

Week 3 – The Strawman – Bible Study Helps

Title: The Strawman

Sermon Summary: This sermon addresses the growing heresy of replacement theology—the false teaching that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. The message systematically examines how false teachers misuse Scripture to claim that God's covenant promises to Israel have been transferred to the church. Through careful exposition of Romans 9-11 and other key passages, the sermon demonstrates that God has not cast away His people Israel, that current Jewish unbelief is temporary ("blindness in part"), and that God will fulfill His literal promises to restore Israel after the rapture of the church. The message emphasizes the critical importance of rightly dividing the Word of God and taking Scripture literally rather than allegorically. The sermon warns that even those holding King James Bibles can teach false doctrine if they don't properly divide Scripture, and he traces this heresy back to early church history and the allegorical methods of Origen at Alexandria, Egypt.

Key Points:

- Replacement theology is a satanic heresy that teaches the church has replaced Israel in God's plan
- Romans 9, 10, and 11 clearly distinguish Israel's past, present, and future—these chapters are specifically about Israel, not the church
- Romans 11:1 directly asks and answers: "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid"
- False teachers misuse seven main arguments to support replacement theology, taking verses out of context
- Being called "Abraham's seed" (Galatians 3:29) means spiritual participation in Abraham's blessings, not replacement of national Israel
- When Jews and Gentiles trust Christ, they become the church—this unity does not erase future covenant promises to Israel
- The olive tree illustration in Romans 11 shows natural branches (Israel) will be grafted back into their own tree
- After the church is raptured, God will return His focus to Israel during the seven-year tribulation period
- A remnant of Israel will trust Jesus Christ and be saved at the end of the tribulation
- Those who say they are Jews but are not are called "the synagogue of Satan" in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9
- Hermeneutics (how you study the Bible) determines eschatology (what you believe about end times)

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- Taking the Bible literally leads to premillennial, pre-tribulation rapture beliefs
- Modern Israel has prophetic relevance—their regathering as a nation is a fulfillment of prophecy
- False teachers may hold King James Bibles but don't rightly divide them

Scripture Reference:

- Romans 11:1 (primary focus)
- Romans 9, 10, and 11 (overall context for the series)
- Galatians 3:26-29 (Abraham's seed)
- 1 Peter 2:9 (chosen generation, royal priesthood)
- Matthew 21:42-43 (kingdom of God taken and given)
- Ephesians 2:14-15 (one new man in Christ)
- 2 Corinthians 1:20 (promises fulfilled in Christ)
- Romans 9:6-8 (not all Israel is Israel)
- Hebrews 8:8 (new covenant)
- Revelation 2:9 and 3:9 (synagogue of Satan)
- Romans 2:17-29 (inward vs. outward Jew)
- Genesis 15 (Israel's land promises)
- Jeremiah 31 (national regathering)
- Ezekiel 36-37 (dry bones—physical and spiritual restoration)

Stories:

- The pastor's personal testimony of leaving the Mormon cult and setting out to prove Mormonism wrong, then learning that the best defense against false teaching is knowing the truth
- Brandon's firsthand account of people using King James Bibles while teaching replacement theology
- Reference to formal debate tactics using "straw man" arguments—often misrepresenting an opponent's position
- Illustration of how attorneys in courtrooms can skew facts depending on whose side they're on
- Example of how Mormons misuse Old Testament passages (the "two sticks" in Ezekiel) to support the Book of Mormon

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- Comparison to modern cultural manipulation (example: "a man can have a baby") showing how repeated false information can vex people's brains until they accept lies
- Church history reference to the period from 200-325 AD leading to Constantine, when the Roman Empire became the Church of Rome and began claiming Jewish promises as their own
- Reference to the allegorical interpretation method of Adamantius Origin at the school of Alexandria, Egypt, connecting it to modern false teaching and corrupt Bible translations

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Discipleship Questions

How does understanding the distinction between Jews, Gentiles, and the Church help us properly interpret Scripture and avoid falling into replacement theology?

In what ways does Romans 11:1 directly refute the claim that God has permanently cast away Israel, and why is this verse so foundational to our understanding of God's faithfulness?

When false teachers spiritualize literal covenant promises made to Israel, what does this reveal about their approach to Scripture and their view of God's character?

How does the olive tree illustration in Romans 11 demonstrate that God's plan includes both the Church age and a future restoration of Israel without contradiction?

Why is it significant that Romans 9, 10, and 11 were written to the church in Rome, and what does this teach us about God's desire for believers to understand His relationship with Israel?

What are the dangers of taking verses out of context to support a predetermined theological position, and how can we guard against doing this ourselves?

How does the warning in Revelation 2:9 about those who say they are Jews but are not apply to modern teachings that claim the Church has replaced Israel?

In what ways does literal interpretation of Scripture protect us from being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, especially regarding Israel and end times prophecy?

Why is it essential to distinguish between spiritual blessings that believers share with Abraham and the specific national, land, and kingdom promises God made to Israel?

How should our understanding of God's unfulfilled promises to Israel affect our prayers, our view of current events, and our confidence in biblical prophecy?

Small Group Guide: Israel Today - Understanding Replacement Theology

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever believed something to be true, only to discover later that you had been misinformed? How did you feel when you discovered the truth?

Introduction (5 minutes)

This week's study addresses a critical issue facing Bible-believing churches today: replacement theology. This false teaching claims that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan and that God is finished with the Jewish people. Understanding this heresy is essential for rightly dividing God's Word and standing firm in these last days.

Key Takeaways

1. The Foundation: Romans 9-11

- Romans 9: Israel's Past
- Romans 10: Israel's Present
- Romans 11: Israel's Future

Key Verse: Romans 11:1 - "I say then, hath God cast away His people? God forbid."

2. What is Replacement Theology?

The false teaching that:

- The church has replaced Israel because Israel failed
- All promises to Israel are now spiritual only (for the church)
- Modern Israel has no prophetic relevance

3. The Danger

Even Bible-believing Christians with King James Bibles can be led astray if they don't rightly divide the Word of God.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Issue (15 minutes)

1. Before this study, had you heard of replacement theology? Where have you encountered this teaching (social media, books, other churches)?
2. Why do you think Romans 11:1 ("Hath God cast away His people? God forbid") is such a clear answer to replacement theology?
3. Read Revelation 2:9 together. What does Jesus say about those who "say they are Jews and are not"? How does this relate to replacement theology?

Examining the Arguments (20 minutes)

4. The sermon addressed seven arguments used by replacement theology teachers. Which one do you think would be most confusing to someone who doesn't study their Bible regularly? Why?
5. Read Galatians 3:26-29. How would you explain to someone that being "Abraham's seed" doesn't mean the church has replaced Israel?
6. Look at Ephesians 2:14-16. How does understanding that Jews and Gentiles become "one new man" (the church) help us see that this doesn't erase God's future plans for Israel?

The Importance of Right Division (15 minutes)

7. The sermon emphasized that "how you approach the Bible determines what you believe about the end times." What does it mean to take the Bible literally? When should we not take it literally?
8. Read 2 Peter 3:16 about those who "wrest" (wrestle) the Scriptures. What are some warning signs that someone might be twisting Scripture rather than rightly dividing it?
9. Why is it dangerous to spiritualize or allegorize passages that should be taken literally (like promises to Israel)?

Practical Applications

Personal Application (10 minutes)

Discuss as a group:

1. Bible Study Habits
 - Are you regularly reading and studying your Bible?

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- Do you take notes and look up cross-references?
- How can you improve your personal Bible study to avoid being "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine"?
- 2. **Testing Teachers**
 - What criteria should you use when listening to preachers, podcasts, or YouTube teachers?
 - How can you "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21) before accepting new teaching?
- 3. **Standing for Truth**
 - Have you encountered replacement theology in conversations with other Christians?
 - How would you lovingly but firmly respond to someone who says God is done with Israel?

Group Challenge (5 minutes)

This Week's Action Steps:

1. **Read Romans 9, 10, and 11** in one sitting. Take notes on every mention of Israel and what God says about their future.
2. **Memorize Romans 11:1** - Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you regarding God's plan for Israel.
3. **Pray for Israel** - Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6) and for the remnant that will one day turn to Christ.
4. **Share one truth** from this study with another believer this week.

Key Verses to Remember

- **Romans 11:1** - "I say then, hath God cast away His people? God forbid."
- **Romans 11:26** - "And so all Israel shall be saved."
- **Jeremiah 31:35-37** - God's promises to Israel are as permanent as the sun, moon, and stars
- **Ephesians 4:14** - We should not be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine"

Closing Discussion (10 minutes)

1. **What was the most eye-opening truth you learned from this study?**
2. **How has this study changed your understanding of God's faithfulness?**
3. **What encouragement do you draw from knowing that God keeps His promises to Israel (and therefore to us)?**

Closing Prayer

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for His perfect, preserved Word
 - Pray for wisdom to rightly divide the Scriptures
 - Pray for protection from false teaching
 - Pray for Israel and the Jewish people
 - Pray for boldness to stand for truth in these last days
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For Further Study

Recommended passages to study this week:

- Genesis 12:1-3 (The Abrahamic Covenant)
- Genesis 15 (The Land Promise)
- Jeremiah 31:31-37 (The New Covenant with Israel)
- Ezekiel 36-37 (Israel's Future Restoration)
- Zechariah 12-14 (Israel in the Last Days)

Questions to consider:

- What unconditional promises did God make to Abraham and his descendants?
 - How do these promises relate to the land of Israel?
 - What does "regathering" mean in prophetic terms?
 - How will Israel ultimately be saved according to Scripture?
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Leader Notes

- Be prepared for strong reactions, as this topic may challenge long-held beliefs
- Keep the discussion focused on Scripture, not politics
- Emphasize love for all people while maintaining biblical truth
- Remind the group that understanding prophecy should lead to evangelism and holy living
- Have your Bible marked and ready to turn to key passages quickly

5-Day Devotional: Standing Firm on God's Promises to Israel

Day 1: God's Unchanging Faithfulness

Reading: Romans 11:1-6

Devotional: "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid." These powerful words remind us that God never abandons His promises. Just as He remains faithful to Israel despite their temporary unbelief, He remains faithful to you. When circumstances tempt you to question God's commitment, remember that His character doesn't change based on human failure. The same God who made unconditional covenants with Abraham is the God who saves you by grace through faith. His faithfulness isn't earned—it's rooted in His unchanging nature. Today, reflect on areas where you've doubted God's faithfulness. Confess those doubts and rest in the truth that what God promises, He performs. Your salvation doesn't depend on your performance but on His unchanging Word.

Day 2: Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Reading: 2 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 4:11-16

Devotional: God's Word is perfect, but it must be rightly divided to be properly understood. Paul warned Timothy to study and correctly handle Scripture. This isn't about creating division but about understanding God's progressive revelation—recognizing distinctions between Israel, the Gentiles, and the Church. When we fail to rightly divide, we become "tossed to and fro" by false teaching. The local church exists to ground believers in sound doctrine so they won't be deceived. Are you studying God's Word for yourself, or merely accepting what others say? Commit today to reading your Bible literally, taking God at His Word unless it's impossible to do so. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Let the Holy Spirit guide you into all truth, and become a workman approved unto God.

Day 3: The Mystery of the Olive Tree

Reading: Romans 11:17-27

Devotional: God's plan for Israel is pictured in the olive tree—natural branches temporarily broken off, wild branches grafted in, but with the promise that natural branches will be grafted back into their own tree. This mystery reveals God's grace to Gentiles during Israel's partial blindness, but it doesn't erase His future plans for the Jewish nation. As a Gentile believer, you've been grafted into blessing through Israel's unbelief—what amazing grace! But don't become arrogant. God's kindness to you should produce humility and gratitude, not pride. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem today. Pray for Jewish people to recognize their Messiah. Remember

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that "all Israel shall be saved" when Christ returns. Your salvation and Israel's restoration both magnify God's faithfulness to His Word.

Day 4: One in Christ, Distinct in Purpose

Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22; Galatians 3:26-29

Devotional: In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile—we are all one body. This glorious truth means salvation is available to all through faith alone. The middle wall of partition has been broken down; Gentiles need not become Jews to be saved. However, unity in salvation doesn't erase God's distinct prophetic purposes. Jews and Gentiles who trust Christ become the Church, but this doesn't cancel God's unconditional covenant promises to national Israel. False teachers confuse positional unity with prophetic replacement. You are Abraham's seed spiritually, sharing in his blessing of faith, but you haven't replaced Israel in God's plan. Rejoice today that you're a child of God by faith! Thank Him that salvation isn't based on ethnicity or works, but on Christ alone.

Day 5: Beware of False Teachers

Reading: 2 Peter 2:1-3; Revelation 2:9

Devotional: Jesus warned about those who "say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Throughout church history, false teachers have claimed Israel's promises for themselves while rejecting God's future plans for the Jewish nation. Today, replacement theology spreads even among those holding King James Bibles, proving that having the right Bible doesn't guarantee right doctrine. Satan's ministers often appear as ministers of righteousness, using Scripture twisted out of context. Your defense is knowing God's Word for yourself. Study it. Memorize it. Rightly divide it. Don't accept teaching just because someone sounds confident or quotes verses. Compare everything to Scripture in context. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment. Stand firm on God's literal promises. In these last days, be grounded in truth so you won't be led astray.

Reflection Questions for the Week:

1. How does understanding God's faithfulness to Israel strengthen your confidence in His promises to you?
2. Are you studying the Bible for yourself, or relying solely on others' teaching?
3. What practical steps can you take this week to pray for Israel and share the gospel with both Jews and Gentiles?