

ALL THINGS IN CHRIST

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him the plan for the fullness of the times

**TO HEAD UP THE ALL THINGS IN THE CHRIST,
the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him...**

(Ephesians 1:8b-10)

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Dualism, Reversionism, Graftage

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Many years ago, I held the view that God is now working along two very distinct and different lines that will also continue in the age to come: 1) the ecclesia of Christians [the church], and 2) the present-day Jewish state of Israel comprised of Jews according to the flesh [bloodline]. However, quite a few years ago I became troubled in my spirit because it did not feel right to me. Something was amiss in such thinking. After all, the dividing wall has been broken down and there is now **one new man** (Ephesians 2:15), and **we** [commonwealth of Israel and the nations] **both have our access in one Spirit to the Father** (Ephesians 2:18). This sure doesn't sound like two distinct lines.

So, I began to inquire of the Lord and search for an answer to what was boiling inside me. As I searched for the answer, the Holy Spirit began to gradually open my eyes to what I now believe is a much more accurate truth of the Word of God.

The question that sat before me was this: **Is God working on two distinct lines or one?** The answer I discovered is that God is working only on one line, and this line is based on His Son and the New Covenant, and all, regardless of bloodline, are being grafted into this one line. This might seem a bit too obvious, but it really isn't when you begin studying this subject and discover that many seem to believe in a hybrid of the Old and the New Covenants.

To explain the results of my research, I have divided the various views on the subject into three schools of thought and labeled them: **Dualism, Reversionism, and Graftage**. The latter two terms may seem strange to some, but they are real words.

Dualism

Dualism is defined as "the state of being dual (two); duality; two basic entities; two natures." This is a condensed definition, but the point is that it refers to two of something.

As such, dualism sees God working along two distinct lines of people. The first line involves the unbelieving Jews based on the flesh, that is, ones born of a genealogical bloodline traced to the seed of Jacob. The second line involves the ecclesia (church) of Christians based on the spirit, that is, ones born from above with the seed of God.

As with most schools of thought, there are variations around a common theme. This school is most associated with **dispensationalism**. The most prevalent form of this ism holds to a future

pre-tribulation "rapture," followed by a 7-year tribulation, and then a 1000-year kingdom with Christ ruling from ancient Jerusalem with a rebuilt temple and the Jews (Israel) heading up the nations, with the church in heaven, meeting at the pearly gates, eating fruit from the tree of life, walking on streets of pure gold, and living in mansions in a literal, heavenly city called the new Jerusalem.

In other words, according to this school, there will be two groups of God's people living in two distinct cities, one earthly and one heavenly, with both blessed of God for two different reasons, one based on the physical seed of Jacob and the Old Covenant, and one based on the spiritual seed of God and the New Covenant. At the same time, there will continue to be billions of unbelievers, created to be in the image of *Elohim*, roasting and toasting in an eternal place of fire and worms that many call *hell*. Ugh! This is straight out of paganism. Or, is it straight out of hell?

Further, some within this school of thought see the church coming back to earth and residing in the earthly Jerusalem with believing Jews, all united in Christ. Others in this school see the Jews rebuilding a physical temple where God will place His name and glory and reinstitute the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices. In other words, they replace Christianity with Judaism that rises to its former grandeur of Solomon's day with Jesus seated on a throne in Jerusalem and ministering through a rebuilt temple. To add to the confusion, some see King David, literally, on the throne, and some believe that Jews do not have to believe Jesus is the Messiah because the Jews are given special privilege to rule the world based simply on their bloodline that is traced back to Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. After all, as the thinking goes, they are God's chosen people, and they can do no wrong, and God will protect them no matter what mischief they create in the world. Of course, some rightly insist that the Jews must and will believe in Jesus.

The point is that dualism sees God working on two distinct lines, some see both of these in Christ, and others do not. Unfortunately, dualism seems to confuse or ignore Scripture on several levels. A few are offered.

First, it retains the Old Covenant or some hybrid of it that, according to God's Word, has been made obsolete and has been replaced with the New Covenant. **When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete** (Hebrews 8:13).

Second, Paul defines a true Jew. Based on his definition, an argument could be made that every believing Christian is a Jew.

(28) For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. (29) But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Romans 2:28-29 NASB)

Third, in His letters to the ecclesias, Jesus exposed the synagogue of Satan and the lying Jew.

(2:9) 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.' ... (3:9) 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.'
(Revelation 2:9; 3:9 NASB)

Claiming one is a Jew based on ancestry and circumcision of the flesh and, on this basis alone, has access to God the Father (God of Abraham) while rejecting His Son, Jesus the Christ, makes one a liar. Jesus said that **no one comes to the Father but through Me** (John 14:6). If an "outward" Jew rejects Christ and thus has an uncircumcised heart, then his claim to be a true Jew is a lie.

Fourth, Paul made a clear distinction between the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above.

(25) Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. ... (30) But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN."
(Galatians 4:25-26, 30 NASB)

The present or earthly Jerusalem must be cast out.

There is only one Jerusalem on God's heart; it is the city that Abraham sought, **which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God** (Hebrews 11:10). It is called **New Jerusalem**. For this reason, the Hebrew believers were exhorted: **For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come** (Hebrews 13:14).

Ancient Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by the Romans shortly after the letter to the Hebrews was written, but notice that the Hebrews were never encouraged to hold to the earthly city or, for that matter, a new and improved rebuilt one. It had to be destroyed so that they would be released from any and all attachments to the present Jerusalem, the temple, and Judaism. Instead, they were encouraged, as we are today: **But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem** (Hebrews 12:22).

Fifth, Paul tells us that Christians are the temple of the living God, and this temple is being built into a dwelling of God *in Spirit*, which is corporately New Jerusalem.

And what agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are a temple of the living God, even as God said, "I will" dwell in them and "walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 37:27 (2 Corinthians 6:16 LITV)

(19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, (20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, (21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in [the] Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 NASB)

Sixth, the thought that a Levitical priesthood will be reinstated to minister in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem during the next age seems contradictory to Scripture. The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that there is a new priesthood, not based on a genealogical line traced to Aaron and Levi, whose priests died every generation, but one based on an indestructible life and the very oath of God to His Son. In other words, it is traced to and found in the Son of God.

(5) So also the Christ has not glorified Himself to become a high priest, but He speaking to Him, "You are My Son; today I have begotten You." Psa. 2:7 (6) As He also says in another place, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek," Psa. 110:4 (Hebrews 5:5-6 LITV)

(13) For the One of whom these things are said has partaken of another tribe, from which no one has given devotion at the altar. (14) For it is clear that our Lord has risen out of Judah, as to which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. (15) And it is still more abundantly clear that if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, (16) who has not become so according to a law of a fleshly command, but according to the power of an indissoluble life. (17) For it is testified, "You are a priest to the age according to the order of Melchizedek." Psa. 110:4 (Hebrews 7:13-17 LITV)

This priesthood traces back to Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and the king of peace, who was a type of God's Son, the true King of Righteousness and of Peace. The first king-priest according to the order of Melchizedek was Shem, who built the first Jerusalem, signifying the Kingdom of God on earth. The last and preeminent King-Priest according to the order of Melchizedek is Jesus, who is the very cornerstone, foundation, and builder of the second and last Jerusalem, New Jerusalem, signifying the Kingdom of God in heaven and on earth, as manifested in a people called the Body of Christ.

Consequently, the Levitical priesthood has been made obsolete. It seems untenable that it will be revived as part of God's plan in order to offer daily sacrifices that have all been fulfilled in Christ's one sacrifice for all times (Hebrews 10:9-10).

Just as the Old Covenant has been made obsolete, so has the old priesthood of men from the loins of Aaron and Levi been made obsolete! God is raising up a new priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, born of the seed of God, indwelt with the Spirit of God, and they will reign on the earth for 1,000 years (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6), and beyond into God's Day.

Christian Zionism

Before moving on to the other schools of thought, prevalent in our day, dualism is most evident in what is called *Christian Zionism*. This section might appear a bit redundant, but it cannot be avoided in order to make the point.

I realize that there are some who will counter what I have written so far with the argument that the Jews according to the flesh will come into the Kingdom of God the same way that Christians do. Their eyes will be opened to Jesus as Messiah, and they will repent for their unbelief and believe on Him. Up to this point, I am in full agreement, for this is the only way for anyone, Jew

or gentile [nations], to come into the Kingdom of God. Again, the only way to God the Father is through His Son, the Lord Jesus, who is the Savior of the world and the King of the nations.

Where I differ, and I also believe Scripture differs, is where those who state the above go on to argue that the believing Jews, whose eyes are opened at the end of the age, generally through and during what is called the great tribulation, are a special race of people destined to rule over the nations in the age to come, based not only on their belief in Jesus but also on their bloodline traced back through Jacob, to Isaac, to Abraham. In other words, in the age to come, the believing Jews will be separated out from the ecclesia of believers [church] and given special status as the nation of Israel that will rule over the nations on earth because they are God's chosen.

The problem with such a doctrine is that it is contrary to Scripture, especially according to the glorious gospel presented by Paul in his Ephesians epistle.

(13) But now, in Christ Jesus you who then were afar off, came to be near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He is our peace, He making us both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, (15) in His flesh causing to cease the enmity, the Law of the commandments in decrees, that He might in Himself create the two into one new man, making peace, (16) and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, slaying the enmity in Himself. (17) And coming, He proclaimed "peace to you, the ones afar off, and to the ones near." Isa. 57:19 (18) For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:13-18 LITV)

There are no longer two distinct lines but one line that God is working along that Paul calls the **One New Man in Christ**. The wall that separated the nation of Israel from the rest of the nations has been broken down by the Second Man, Christ, and all who believe on God's Son are one and equal in the sight of God. All have the same access by one Spirit to one Father. Paul makes it very clear in his letters that, in respect to God and His Son, there is only one distinct line, not two.

(4) There is one body and one Spirit, even as you also were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all, the One above all and through all and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4-6 LITV)

But to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we by Him. (1 Corinthians 8:6 LITV)

Unfortunately, it seems that many evangelical Christians have chosen to ignore the truth of these verses, and more, as they support the current Jewish state of Israel solely on the basis, as they see it, of them being God's chosen nation to rule the world in the age to come, no matter what they do or think. It would be one thing, and a good thing at that, if they sought to simply convert the Jews and the modern nation of Israel to Christ so that they would come out of Judaism into Christianity, but this is not at the heart of Christian Zionism.

Like Esau who sold his birthright to Jacob for a pot of red stew, so are many Christians selling their birthright to a people and a nation that have rejected Christ for the last 2,000 years and

that Jesus Himself said would not inherit the Kingdom of God (Matthew 21:43). Believers are the true Jew and the church of the conquerors is the true Israel of God because they have come under the rule of God through His Son, are obedient to His will, and are in an intimate covenant relationship with Christ.

Now, what is **modern Zionism**? There are many definitions of it, some even sinister, but, at its core, it holds that the Jews have the right to self-determination and to develop their national culture in their own natural homeland, implemented through the creation and defense of the Jewish state of Israel. Initially, Zionism was a national movement to return the Jewish people to Palestine and to reestablish their sovereignty in "the land of Israel" through their own nation. Of course, this took place in 1948.

One Jewish website included this in the definition of Zionism: **"It is applied to Evangelical Christians who want people of the Jewish religion to return to Israel in order to hasten the second coming. 'Christian Zionism' is also used to describe any Christian support for Israel."**

It is safe to say that Christian Zionists believe that modern Israel, along with its "eternal" capital, Jerusalem, is the apple of God's eye and will never cease to exist, and any nation that opposes Israel or attempts to give away its land will ultimately fail.

Again, some believe that the ones calling themselves Jews, who presently reject Christ Jesus and remain enemies of His cross, must and will believe on Jesus as Messiah at the end of the age in order to have this most-favored status in the world. However, others believe they will come into this favor with God based simply on their ancestry. In addition, as the doctrine goes, the ecclesia of Christ will be "raptured" off the earth and, "poof," the Jewish state will take over.

Christian Zionists fail to see that, prophetically, the earthly Jerusalem must fall just as Shiloh fell, never to be repaired again (Jeremiah 7:12-15; 19:11). Like a cat with nine lives, Jerusalem has been rebuilt many times. Obviously, the destruction of the temple and the city in 70 AD was only a precursor to a latter-day downfall of the great city, which mystically is associated with Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified (Revelation 11:8).

A day must come when the prophecies of Jeremiah are fulfilled, and the city is never rebuilt again. There is only one Jerusalem, just as there is only one God and one Lord.

People of God, we must make a clear distinction between the unbelieving Jew, who is one according to the flesh, and the spiritual Jew, who is one inwardly with a circumcision of the heart by the Spirit (Romans 2:29). We must see that modern Zionism is antichrist and not of God but of man striving for power, control, and domination. The true Zion of God is not of this earth or of man but of heaven. The Zion of God is Mount Zion and the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). We must not confuse the revived, present Israel with the spiritual Israel of God, which is New Jerusalem.

If we love the modern Jews in Israel who are still in unbelief and enemies of the cross, we should be encouraging them to believe on Jesus, repent, and get out while they have time

rather than buying Jews airfare to return to the Middle East and supporting them with foreign aid.

Now, let us continue to reversionism, which could be likened to the outcome of Zionism if carried to its full manifestation.

Reversionism

Reversionism is defined as a belief that one must "return to a former state, custom, or belief." The Galatians and Hebrews epistles were both written to confront believers that were in danger of reverting back to Judaism and the Old Covenant, in part or in whole.

This view is similar to dualism, and the same scriptural argument against dualism applies to reversionism; however, it goes much further in its view of the Jew and Israel and what it sees as the economy of God for the ages. We could say that reversionism is more insidious than dualism, for it seeks to bring the New Covenant into the Old Covenant rather than spiritually interpreting the new in light of the types and shadows of the old. The result is that, in the extreme case, the New Covenant is abandoned in whole or in part, or perverted through some hybrid theology to the point of either rejecting Christ or making Him prominent but not preeminent.

Reversionism seeks to return to a former state that, in this case, is no longer in the economy of God. Again, and as a reminder, the book of Hebrews was written for this very reason; it was a warning to believing Hebrews (and now to all believers) of the danger of returning to Judaism and the Old Covenant, exhorting them to press on in the New Covenant that is based on better promises and a better resurrection.

Reversionists hold that believers must become like practicing Jews and hold to a form of Judaism. They are judaizers. As they say, Christ is coming for a Jewish bride, so Christians must be like a physical, practicing Jew. At best, it becomes a hybrid of Christianity and Judaism with the Son of God in the midst of it in some measure; however, in the extreme it tramples under foot the Son of God (Hebrews 10:29).

We need to be abundantly clear that, because of Calvary, Christ has done away with Judaism, but this camp seeks to bring Christ into Judaism. Another way of stating this is that it seeks to bring Christ Jesus into Judaism, something that He made obsolete with His very own blood (Hebrews 9:12, 25; 13:12) and condemned and brought into death in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and Herod's temple (Luke 19:14, 27; 22:7). Consider what the Word of God says.

(4) For it is impossible for those once having been enlightened, and having tasted of the heavenly gift, and becoming sharers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and tasting the good Word of God, and the works of power of a coming age, (6) and having fallen away, it is impossible for them again to renew to repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, and putting Him to open shame. (Hebrews 6:4-6 LITV)

(29) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? (30) For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY." And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." (Hebrews 10:29-30 NASB)

This does not mean that a believer will lose his or her salvation and never reach immortality. Immortality is a promise to all who believe. However, the timing is not based on a promise but on being **called, chosen, and faithful** to the Lambkin (Revelation 17:14). Only conquerors will receive immortal bodies in the first (better) resurrection and transfiguration. The rest will have to wait for the second resurrection, when they will be **saved, yet so as through fire** (1 Corinthians 3:15), which speaks of the **Great White Throne** and **the fiery, righteous law of God** that will go forth like a **lake of fire** to judge the works or deeds of the flesh of men for the purpose of restitution and restoration at the consummation of the eons, not for eternal torture and punishment (Revelation 20:11-15).

Those who seek to bring Christianity into Judaism, along with all its outward appearances and forms and works of righteousness under the Law by which no man is justified (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:20, 28; Galatians 2:16; 3:11; Philippians 3:9), are severing themselves from Christ and disqualifying themselves from being an heir with the son of the free woman. They are in bondage with the bondwoman, the present Jerusalem that needs to be cast out (Galatians 4:25-30).

(2) Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you are circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. (3) And I testify again to every man being circumcised, that he is a debtor to do all the Law, (4) you whoever are justified by Law, you were severed from Christ; you fell from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness out of faith. (6) For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any strength, but faith working through love. (7) You were running well; who held you back that you do not obey the truth? (Galatians 5:2-7 LITV)

As the Hebrews letter asks: **How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation** (Hebrews 2:3)? Paul did not mince words when it came to any gospel that tried to revert Christians to Judaism.

But even if we, or an angel out of Heaven, should preach a gospel to you beside the gospel we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8 LITV)

This leads to the third and most important school of thought on this matter.

Graftage

The noun *graftage* is defined as "the state of being grafted." The noun *graft* is defined as "a shoot or bud of one plant or tree inserted or to be inserted into the stem or trunk of another, where it continues to grow, becoming a permanent part; the act or process of inserting such a bud or shoot." The same process can occur with skin, bone, or living tissue transplanted from

one body to another body or from one part of a body to another part of the same body, where it grows and becomes a permanent part. Another way of stating this is that "being grafted" refers to the process of inserting, let's say, object B into object A so that object B becomes a permanent part of object A. Once grafted, object B takes on the life of object A.

Graftage is a two-way process involving cutting or removing a part from one object and inserting or grafting it into another object. Obviously, if something can be grafted in, it only follows that it can also be cut out or pruned if it fails to root properly or bear fruit.

The fact of the matter is that, in order to bring forth the fruit of His Kingdom, God both prunes (cuts out dead material and trims living material) out of and grafts (inserts living material) into His tree. This is the job of a vinedresser.

The Word of God uses many agricultural or horticultural metaphors, most notably, those involving trees and vines that, in the natural world, are grafted. The most recognizable one is Jesus as the true vine and the Father as the vinedresser (John 15:1-6). But one that is not as recognized is the good and the bad fig trees of Judah. To understand this, a little history is in order.

At the end of Jacob-Israel's life, he blessed his son Judah with the scepter [the King] (Genesis 49:10), Joseph with fruitfulness [the Kingdom] (Genesis 49:22-26), and the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, with the birthright (Genesis 48; 1 Chronicles 5:1), who were also blessed with his name Israel: **"And may my name live on in them"** (Genesis 48:16). Following Solomon's death, the United Kingdom of Israel was divided into two nations (1 Kings 11:9-11; 2 Chronicles 10:15-11:4), the house of Judah, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and most of the Levites, and the house of Israel, consisting of the remaining ten tribes. The name of Judah and the scepter remained in Jerusalem and formed the southern nation. The name of Israel and the birthright took root in Samaria and formed the northern nation. Later, the nation of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity and dispersed northward. They ceased being a nation and lost their national identity. They became the lost [i.e., no national identity] sheep of the house of Israel and remain so to this very day. The birthright remains a treasure hidden in the field [world] (Matthew 13:44). Modern Israel is not this house; it has unlawfully usurped the name. The nation of Judah was also taken into captivity, but by the Babylonians. Later, a remnant returned to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, and with it, the hope of the scepter.

This is a very condensed history, but the point is: When Jesus came the first time, the house or nation of Judah, not Israel, resided in Jerusalem. Jesus came the first time as the antitype of Judah to take the scepter as the King of Judah. When He comes the second time, He will come as the antitype of Joseph to establish His Kingdom through the birthright and, spiritually speaking, reunite Judah and Israel.

Now, the nation of Judah was symbolized by the fig tree, but in the days of Jesus, there were two fig trees present in Judea, a good fig tree and a bad fig tree. Jeremiah, a prophet of Judah, was given revelation of two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord.

(2) One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten due to rottenness. (3) Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad figs, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness." (Jeremiah 24:2-3 NASB)

Then, the Lord went on to explain what would happen to the good figs and the bad figs.

(6) "For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. (7) I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart." (Jeremiah 24:6-7 NASB)

(8) 'But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness ... so I will abandon ... the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land (10) 'I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.'" (Jeremiah 24:8, 10 NASB)

Drawing upon the word He gave to Jeremiah about 600 years earlier, Jesus clearly made the point that the good figs could only come from a good fig tree and the bad figs from a bad fig tree.

(17) "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. (18) A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. (19) Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (20) So then, you will know them by their fruits." (Matthew 7:17-20 NASB)

In other words, the nation of Judah was made up of two trees, a good one and a bad one, one that had a heart for the Lord and one that did not. The good fig tree believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the King of Judah and followed Him, even after His death on the cross and resurrection. They recognized Him and loved Him. The bad fig tree refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah and the King of Judah and rejected Him to the point of demanding His death on a cross. They too recognized Him, for the parables tell us so, but they hated Him to the point of becoming murderers (Matthew 21:38-39).

Because of this, Jesus declared to them: The kingdom of God will be taken from you [bad fig tree], and it will be given to a nation [good fig tree] producing the fruits of it (Matthew 21:43 LITV).

The bad fig tree would not inherit the Kingdom of God but instead be cast out because of its rotten fruit. Just as Jeremiah had prophesied, so did Jesus: **"But the king [God the Father] was enraged, and he sent his [God's Roman] armies and destroyed those murderers [bad figs] and set their city [Jerusalem] on fire"** (Matthew 22:7 NASB). In 70 AD, God sent His Roman army to destroy the great city Jerusalem and the temple, bringing a final blow to Judaism and the Old Covenant.

We need to realize that the good fig tree that followed Jesus lived on, and this tree was made up of believing Judahites or Jews. To those who argue that the ecclesia of Christ is a Jewish ecclesia; there is some truth to this. The early ecclesia was mostly of Judahites who followed the King of Judah. After all, Paul declared: **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek"** (Romans 1:16 NASB). Then he asked: **"What advantage has the Jew?"**; to which he answered: **"Great in every respect"** (Romans 3:1, 2). However, the advantage is of no value if a Jew remains one outwardly, manifested through the flesh, and is not one inwardly, manifested through faith and a circumcised heart.

As the King and Lion from the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), Jesus is the trunk or, if you will, the entire good fig tree, made up of many branches, called to bear the fruit of the Kingdom. The genealogical Judahites that were good figs met Paul's definition of a true Jew, for they were ones inwardly with a circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit (Romans 2:29).

Here is where graftage enters in. All who have believed on Jesus regardless of their genealogical roots have been grafted into the good fig tree of Judah as spiritual Judahites. All are true Jews, for they have united themselves with the King of Judah.

Again, let it be emphasized that the early church was most assuredly made up of genealogical Jews or good figs. Over time, as the gospel went forth to the nations, other shoots were grafted into this good fig tree to bear the fruit of the Kingdom. We could even say that those from the nations produced other types of fruit, such as apples, oranges, pears, etc., metaphorically speaking. God loves diversity!

The Kingdom of God produces all kinds of fruit; after all, consider what the tree(s) of life produces in New Jerusalem. To be clear, the fruit bearers are people, for the city of God speaks of the corporate Temple of the Lord, the Body of Christ.

(1) Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (2) in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2 NASB)

Replacement Theology

Before concluding, there is one more point that needs to be made and it pertains to *replacement theology*. This theology starts with the idea that the Jews are Israel, which is incorrect.

The term *Jew* is a shortened version of the name *Judah*. Again, after Solomon's death, his kingdom was split into two nations, Judah and Israel. By the time of Jesus' first advent, Israel had already been scattered among the nations and had lost its national identity as Israel. This occurred over 700 years earlier (2 Kings 17:18). So, when Jesus walked the ancient land, there was no Israel to be replaced. At best, only Judah could be replaced, but there is a challenge to this as well. As shown already, Judah consisted of good figs and bad figs. The good figs believed

on Jesus, and the bad figs rejected Him as the Son of God and Messiah. The good figs did not replace anyone; they simply became the true Judah in the sight of God, for they followed the true King of Judah. In other words, in the sight of God, they carried on the name of Judah, not because of their genealogy but because of their faith. The other Jews who were ones in appearance only, that is, of the outward sign of the flesh, no longer were considered Jews in the sight of God (Romans 2:28-29). To repeat, as far as God was concerned, they were not Jews, and this has continued to our day for all who claim to be a Jew based on the flesh and who are enemies of the cross.

After Calvary, the apparent Jews continued to claim their right to the name. The true Judah nation, the one called to produce the fruit of the Kingdom, became known as the church, but this did not change her roots, which leads to the second error.

Replacement theology also holds that the so-called *gentile* church of the last 2,000 years completely replaced the Jew, as if the early church of Jews were insignificant. In other words, a gentile church has fully replaced the Jews who no longer have a place in the economy of God, of course, unless they repent and believe. By the way, the more accurate label to attach to the church is the word *nations*; for her building material has been taken from among the nations of which Judah is included.

Graftage is not replacement, for it acknowledges that the good fig tree of the Old Testament and the Old Covenant continued on as the good fig tree of the New Testament and the New Covenant. In other words, its roots are in the ancient days of Judah, but its growth materially increased after Calvary and the resurrection of Christ as not only genealogical, believing Jews continued on as the tree but others not of the ancient tree were grafted into it. In like fashion, many genealogical Jews were pruned out of the tree to become wild or bad figs and cannot be grafted back in until they have faith to believe in Jesus, the Savior and Messiah.

But do not think for a minute that graftage involving the good fig tree means that there is a reversion to any portion of the Old Covenant, for it does not. The first has been taken away to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9). The genealogical Jew had an advantage, for the gospel was presented to the Jew first; however, salvation is based on faith (Romans 1:16-17), not a gene pool.

Today, there is no advantage to the genealogical Jew, for God only acknowledges the true Jew who is one with a circumcised heart.

Conclusion

There is only one line upon which God is working today, and the good fig tree of Judah is one type of this line that has remained unbroken since its inception. Another type is the olive tree that speaks of spiritual Israelites who feed off the rich root of Christ as the Word of God.

Good news; we who believe have been grafted!