

Chapter 6

ISRAEL - THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

THE proponents of replacement or supercessionist theology usually argue that the promised corporate seed of Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, must ultimately be, according to Christ the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), the authentic Christian church which has become the true spiritual Israel. At the outset, it is worth pointing out that this line of reasoning is often presented in a manner that is, as S. Lewis Johnson points out quite illogical. “[S]ince the church is the seed of Abraham and Israel is the seed of Abraham, the two entities, the church and Israel, are the same. The result is a textbook example of the fallacy of the undistributed middle.”¹

The historic progression of this line of reasoning, allegedly according to Scripture, requires that national Israel, in forfeiting its conditional covenant privileges through unbelief, has become, in the sight of God, everlastingly *persona no grata*. Two amillennial works in particular have reasoned in this manner with regard to Israel, they being Albertus Pieters’ *The Seed of Abraham* and John Reisinger’s more recent *Abrahams Four Seeds*. Whatever differences there are between these authors concerning other matters, and they are quite substantial, it is fundamental to both that national and ethnic Israel, and consequently individual Jews, now have no divine, covenantal legitimacy, and never will have in the future. However, also common to both presentations is a disregard of serious exegesis of some key texts of Scripture. While Pieters is guilty of explicit theological anti-Semitism (refer to Chapters 1 and 2), it must be pointed out that Reisinger is more temperate with his expressed conclusions in this regard. His theology has some eschatological similarity with Pieters, though his attitude is more peaceable. However, if it is believed that national Israel is forever disinherited by God, and thus there is no such thing as a covenant Hebrew or Jew in the sight of God, then, upon the biblical principle that belief produces behavior, it is reasonable to expect that such replacement theology will be productive of at best indifference toward contemporary Judaism, verbal denials notwithstanding. Simply consider, where in the nation of Israel today are there Christian pastors who uphold such teaching, namely national and territorial illegitimacy in the sight of God? Further, in the area of particular missionary endeavor toward the Jews, where are there outreach agencies that promote such teaching in their witnessing endeavors?

A. Albertus Pieters, *The Seed of Abraham*, 1950.

We have already seen in Chapters 1-2 that Albertus Pieters is unabashed in his theological ant-Semitism. Hence we now consider the development of this belief which is most clearly indicated in his *The Seed of Abraham*. We will consider select chapters under the headings this writer supplies in which his explicit replacement theology is seen to develop.

1. The Seed of Abraham and the Patriarchal Period.

In view of “the promise” made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), there issued forth “the most intensely exclusive, narrow and nationalistic race the world has ever known—the

¹ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. “Paul and ‘The Israel of God’: An Exegetical and Eschatological Case-Study.” *Mishkan*, 6&7, 1987, pp. 59. This syllogistic fallacy is best understood if we argue that since all dogs have four legs and all cats have four legs, then all dogs are cats!

Jews!”² This resultant seed of promise commencing with Isaac, as distinct from Ishmael, was to be identified according to faith and the emblem of circumcision. However it is significant that Pieters makes no reference to the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15 in this regard. Further we read, and this indicates the tilt of this author’s doctrine:

Whenever we meet with the argument that God made certain promises to the Jewish race, the above facts [concerning seed as a covenant group] are pertinent. God never made any promises to any race at all, as a race. All His promises were to the continuing covenanted community, without regard to its racial constituents or to the personal ancestry of the individuals in it. Hence no proof that those whom the world now calls “the Jews” are descended from Abraham, if it could be supplied (which it can not) would be of any avail to prove that they are entitled to the fulfillment of any divine promise whatsoever.³

Yet the previous quotation referred to the Jewish “race.” However the distinction here is not valid since the “seed” is the nation concerning which God says He will bless (Gen. 12:2). Further, this promise is frequently confirmed to Israel as a nation, as a race (Gen. 18:18), of course comprised of a covenant seed. So Ishmael was also to become a “great nation” (Gen. 17:20). Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid a tone here that, from the outset, is unfriendly toward the “Jews.”

2. The Seed of Abraham and the Old Covenant.

The purpose of the Mosaic covenant is confused, although we find ourselves in partial agreement at this point.

The Sinaitic Covenant, while it was a grand work of God for a high and holy purpose, namely to train for Himself a people in whom and through whom He might carry on His redemptive enterprise for the whole world, was in its nature and purpose temporary, to be superceded when its work had been accomplished. This bold statement I should not dare to make on my own authority. It is made for me in the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34.⁴

To the contrary, the Sinaitic Covenant “was added because of transgressions . . . until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made” (Gal. 3:19). Nevertheless, it was an interim agreement. Further, and with this we happily agree:

This Sinaitic Covenant, being given to the Seed of Abraham, did not in any way alter the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant, under which they already were, not did it supercede or annul that covenant. For this we have the word of the apostle Paul [Gal. 3:17].⁵

3. The Seed of Abraham and the New Covenant.

Again we find ourselves in partial agreement with Pieters when he expressly declares that the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 was contracted with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”

² Albertus Pieters, *The Seed of Abraham*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

The promise is to the people of Israel and the people of Israel must receive it. . . . This is entirely correct, and it is to the house of Israel that fulfillment came. . . . [Any] objection arises from a failure to perceive that the Christian church in its origin was an Israelitish body, fully qualified to claim the promises made to Israel.⁶

Hence, what then is the destiny of that large portion of the nation of Israel that did not believe in Jesus as the promised Messiah? Here we find ourselves at the parting of the ways with this author.

What of the others? Is it not clear that those who refused to acknowledge the King whom God had sent to them and to enter the New covenant which He had promised, by that very act lost their standing as the people of God and were cut off from the Seed of Abraham? In what covenant relation could they still stand to God? The Old Covenant was gone—“done away in Christ” (II Cor. 3:14) and in the New Covenant they had no part. You may say: “They still had the Abrahamic Covenant”, but did they? Not if St. Paul is right in saying [Gal. 3:7, 16, 29]. . . . No, just as it would have been impossible for any Israelite to refuse God’s offer in the Sinaitic Covenant and still retain his standing and rights under the Abrahamic Covenant, so it was equally impossible for those under the Sinaitic Covenant to refuse to accept the New Covenant in Christ and still to retain their standing and privileges as the Seed of Abraham.⁷

Now we will give Pieters credit for some clever reasoning here that nevertheless leads to an unbiblical conclusion, though it may well indicate why he was not interested in pressing home the unilateral nature of the Abrahamic Covenant in the initial chapter we considered. In reality, this author is saying that participation in the Sinaitic Covenant did qualify the efficacy of the Abrahamic Covenant, a point which he earlier denied in quoting Galatians 3:17. But further, in fact Israel did break the Sinaitic Covenant time and time again, though God remained faithful, even as Hosea so graphically portrays, and of course, the promised New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 makes abundantly clear.

Further support for the casting aside of national Israel is offered from Matthew 21:43 where the Lord Jesus declares in judgment: “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.” However, Pieters makes no mention of the fact that the following v. 45 states: “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them.” Hence it was the corrupt leadership of Israel that Jesus was addressing. Moreover, while there were national consequences in this regard, there is no indication at all that such an obvious reference to the ingathering of the Gentiles would preclude a future national conversion Israel. This leads us to the interesting fact that while Pieters does refer to Romans 11 concerning the remnant of remaining olive branches, he is skeptical concerning any future eschatological conversion, and is silent concerning v. 11, “Now if their [unbelieving Israel’s] transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their [unbelieving Israel’s] fulfillment be?”

⁶ Ibid., p. 71.

⁷ Ibid., p. 73.

4. What of the Jews?

This is Pieter's penultimate conclusion which appears to explain much intimation found in the preceding chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 have already referenced the theological anti-Semitism here and in other parts of this book. Here we find prolonged reasoning as to why there is no such person today as a biblical Jew. Further consider the final paragraph of this section.

In conclusion, some will ask what we think of Zionism and of the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine. We reply that this is a biblical study, not a political forecast. No doubt God has His plans for this new development, as for the whole course of affairs in the world, but as students of prophecy it is our task to determine what He has revealed concerning such plans; and whether this new state becomes permanent or not, we are still sure that no such thing is to be found in the scriptures.⁸

Hence it must be pointed out there is an attitudinal dark side in all of this that is profoundly disturbing. And the inescapable conclusion is that such an un-Pauline viewpoint is theologically driven. And if this last point alone be true, then it must surely indicate fundamental doctrinal error that at the same time is ethically counterproductive.

B. John Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, 1998.

In John Reisinger's *Abrahams Four Seeds*, hereafter referenced as AFS, this writer professes that his intention is to steer a course between Covenant Theology on the one hand and Dispensationalism on the other, and so arrive at the more biblical midstream position of New Covenant Theology. Thus all three positions are assessed with regard to the seed that issued forth from the loins of Abraham, distinguished according to four categories. First, there is the *Natural Seed*, including all physical children, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Jews and Arabs. Second there is the *Special Natural Seed*, the nation or children of Israel, all of the physical seed of Jacob. Third there is the *Spiritual Seed*, all believers of all ages, David and Paul, Jewish and Gentile believers. Fourth there is the *Unique Seed*, Christ the Messiah.⁹ Now this author, being of baptistic convictions, finds himself in substantial agreement with Reisinger's critical analysis of Covenant Theology and its fruit of paedobaptism. However his antithetical representation of dispensationalism raises some serious issues, particularly with regard to Israel's eschatological status, that must be revealed as nothing new, but simply a modified presentation of historic replacement or supercessionist theology which is as old as Augustine. Of course the Bishop of Hippo would define the church very differently from Reisinger. Nevertheless they both approach the issue of Israel, its conditional, typological, displaced existence, etc., with regard to the church, in much the same way.

Lest such a charge be thought of as excessive, consider some concluding comments in AFS.

The spiritual nation, the Body of Christ, was 'born in a day' and has become all of the very things Israel never became. . . . The *ekklesia* of Christ is the true nation that was promised to Abraham. . . . The *Church* inherits the true spiritual blessings promised to Israel in the law covenant at Sinai simply because her Lord has kept the covenant for her.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., p, 148.

⁹ John R. Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, p. 116.

Further, the concluding emphasis of AFS leads to the incorrect conclusion that this amillennial understanding of the place of Israel in the New Testament is not only midstream, but also the inevitable outworking of New Covenant theology. On the other hand, if you take a more premillennial/dispensational position with regard to Israel in the present and future, then you have not fully understood the ramifications of New Covenant theology. Only the amillennial/replacement model does full justice to the New Covenant. Reisinger has not been alone in this conclusion amongst those who have upheld New Covenant theology. However it is this authors' understanding that such a perspective concerning national Israel is historically an embarrassment and exegetically misguided, especially by means of Gentile exegesis that neglects the vital Jewish emphases of Jeremiah 31:27-37; Ezekiel 37:1-28; Romans 11:11-32; Hebrews 8:7-13.

1. Definitions.

To begin with we raise the question of terminology with regard to "Dispensationalism," even as Appendix 2 in AFS is titled. Now there are several references to the "postponed kingdom" theory of dispensationalism which is distinctively defined in terms of Chafer, Scofield, and Walvoord. However, although the name "Israel" is numerously mentioned in AFS, none of these references are really dealing with the distinctive understanding of the aforementioned authors concerning Israel that is commonly acknowledged to be a vital distinguishing element of dispensationalism.¹¹ Thus one discovers that throughout the book, the preponderant consideration of Israel concerns not focus on the distinctive dispensational perspective concerning Israel and the Church, but the more broad understanding of premillennialism in which the one people of God incorporates a distinction between national Israel and the Church. Unfortunately Reisinger argues in such a way that anyone who differs from his Augustinian, baptistic adaptation of the Church as the superceding New Israel is branded as dispensationalist and consequently lacking in his comprehension of the New Covenant.

More particularly, while there is reference to "premillennialism" in passing on 4 occasions, the term "dispensationalism" is mentioned 115 times. Hence it seems ironic that while this book resulted from discussion between a "group of Amils and Premils,"¹² yet "dispensationalism" is manifestly the dominant term. Further, on 12 occasions it is distinguished as propounding a future "postponed" earthly millennium, which element of "postponement" is not really under consideration in the book. For Reisinger, "postponed" simply refers to a future earthly millennium which more classically, according to premillennialism, could be termed a future, consummate, glorious earthly millennium of fulfillment of that which was promised. Apart from the reference to "Premils" on page 1, the only other references are in a footnote on page 57 concerning "historic premillennialism," which term is left undefined, and twice in a

¹¹ Consider that Charles C. Ryrie is often quoted as declaring that the *sine qua non* of dispensationalism is a distinction between Israel and the Church, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 44-47. However it will be noted in Appendices E, F, G, H, that Edwards, Spurgeon, Ryle, Bonar, and a host who believed in classic premillennialism, also upheld a distinction between Israel and the Church while at the same time they were not in the slightest dispensationalist.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. i. Reisinger claims that his book originated when, "a group of Amils and Premils got together (along with some of us who are not convinced of any prophetic position)." This gathering in 1995 would certainly have also included some Dispensationalists. Why not admit this? Any who read this book will undoubtedly conclude that Reisinger cannot now claim to be a prophetically midstream concerning Israel.

footnote on page 61. Reisinger is aware that many, like Spurgeon, who could in no way could be designated as being even partially dispensational, nevertheless believe in the eschatological prospect of national Israel being restored to the Land, of it being nationally converted, and then blessed in a millennial economy under the personal reign of Christ from a glorified Jerusalem while at the same time enjoying fellowship in Christ with surrounding Gentile nations. It cannot be emphasized enough that this definition of a premillennial focus on the future of Israel, as Appendixes E, F, G, in this volume clearly indicate, is not in the slightest dispensational, and Mr. Reisinger needs to come to grips with this truth. He is not alone in this regard since many bandy about the term “dispensational” without carefully distinguishing it from classic premillennialism. We could further quote from David Baron, Adolph Saphir, Joseph Seiss, Charles Simeon, Nathaniel West, etc., none of whom were dispensational, and yet they believed the aforementioned premillennial scenario.

2. Major propositions.

To get to the heart of the matter, we first quote from Reisinger with regard to what he declares to be central to a right understanding of the seed of Abraham. He writes that, “We now come to Abraham’s *special* natural seed, the nation of Israel, and its relationship to the church today and in the future. This is the heart of the issue.”¹³ With this we would unquestionably agree and consequently set forth five propositions that are upheld as being not only essential to Reisinger’s central assertion in AFS, but also are in fact vital to general amillennial eschatology, and thus inevitably lead to alignment with replacement theology. This being the case, it is proposed that AFS does not at all uphold eschatological middle ground.

a. The Christian Church is the Israel of God.

We quote: “Dispensationalism [hence Premillennialism] does not see the Body of Christ as the true Israel of God in fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and his seed. This system of theology insists on different promises for Israel and for the Church.”¹⁴ Certainly original Dispensationalism made an extreme distinction between the two people of God, namely the church being destined for heaven while Israel was destined to reign upon earth. However classic Premillennialism, believing in one people of God, has at the same time acknowledged a diversity within this unity, namely Israel and the church, after the manner of male and female in Galatians 3:28, as well as the Personal diversity within the unity of the Godhead.¹⁵

Consider the statement: “The nation of Israel was not the ‘Body of Christ,’ even though the Body of Christ is indeed the true ‘Israel of God.’”¹⁶ Again Reisinger incorrectly indicates that to deny the second part of this statement is to be

¹³ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁵ We prefer to use the term “classic premillennialism” since many, in referring to “historic premillennialism” are in fact identifying with the premillennialism of George Eldon Ladd that, although significant, is hardly historic in line with Simeon, Newton, Tregelles, Baron, Saphir, Seiss, West, etc. Refer to Gary Long, *Context!* pp. 32-48.

¹⁶ Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, p. 19.

dispensationalist. However what is astonishing is the absence of biblical support particularly when the only explicit verse in the New Testament that might be referenced in this regard, is Galatians 6:16. Refer to AppendixC.

- b. There is a dichotomy between the material and the spiritual.

This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6. However we repeat here that any supposed tension here between the material and the spiritual is the result of wrongly identifying these categories according to an either/or rather than a both/and scenario. To describe this matter another way, Israel's problem in the Old Testament was not so much its carnality as its absence of spirituality. Thus for Reisinger national and ethnic Israel is fundamentally inferior, being physical, earthly, temporal; the Christian church is fundamentally superior, being, by way of antithesis, spiritual, heavenly, eternal.

- (1) Consider the statement: "The whole nation of Israel was *physically redeemed*, but only a small handful of individuals was *spiritually redeemed* (cf. Heb. 3:16-4:3 and I Cor. 10:1-13 with Num. 14:22-35). If Israel was the church, then over 99% of the first 'church members' are in hell according to these verses."¹⁷ In response to an overly simplistic understanding of the redemption analogy concerning Israel, we should first point out that in spite of ongoing unbelief and rebellion (Num. 14:1-10), God in His wrath nevertheless heeds the intercession of Moses (Num. 14:11-19) and declares, "I have pardoned them according to your word" (Num. 14:20). However, the resultant discipline is banishment of the original generation from entrance into the Promised Land and consequent wandering in the Sinai wilderness (Num. 14:22-23, 26-37). Nevertheless, the forgiveness abides, which fact Reisinger seems to ignore. But further we should ask, what percentage of the Christian church today is destined for hell? How many within the Christian church today are merely physically redeemed through water baptism? Would it be wrong to say that within Christendom today, relatively speaking, "only a small handful of individuals was spiritually redeemed?" Furthermore, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their wives, then some of those who took refuge in Egypt, were most likely spiritually redeemed. Yes, a high percentage of Israel did not enter the rest of Canaan because of unbelief, but then neither did Moses, whom we are reacquainted with on the mount of the transfiguration. Yes the old generation perished in the wilderness, yet when you look at the new generation onward from Kadesh Barnea to the Plains of Moab until the crossing of the Jordan, it is wrong to infer that their improved faithfulness gained the promised inheritance. In fact it was this period that led to the plague of serpents due to further murmuring as well as the severe judgment resulting from Balaam's treacherous ministry.

If one believes that the ultimate destiny of national Israel was inviolately related to the Mosaic covenant, then, as is common with the viewpoint that Reisinger is espousing, this exclusive physical attribution, wholly constructed of shadows, types, and earthly patterns, would certainly lead to the conclusion that Jewishness is as temporal as that old economy. However, we

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

would make the fundamental point that Israel, by its very name, has been mined from a much older pit. Thus God’s exhortation to the Hebrew people is, “Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain” (Isa. 51:1-2).

- (2) Consider the statement: “The designation ‘redeemed people of God’ can only be used in a physical sense and never in any spiritual sense when we are referring to the nation of Israel.”¹⁸ This is simply not the case with regard to Ezekiel 36:22-37:28 when the carnal nation of Israel will be newly enfolded and, “I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it,” declares the Lord” (Ezek. 37:14). If God spiritually resurrects dead individuals, it should not surprise us if He also resurrects a dead nation. Refer to Spurgeon on this passage in Appendix F. The same truth is found in Jeremiah 31:27-37 with reference to the New Covenant made with “the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” Particularly note that this theme continues in Jeremiah 33:7-9 where, “I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace I make for it.” Notice that the Gentiles are also converted and enter into godly concord with Israel. Here the physical will be redeemed, resurrected, regenerated. So in Romans 8:21-23, “the creation itself will be set free from its slavery to corruption.”

- (3) Consider the statement:

God indeed “dwelt among” the nation of Israel in a special way, but again, it was neither a personal nor spiritual indwelling as it is with every believer today. God did not ‘dwell among’ Israel in the same sense that he now dwells in the individual believer since the personal advent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Israel was never the ‘temple of God’ in the sense that the church is specifically designated his temple.¹⁹

Certainly there is distinction between God’s presence through His Spirit prior to and after Pentecost. But Reisinger’s contrast between God’s dwelling with “the nation of Israel” and “the individual believer,” not “the Christian Church” today is not a balanced comparison. Rather we should consider God’s indwelling of genuine believers in both dispensations. Warfield’s comment at this point is relevant.

The Spirit was active under the Old Dispensation in all modes of His activity under the New Dispensation. . . . The new dispensation is the dispensation of the Spirit because in it the Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh. . . . The new dispensation is the dispensation of the Spirit, again, because now the

¹⁸ Reisinger, *Abraham’s Four Seeds*, p. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

object of the Spirit's work is, for the first time, to recover the world from its sin.²⁰

Too often spirituality has been downgraded with regard to the Holy Spirit's ministry in the lives of Old Testament saints.

- c. National Israel today, being carnal, has no covenantal relationship with God.

Consider the statements:

Israel *as a nation* was cast off in respect to special national status (Matt. 21:33-46). . . . We must separate Israel as a physical nation with special national covenant from Israel as a people "beloved for the father's [and the Father's] sake." Romans seems to leave plenty of room for a revival of gospel faith among the Jewish people in the last days.²¹

Here is a fundamental problem in Reisinger's AFS that has characterized many amillennialists. It is the astounding, though unsupported hypothesis that, while national and ethnic Israel has forfeited its legitimacy in the sight of God, yet we Gentiles condescend to acknowledge still the "Jews" individually, even though they are not really "Jews" in a territorial, national, covenantal sense. Remember that AFS proposes that national Israel has lost its divine status through its disobedience concerning the terms of the Mosaic covenant. What is astounding here is Reisinger's patronizing allusion to Romans 11:28 which in fact demolishes what he has just proposed. This passage, speaking in the present tense, is not simply describing the "Jewish people," but unbelieving national Israel. Such a point here strikes at the heart of Reisinger's contention that God would have nothing to do with carnal, unbelieving Israel. There is simply no validity to the distinction that he makes here. He uses the term "Jewish people" which, if he explained to the Jewish people what he really means by this expression, would obtain for him their swift rejection of anything else he had to say. But this was never the attitude of the Apostle Paul when he witnessed from synagogue to synagogue. We are not saying that unbelieving national Israel has any peculiar salvific qualification; what we are saying is that all of unbelieving national Israel continues to be regarded as God's beloved enemies, for the sake of the irrevocable Abrahamic covenant (Rom. 11:28-29). For more detail, refer to Chapter 8.

- d. National Israel's Relationship with God was conditional.

This is a common proposition upheld by amillennial Calvinists who propose conditionalism for Israel in accordance with the terms of the Mosaic covenant, and unconditional particular election, which grants true saving faith, for the New Covenant Christian. Thus Reisinger declares on several occasions: "God did not deny his promise or fail to keep his covenant when he cast off the Jewish nation. He did not break or dishonor his 'special covenant' relationship with Israel simply because that covenant and relationship were purely conditional and Israel never met the terms. . . . Israel never kept that [Mosaic] covenant, and therefore it never

²⁰ B. B. Warfield, *Faith & Life*, pp. 135, 140-141.

²¹ Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, pp. 30-31.

became the true holy nation of God.”²² This must mean that the redeemed nation subsequently lost its redemption due to disobedience; it is a form of Galatianism attributed to Israel, that is the necessity of faith combined with works, which the New Testament repudiates. Hence at Sinai, the covenant introduced there qualified the fact of Israel’s redemption, which was indeed the unconditional Abrahamic covenant (Exod. 3:6-8, 15-17; 13:5; 33:1-3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27). Hence, the end result is that disobedience concerning the Mosaic covenant nullifies earlier promised Abrahamic blessing, which Galatians 3:17 explicitly denies.

However, to this Reisinger responds:

It should be abundantly clear that the unconditional promise that God made to Abraham has nothing at all to do with plural ‘seeds.’ It can have nothing to do with physical Jews and Palestine. . . . God unconditionally promised Abraham that his seed would be the Messiah. The seed promised to Abraham is Christ!²³

Of course the Gentile logic here is that Galatians 3:16 nullifies any understanding of national blessing inherent in the Old Testament promise so that “seed” in Genesis 13:15; 17:7 must exclusively refer to Christ. Such an absolute conclusion is necessary for upholding Israel’s conditional existence, though it is exegetically untenable when the preceding context of Genesis 15 is considered, especially the fact of the Abrahamic covenant being unconditionally cut at that time. So God says to Abraham, your “descendants [seed]” shall be as the innumerable stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5). Further, Abraham was told, “To your descendants [seed] I have given this land.” (Gen. 15:18). These references clearly refer to the nation of Israel. Paul’s employment here of Midrash, distinctive Jewish interpretation, incorporates Christ as the root of promised blessing without at all denying the obvious promise of national blessing, the plurality of “Abraham’s descendants [seed], heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29).²⁴

e. Exegesis of Romans 9:6-7.

The author of AFS places considerable emphasis upon this passage as support for his amillennial understanding of Israel, though we believe he misunderstands the intent of Paul here. For a more detailed consideration of these verses, and examples of similar misunderstanding, refer to Appendix B. However, one quotation of Douglas Moo is repeated here because it so succinctly clarifies what Paul is and is not declaring. “Paul is not saying ‘it is not *only* those who are Israel that are Israel,’ but ‘it is not *all* those who are of Israel that are Israel.’”²⁵

²² Ibid., pp. 79, 116.

²³ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁴ David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 549. Difficult as this passage is, few commentators take Reisinger’s hard line here whereby unconditional blessing to Israel as a nation is eliminated from the original promise given to Abraham.

²⁵ Moo, *Romans*, p. 574. Also Fred Zaspel notes that the previously listed Jewish blessings are not expounded here by Paul as being “now realized in the church; . . . they belong to Israel; . . . they have not become ineffectual for them; they offer no less a real hope today than ever.” *Jews, Gentiles and the Goal of Redemptive History*, pp. 12-13.

Reisinger concludes from these verses: “Nothing that God ever promised or covenanted to the nation of Israel guaranteed, in any sense whatever, that they, or their children, would receive spiritual blessings.”²⁶ There are absolute comments like this on numerous occasions, all being rooted in Romans 9:6-7. However, the problem here is that the author so settles on this point that he gives scant attention to the subsequent flow of Romans 9-11, and especially careful exegesis of critical verses in Romans 11 that we believe uphold the ongoing role of national Israel.

²⁶ Reisinger, *Abraham's Four Seeds*, p. 80.