

Upon This Rock: A New Look

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FOREWORD

by

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It is unusual for one book to be occupied with so many major issues all at the same time, but that is what *Upon This Rock: A New Look* has done. It begins as an exegetical and theological answer to five statements made by Jesus in Matthew 16:18-19, John 20:23 and John 21:15. But in the course of dealing with these passages and the Roman Catholic claims for Peter and the Church, it has engaged some of the most serious aspects of the doctrine of the Church, the hermeneutical question of the continuity or discontinuity of the Old and New Testaments, how some of the questions relate to Messiah in his first and second coming as it affects the issue of the Church, and how these matters all interrelate to each other.

Especially important is the discussion as to whether the promises made to Israel are now made over to the Church, as this group is said by some to replace Israel as the new Israel of God. This is also known as "supersessionism," where some in the Church claim that Israel has been denied inheritance to their original promises made by God, because of her constant refusal to obey the calling and commands of God.

Such "replacement Theology," as it has been labeled, really grew over the centuries as Jewish and Gentile believers not only grew apart, but the Gentile section of the worshiping group began to raise such a hostile voice against the Jewish segment of the original Messianic synagogue. Not only did the gathered community for worship split apart, but the bitter acids of the memory of these unfair outcries against the Jewish community often left a trail that lead directly from the opinions and acts of the Christian Gentiles to things like the Crusades, the Inquisition, some of Hitler's tirades against the Jewish people, and the horrors of the holocaust. This trail is not a pretty sequence of events at all, and anyone familiar with the history of this tortuous trek will bear witness to the fact it is no wonder that when a Jewish person sees the representation of the Christian "cross," it brings back a flood of bad associations, to say the least.

What was settled peaceably at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 would eventually break out numerous times in later history, without such godly leaders as were present at the Jerusalem Council to quell the hostility, which became anti-biblical and anti-christian. Therefore, what had begun as a believing synagogue movement, when the Jewish believers were probably in the majority and Gentile believers were in the minority, were now divided into those who were called "Christians" and those who were now Jewish rejectionists of Messiah.

The truth of the matter, however, is that nowhere in Scripture had God rescinded

the Covenants he had made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David. Nor had God deleted any of the content from those earlier covenants in what was now called the "New Covenant" in Jeremiah 31:31-34. All these covenants were not bi-lateral (two-sided with obligations on both parties) covenants in which there was the condition expressed on both God and the people in that covenant, so that if either one broke any part of that covenant, then the whole set of promises were null and void--including the promise that God would be their God, Israel would be his people, God would dwell in the midst of them, Israel would inherit the land, and the Messiah would come from the "Seed" of the woman and the "seed" of the Patriarchs. I have written much more extensively elsewhere on this same *Promise-Plan of God*. But let it be strongly noted that to the contrary, only God in each one of these covenants obligated himself to the terms of the covenant without demanding that these men and the Jewish people keep their part of the covenant in order to implement its contents. It was an unconditional promise (uni-lateral = "one-sided") with no obligations other than each generation had to *transmit* the promise, but they could only personally *participate* in its on-going benefits by faith. Even in the face of a wholesale rebellion against God and his word, God had promised that at the end of the days, he would not forget what he had promised, but he would fulfill it in the eschaton, i.e., the last days.

Those who espoused "replacement theology" in the most recent modern centuries have usually espoused a reformed theology (but not all) along with an "a-millennial" point of view. But their theological counterparts in the Christian Church, the "dispensationalists," also have made a major mistake at this point even though they held to a "pre-millennial" eschatology. They have argued that the Church was a *new* institution that had had no antecedent roots or connections in the Old Testament, and that the "New Covenant" was made with this new Gentile institution on the day of Pentecost.

But as this book will forcefully argue, God never made a Covenant with the Church, for the New Covenant was made instead with the "house of Israel and the house of Judah." What happened on the day of Pentecost was in continuity with the "congregation" in the Old Testament. All Gentile believers must be "grafted" in to the roots and the Olive Tree if they are to have any rootage or substance at all; otherwise the "Church" would just float in the air with no anchor in time or space. But this work will argue the reverse; the nourishment and blessings of the Church will come from this Olive tree and its roots in the promises God made with the Patriarchs.

The theses found in *Upon this Rock* will provide the bases for an extended dialogue, not only between the Jewish and Christian communities, but also between the Roman Church and her separated brethren. This book is more than a mere academic exercise; it is the foundational work for that long awaited study in one of the most neglected areas of Systematic Theology: viz., Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church. Now that work will be a new possibility because of the work of Ken Morgan in this text.