Testament promise is made unconditionally with a specific group such as Israel, then that promise must be fulfilled with that group. **Progress of revelation cannot cancel unconditional promises to Israel:**

If an OT prophecy or promise is made unconditionally to a given people and is still unfulfilled to them even in the NT era, then the prophecy must still be fulfilled to them. While a prophecy given unconditionally to Israel has a fulfillment for the church if the NT *applies* it to the church, it must also be fulfilled to Israel. Progress of revelation cannot cancel unconditional promises.<sup>101</sup>

David L. Turner has also addressed how some supersessionists and nonsupersessionists have understood the relationship between the Old and New testaments and the implications of their views in relation to progressive revelation. In doing so, he refers to covenant theologians who are supersessionists, and dispensational theologians who are nonsupersessionists. Turner argues that "covenant theologians [supersessionists] and dispensationalists [nonsupersessionists] disagree on the nature of progressive revelation."<sup>102</sup> He says, "Each group accuses the other of misinterpreting the

<sup>99</sup> Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 732.

<sup>100</sup> John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 76. Emphasis in original.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>102</sup> Turner, "The Continuity of Scripture and Eschatology: Key Hermeneutical Issues," 280.



NT due to alien presuppositions.”<sup>103</sup> Turner points out that dispensationalists who are nonsupersessionists deny that the New Testament reinterprets Old Testament promises to Israel. He says, “It is their contention that the NT supplies no ‘reinterpretation’ of OT prophecy which would cancel the OT promises to Israel of a future historical kingdom. In their view the NT use of the OT does not radically modify the OT promises to Israel.”<sup>104</sup>

Turner rightly claims that the supersessionist understanding brings into question God’s faithfulness to Israel: “If NT reinterpretation reverses, cancels, or seriously modifies OT promises to Israel, one wonders how to define the word ‘progressive.’ God’s faithfulness to His promises to Israel must also be explained.”<sup>105</sup>

Turner also rightly points out that the supersessionist approach comes close to violating New Testament statements that uphold the truth claims of the Old Testament: “It appears exceedingly doubtful that the NT reinterprets the OT so as to evaporate the plain meaning of its promises. This comes perilously close to conflicting with such NT passages as Matt 5:18 and John 10:35b.”<sup>106</sup>

Charles C. Ryrie points out that the New Testament does not change the meaning of Old Testament texts. He asserts, “New revelation cannot mean contradictory revelation. Later revelation on a subject does not make the earlier revelation mean something different.”<sup>107</sup> “If this were so,” according to Ryrie, “God would have to be conceived of as deceiving the Old Testament prophets when He revealed to them a nationalistic kingdom, since He would have known all the time that He would completely reverse the concept in later revelation.”<sup>108</sup> For Ryrie, the concept of progressive revelation can be likened to a building in progress: “The superstructure does not replace the foundation.”<sup>109</sup>

Unlike the approach of nonsupersessionists, the hermeneutical approach of supersessionists calls into question the integrity of Old Testament passages. In response to George Ladd’s assertion that the New Testament, at times, reinterprets the Old Testament,<sup>110</sup> Paul Feinberg comments, “If Ladd is correct that the NT reinterprets the OT, his hermeneutic does raise some serious questions. How can the integrity of the OT text be maintained? In what sense can the OT really be called a *revelation* in its original meaning?”<sup>111</sup> Paul Feinberg also points out that the supersessionist approach to Israel’s promises has implications for the truthfulness of God. He says, “How can God be truthful and change the meaning of His promises?”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 280–81.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>107</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 84.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. George N. H. Peters concurs, “If no restoration was intended; if all was to be understood typically, or spiritually, or conditionally, then surely the language was most eminently calculated to deceive the hearers. . . .” George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ as Covenanted in the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 51.

<sup>109</sup> Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 84.

<sup>110</sup> See Ladd, “Historic Premillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 21.

<sup>111</sup> Paul Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 116. Emphasis in original.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 120.

To sum up, progressive revelation does not cancel unconditional promises to Israel. As John Feinberg writes, “The unconditionality of the promises to Israel guarantees that the NT does not even implicitly remove those promises from Israel.”<sup>113</sup> This may have been partly what Paul had in mind when he said that Israel is “beloved for the sake of the fathers” and that “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” when discussing the future of Israel (Rom 11:28–29).<sup>114</sup> Paul also ties Israel’s future salvation to Israel’s election (11:2, 29), its relationship to the Old Testament patriarchs (11:28), and its relationship to the new covenant (11:27). Plus, Paul states that the “covenants” and “promises” are still the possession of “Israelites” even while they are in a state of disobedience (Rom 9:4). Peter, with his speech to the Jewish leaders in Acts 3:25, affirms that they are still “sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers.”

### Israel Not a Type

Supersessionism holds that national Israel functioned as a type of the New Testament church. Once the greater antitype, the church, was revealed, Israel’s place as the people of God was transcended and superseded by the church.

Nonsupersessionists, however, take a different approach to understanding Israel’s role in relation to typology. John Feinberg, for instance, points out that that **the nature of the unconditional promises to Israel has implications for understanding Israel’s relationship to typology.** While acknowledging the existence of Old Testament types that prefigure New Testament realities, the people with whom the promises were made are not types. He states,

The unconditionality of the promises to Israel guarantees that the NT does not even implicitly remove those promises from Israel. OT civil and ceremonial laws and institutions are shadows and are explicitly removed in the NT. But unconditional promises are not shadows, nor are the peoples to whom they are given.<sup>115</sup>

Paul Feinberg, too, while acknowledging the existence of types, does not view Israel as a symbol of the church: “While historical-grammatical interpretation allows for symbols, types, and analogies, I see no evidence that Israel is a symbol for the church, Palestine for the new Jerusalem, *et al.*”<sup>116</sup>

Caution should be used when determining when the New Testament cancels an Old Testament type. As John Feinberg declares, “If the NT antitype cancels the meaning of the OT type, the NT must tell us so.”<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” 76.

<sup>114</sup> Murray writes, “‘Beloved’ thus means that God has not suspended or rescinded his relation to Israel as his chosen people in terms of the covenants made with the fathers. . . . God still sustains his peculiar relation of love to them, a relation that will be demonstrated and vindicated in the restoration (vss. 12, 15, 26).” John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, Reprint 1997), 2:101.

<sup>115</sup> John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” 76.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 124.

<sup>117</sup> John Feinberg, “Systems of Discontinuity,” 79.

Are nonsupersessionists asserting that there is no typological connection whatsoever between Israel and the church? Not necessarily. Saucy, for example, argues that the nation Israel is not a type in the sense that Israel has been transcended by a greater spiritual reality, the church. Yet, he also believes there is a historical and theological correspondence between Israel and the church that may have typological implications. As he explains, “If a type is understood as shadow pointing forward to the reality of an antitype, then it is questionable whether Israel is a type.”<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, if a type is viewed in terms of a correspondence between two groups then a typological connection between Israel and the church may exist:

If a type is defined as a general historical and theological correspondence, then the many analogies between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament people of God may well be explained by seeing Israel as a type of the church. But the correspondence with God’s actions among Old Testament Israel would not in this understanding of typology deny the continued existence of that nation in the future.<sup>119</sup>

Thus, there may be a typological connection between Israel and the church, but this connection is not that of the church superseding national Israel. Instead, the typological connection is that of a historical and theological correspondence that reveals a close relationship between Israel and the church. This typological connection between the Old and New testaments, however, does not alter the original sense of the Old Testament promises to Israel. As David L. Turner explains, “Genuine typology and analogy between OT and NT should not be viewed as destructive to the literal fulfillment of the OT promises to Israel, but rather an indication of a greater continuity between Israel and the church.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, whatever typological relationship exists between Israel and the church, this cannot be taken to mean that Israel’s significance has been transcended and superseded by the church.

### **Multiple Fulfillments/Applications of Old Testament Promises**

The New Testament relates Old Testament texts that told of national Israel’s restoration to specific events in the church age (cf. Acts 2:16–21 with Joel 2:28–32; Acts 15:15–18 with Amos 9:11–12). Some believe this is evidence that the church is the complete fulfillment of the Old Testament promises made with Israel.

Nonsupersessionists, however, come to a different conclusion. In the cases where Old Testament texts regarding Israel are quoted in the New Testament, nonsupersessionists are more likely to interpret the Old Testament passages as having a double fulfillment or application—one for the church in the present and one for national Israel in the future.

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<sup>118</sup> Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 31–32. See also W. Edward Glenny, “The Israelite Imagery of 1 Peter 2,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, 180.

<sup>120</sup> Turner, “The Continuity of Scripture and Eschatology: Key Hermeneutical Issues,” 282. See also Howard Taylor, “The Continuity of the People of God in Old and New Testaments,” *Scottish Bulletin of Theology* 3 (1985): 14–15.

As Paul Feinberg writes, “The referent that acts as the fulfillment of an OT prediction must meet the requirements of the sense of that prediction as determined by the application of historical-grammatical hermeneutics.”<sup>121</sup> For example, with texts such as Acts 2:16–21 and Acts 15:15–18, nonsupersessionists believe that a fulfillment or application of Old Testament prophecies is being made with the church, but they also affirm that there will be a future fulfillment with national Israel.

Paul Feinberg, for instance, argues that Joel 2:28–32 ends up having two referents—the church and Israel. Joel 2:28–32 refers to Israel as a referent while Acts 2:16–21 indicates that the church is also a referent.<sup>122</sup> Likewise, Erich Sauer views Acts 15:15–18 as telling of a present fulfillment of the Amos 9:11–12 prophecy with the church. This present fulfillment in the church, however, does not rule out a future fulfillment of the Amos prophecy with national Israel:

How shall a prior spiritual fulfillment serve to prove that a final complete fulfillment is no more to be expected? Is it not wholly incontestable that, even if these promises can have a prior spiritual fulfillment in the period of the New Testament church, the Old Testament prophets themselves, on the ground of the inspired wording of their prophecies, expected a *literal* fulfillment in a renewed Israel?<sup>123</sup>

In reference to the use of Joel 2:28–32 in Acts 2:17–21 and the use of Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–17, Kenneth L. Barker asserts that there is a present fulfillment with the church and a future fulfillment with national Israel. He states, “These propositions are not either-or but both-and.”<sup>124</sup> Barker calls this ‘both/and’ paradigm “progressive fulfillment.”<sup>125</sup> According to Barker, **the church, including its Gentile members, are involved with “the progressive fulfillment of the great promises in Israel’s unconditional covenants,” but this participation does not involve “excluding Israel in the future” from these covenants.**<sup>126</sup>

The application or fulfillment of Old Testament texts in the New Testament era is not evidence that the original meaning of the Old Testament promises and prophecies have been jettisoned or completely transcended. This is John Feinberg’s point:

NT application of the OT passage does not necessarily eliminate the passage’s original meaning. No NT writer claims his new understanding of the OT passage cancels the meaning of the OT passage in its own context or that the new application is the only meaning of the OT passage. The NT writer merely offers a different application of an OT passage than the OT might have foreseen; he is not claiming the OT understanding is now irrelevant. Double fulfillment, then, is necessitated by the NT’s application of the passage to the church and by

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<sup>121</sup> Paul Feinberg, “Hermeneutics of Discontinuity,” 123.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 125–27.

<sup>123</sup> Sauer, *From Eternity to Eternity*, 191. Emphasis in original. See also Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 78–80.

<sup>124</sup> Barker, “The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope,” 323.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 325. Bock writes, “Other premillennialists acknowledge that the New Testament does acknowledge degrees of direct, initial Old Testament fulfillment in the church today, but because this fulfillment is ‘already/not yet,’ the present fulfillment complements or supplies only a piece of what is ultimately alluded to in the Old Testament.” Bock, “Summary Essay,” 291.

maintaining the integrity of the OT's meaning, especially in view of the unconditional nature of the promises to Israel.<sup>127</sup>

Therefore, *expansion* of Old Testament promises to the church does not mean that national Israel has been *excluded* from the promises. As Paul Feinberg asserts:

Where a promise or prediction is expanded or amplified, the amplification does not preclude the original addressees as a part of the referent (fulfillment) of that promise. *Expansion* does not require *exclusion*. Exclusion from any promise must be based upon some explicit or implicit statement of subsequent Scripture.

Therefore, a concern for those to whom the prediction was given will always be necessary.<sup>128</sup>

In line with this assumption that Old Testament texts should be understood according to their historical-grammatical contexts is the belief that national Israel is still a referent for the Old Testament predictions regarding Israel.

Thus, unconditional promises made to Israel are still in effect. House makes a valid point that "Those who believe that the church has somehow taken over the blessings of Israel must explain the revoking of these apparently irrevocable callings of God on His people."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> John Feinberg, "Systems of Discontinuity," 77.

<sup>128</sup> Paul Feinberg, "Hermeneutics of Discontinuity," 127–28. Emphases in original.

<sup>129</sup> House, "The Church's Appropriation of Israel's Blessings," 81.