

## **"Christian Heresy and Spiritual Anti-Semitism within the Church"**

It is natural for people to have different opinions about what is meant in a Scriptural passage, but when views diverge to a great extent, what then was simply a different understanding can indeed become heresy. When reviewing a great deal of the views of Christian theologians today concerning Israel, it becomes most clear that accepted methodologies for interpreting the Bible are consistently ignored, in order to promote understandings of Israel which contradict the simple meaning which the Bible overwhelmingly offers for a proper identification of what is meant by the term Israel. Such theologians utilize exegetical acrobatics to justify their view that in the New Testament, the term **Israel** and in most prophetic passages in the Old Testament, refers actually to the Church, i.e. believers in Yeshua (Jesus). It is my sincere conclusion that such theological understandings are often founded in a genuine anti-Semitism, rather than in any objective examination of Biblical texts.

Recently, I was sent a copy of a book entitled, "*The Israel of God in Prophecy*". The book was written by Hans K. LaRondelle. In this book, he simply repeats the normal interpretations of the same passages which are highly twisted and ripped from the simple meaning of the text, in order to arrive at the conclusion that G-d is finished with the Jewish people in any unique way and based in any covenantal consideration. LaRondelle states what many other Christian theologians believe and what a high percentage of Christian theological seminaries teach. For LaRondelle writes,

*"The implication of the ecclesiological interpretation of Israel in the New Testament is unmistakably that the ethnic restrictions of God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in Christ and His Church. The apostolic Church considered itself to be the new and the true Israel of the messianic age. Paul does not look for a restored theocracy of the national Israel in Palestine."* (pages 207-208)

LaRondelle, in his writings, strongly asserts that all promises which G-d gave to Israel are rendered void and one should not expect G-d to return the Jewish people back to the land of Israel or to move in any way that there will be a great day of Salvation for the Jewish people at the time of Jesus' Second Coming. LaRondelle does not see himself as a typical Replacement Theologian for he states, "*It is not correct therefore, to state that the Church has replaced Israel. Rather, the Church is the continuity of the Old Testament Israel of God; it has only replaced the Jewish nation. Gentile Christians do not constitute a different or separate entity from the faithful remnant of Israel.*" (page 210) Although LaRondelle attempts to present a slightly different form of Replacement Theology, his handling of the favorite Biblical text which other Replacement theologians rely is strikingly similar.

Mr. LaRondelle, early in his book, states that he does not prefer a literal understanding of Biblical texts, but what he and others call a "*Christocentric focus of all Holy Scriptures.*" This approach allows him and similar theologians to distance themselves from the literal meaning of the verse and present an interpretation that conveniently agrees with their preconceived doctrines. He writes, "...*recognizing that Christ alone is the true interpreter of Israel's sacred Scriptures.*" (page 3) In other words, it is individuals like LaRondelle and others who agree with him, which have been appointed to reveal how Christ would understand and interpret the Bible. It is not surprising to me that LaRondelle points to Luther, a known anti-Semite, and Calvin, a reformed theologian, in order to justify his approach to the Scriptures. "*For both Luther and Calvin, eschatology was essentially christocentric,*

....” (page 8) It was apparently such a “christocentric” understanding that moved Luther to make the following statements concerning Jewish individuals. When asked what shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews?

*“First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools... This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians....”*

*“Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.”*

*“Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.”*

*“Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb....”*

*“Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside....”*

Such quotes are taken from section XI of Martin Luther’s book, “On the Jews and Their Lies,” published in 1543.

There are even significantly worse and more abundant anti-Semitic rants by Martin Luther, but this should suffice as proof that the methodology of Luther did not produce results that demonstrated love for the Jewish people, but were the very material that the Nazis used to justify their actions and why, for the most part, churches were silent during the Holocaust. I praise G-d for the exceptions which true Christians performed to save Jewish lives and stand in opposition to the Nazi empire.

Mr. LaRondelle is also a Seventh-day Adventist who writes that this denomination *“has received special counsel to draw all eyes to Christ as the center of hope in their prophetic interpretations.* (page 9)

It is also most disappointing that his use of the original languages is nearly absent and the fact that his studies are based on the New International Version (NIV) translation of the Bible; for such a translation is a paraphrase and frequently renders its translations based upon certain theological biases, rather than an accurate translating of the text. No serious student of the Bible would ever utilize the NIV as the basis for interpreting the Scriptures.

Throughout LaRondelle’s book, he manages a comparison between dispensational theology and non-dispensational theology. Although there are several factors which define dispensationalism, for the purpose of LaRondelle, he primarily limits this discussion to whether it is proper to understand a difference between the Church and Israel throughout the revelation of the Word of G-d. Dispensationalists strongly affirm a distinction between the Church and Israel, while non-dispensationalists do not and actually understand Israel and the Church as the one and same entity spiritually. What is really at heart of this debate?

Most Reformed theologians (Calvinists) and Replacement theologians believe that G-d has terminated **all** of His covenantal relationship with the descendants of Jacob, i.e. the Jewish people. Hence, there is **no** more spiritual relevance to the Land of Israel and it is incorrect to believe that it is G-d Who is bringing the Jewish people back to the Land of Israel or that G-d will move in some unique way to save the Jewish people in the End Times.

However, dispensationalists affirm that G-d still recognizes the Jewish people in a unique way and, based upon numerous prophetic passages, He will indeed return most of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel prior to the End Times and bring a significant number of Jewish people to salvation upon His Second Coming. Obviously, these differences will cause vastly different perspectives for the events of the End Times. Such differences will be briefly surveyed in this article.

Another important element to LaRondelle's theology is found in the very title of his book, *"The Israel of God in Prophecy"*. The term, *"The Israel of G-d"* is found in Galatians 6:16. To whom does Paul intend when he uses this phrase?

I have no problem saying that the phrase, *"The Israel of G-d"* refers to all of humanity who has or will have experienced eternal redemption through Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ). In other words, it is absolutely acceptable and correct to understand this term, *The Israel of G-d*, as referring to the Church. The term Church in Greek is the word ἐκκλησία. This word is actually comprised of two words ἐκ meaning "out of" or "from" and the word καλέω which means "I call"; hence the term Church applies to those individuals who were called out of or called from one location to go to another. This Greek word is used in the Greek translation of the Torah (the Septuagint) and refers to the Children of Israel who, having kept the Passover, are being called out of or called from Egypt, in order to relocate in the Land of Israel. It is most significant that the Holy Spirit instructed the writers of the New Testament to use the word ἐκκλησία to refer to those who experienced salvation through Yeshua's death on the Cross, which occurred also on the 14th day of Nissan, i.e. Passover. Having been saved, the believer is called out of this world and will enter into a new land, the Kingdom of G-d.

The problem arises in how individuals understand the term church today. Most people hear the word church and think of something which is unrelated to Jewish people and represents something different to the teachings of Moses and the Prophets. It is common for people to think that Jewish individuals must convert to be part of the Church and stop being Jewish; when in reality the word *convert* is not the appropriate word for Jewish or for Gentile individuals. Rather, the proper word is to repent. The Gospel is for all humanity, and all who were initially part of *The Israel of G-d* were Jewish and a meeting had to be held in Jerusalem to determine if Gentiles could even become part of the Church without converting first to Judaism (see Acts chapter 15).

The distinction between the two terms *Israel and the Church*, which dispensationalists emphasize, is to remind people that G-d is not finished with the Jewish people or the Land of Israel. Both the land of Israel and the Jewish people still hold a most significant place in the L-rd's plans for the End Times. However, Replacement theologians and sadly a fast growing percentage of "Christians", reject a literal or simple understanding of the Holy Scriptures in order that they can joyfully proclaim their anti-Semitic rhetoric. For example, LaRondelle states that the *"Church would replace the Christ-rejecting nation."* (page 101)

Although the majority of the Jewish people did indeed reject Yeshua, please note that when Paul arrives in Jerusalem, he is told about **the thousands of Jews who believe** (see Acts 21:20). Many Jews did in fact accept the Gospel; nevertheless LaRondelle states, *"Christ's Church is not separated from the Israel of God, only from the Christ-rejecting Jewish nation."* (page 102) He also writes, *"...everything Israel stood for, as the covenant people of God, he now applies to the Church."* (page 105) *"The Church now occupies the place of Christ-rejecting ethnic Israel..."* (page 131) For LaRondelle *"...Israel became persistently unfaithful to its covenant God, the Lord therefore took His inheritance*

*back from Israel.*" (page 137) To support this final proclamation, LaRondelle provides Jeremiah 17:1-4; 15:13-14. Obviously these passages were chosen because they speak of Judah going into Exile and G-d's anger burning upon Judah forever. While it is true that G-d was very angry at Judah, this anger did not prohibit the return of the Jewish people to the promised land after the seventy years of the Babylonian Exile were concluded.

However, for LaRondelle, this point is missed as he writes, *"With the rejection of Israel, as the faithless nation, God thus rejected its land as no longer under His blessing."* (page 137) These harsh words are against the Jewish people and are clearly at odds with what is said in a chapter in Jeremiah's prophecy which LaRondelle emphasizes, namely chapter 31. This chapter is where the New Covenant is mentioned in the Old Testament and both LaRondelle and myself understand it as having great significance. It is most troubling that LaRondelle totally ignores that this portion of Scripture which contains the New Covenant prophecy also has a wonderful promise of G-d in which He states that He will bring the people back to the Land and renew His covenantal relationship with the Jewish people. Why does LaRondelle not comment on how this chapter concludes?

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, נָתַן שֶׁמֶשׁ לְאוֹר יוֹמָם, חֻקֵּי יָרֵחַ וְכוכְבִּים, לְאוֹר לַיְלָה; רָגַע הַיָּם וַיִּהְיוּ גִלְיוֹ, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ. אִם-יִמְשׁוּ הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה, מִלְפָּנַי--נֹאֵם-יְהוָה; גַּם זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁבֹּתוּ, מֵהָיוֹת גּוֹי לְפָנַי--כָּל-הַיָּמִים.  
כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, אִם-יִמְדּוּ שָׁמַיִם מִלְמַעְלָה, וַיִּחְקְרוּ מוֹסְדֵי-אָרֶץ, לְמַטָּה: גַּם-אֲנִי אֶמָּאֵס בְּכָל-זָרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַל-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ--נֹאֵם-יְהוָה.

*"Thus said the L-rd, Who gives the sun to light by day, the law of the moon and stars, to light by night; Who relaxes the sea and His waves roar, the L-rd of Host is His name. If these laws depart from before Me declares the L-rd; also the seed of Israel will cease from being a nation before Me all the days.*

*Thus said the L-rd, if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth investigated below, also I will reject all of the seed of Israel, all what they did, declared the L-rd."* Jeremiah 31:35-37

In addition this this, LaRondelle fails to mention all the numerous prophecies which promise that in the last days G-d will bring the Jewish people back to the Land of Israel. For example, also in Jeremiah chapter 23, there is a wonderful prophecy of G-d's faithfulness to His word concerning both the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת-שְׂאֵרֵיט צֹאֲנֵי מְכַל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר-הִדַּחְתִּי אֹתָם שָׁם וַהֲשִׁבְתִּי אֹתָם עַל-נוֹהַן וּפְרוּ וְרָבוּ: וְהִקְמַתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם רָעִים וָרָעוּם וְלֹא-יִירָאוּ עוֹד וְלֹא-יִחַתּוּ וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ נֹאֵם-יְהוָה:  
הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאֵם-יְהוָה וְהִקְמַתִּי לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק וּמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ וְהִשְׁכִּיל וַעֲשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וַיְדַקָּה בְּאֶרֶץ: בְּיָמָיו תִּנְשָׁע יְהוּדָה וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכֹּן לְבֶטַח וְזֶה-שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָאוּ יְהוָה צְדִקְנוּ:  
לִכֵּן הִנֵּה-יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאֵם-יְהוָה וְלֹא-יֵאמְרוּ עוֹד חֵי-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלָה אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: כִּי אִם-חֵי-יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלָה וְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא אֶת-זָרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ צִפּוֹנָה וּמְכַל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדַּחְתִּים שָׁם וַיָּשֻׁבוּ עַל-אֲדָמָתָם:

*"And I will gather the remnant of My sheep from all the countries which I have driven them there and I will return them upon their habitation and they will be fruitful and multiply. And I will establish unto them shepherds and they will feed them and they will not be afraid any more and they will not be dismayed and they will not be punished declares the L-rd. Behold days are coming, declares the L-rd and I raise up for David a righteous Branch and a King will reign and He will succeed and He will make justice and righteousness in the earth*

*and in His days, Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell in safety and this is His name which He will be called, The L-rd Our Righteousness. Therefore, behold days are coming, declares the L-rd, and they will no longer say the L-rd lives Who brought the Children of Israel from the land of Egypt, rather the L-rd lives Who brought the seed of the House of Israel from north land and from all the countries which I have driven them there and they will dwell upon their ground.”* Jeremiah 23:3-8

There several things which are recorded in this passage which demand the reader to recognize that this prophecy is indeed in regard to the End Times and must not be incorrectly associated with the past. The first is that the Jewish people will never *be punished again* וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ. Many translations fail to render this Hebrew phrase properly. It is common for this phrase to be translated *never to be lacking or missing*. The Hebrew word דָּקַף is used throughout the book of Jeremiah and it speaks of G-d acting in a strong manner in regard to His people. The general idea is for Him to visit His people and, depending upon the context of the given passage, the idea is to visit for the purpose of redeeming them or for the purpose of punishing them. Next, one reads about David, which is a clear reference to the Son of David, i.e. the Messiah, as the well-known and agreed upon term צֶמַח “*Branch*” appears. There are several times that this expression is used and there is not disagreement among the commentators that it refers to the Messiah. Therefore, this is another reference to the Messianic Age. It is also significant that this One is called a King and He will bring about justice, righteousness and security to both Israel and Judah. The fact that both the northern and southern kingdoms are mentioned points to an End Time context for this prophecy. Finally, the return to the Land of Israel is not from Babylon, but from the north country, i.e. Russia and all the other countries where Jewish individuals have been driven. Such a return for the Jewish people from numerous countries is also a End Time occurrence. Hence, for a person to deny that G-d will return the Jewish people to the Land of Israel in the End Time is simply not possible according to the Scriptural testimony. In addition to this, it is the Messiah Who will begin His Kingdom when this takes place. It is this very order, Jewish people return to Israel, come to faith in Yeshua, and then the Kingdom begins, which the Bible repeatedly mentions. The only reason people argue so vehemently against the Word of G-d in regard to this is a predominant bias against the Jewish people and against the idea that Israel has any role in G-d’s End Time purposes.

Not only does G-d repeatedly promise to bring the Jewish people back, but Ezekiel informs the reader that it is not based upon any spiritual change in the Jewish people. It is due to G-d’s faithfulness and in order that He will bring them to faith after they have returned to the Land of Israel in the End Times. (Ezekiel chapter 37)

LaRondelle fails to understand that it is G-d’s faithfulness to Israel that will bring about the restoration of the Jewish people to the Land. He only allows for such promises of a return to the Land to be symbolic. As with others who share his twisting of the Scriptures against a literal application of Biblical prophecies, he writes, “*God’s purpose is not a Jewish state as such, but a people that obeys Yahweh, a community which serves Him and is wholly oriented toward Him.*” (page 89) Even though there are dozens of prophecies that emphasize the literal return to the Land of Israel, LaRondelle states that such promises to Israel “*are largely an entity of religious instead of national destination.*” (page 86) When he writes “*religious*” what he intends is really spiritual, as for him “*Israel first and foremost stands for the religious covenant community...and not ethnic and political characteristics.*” (page 90)

It is most informing that LaRondelle quotes Rudolf Bultmann, a “theologian” whose hermeneutical approach to the New Testament called for a demythologizing the New Testament Scriptures. He rejected that Jesus existed before His earthly birth. For him, it was

enough only that Jesus existed, preached and was crucified. Notice there is no emphasis on the Resurrection. In short, Bultmann denied supernatural events in the Scriptures and doubted the reliability of the Gospels. It was to this so called scholar that LaRondelle turned to support his view *“that history of Israel is a history of failure.”* (page 93) What is truly unique about LaRondelle’s theological bent is that it is not the Church which actually replaces Israel; rather, it is the Messiah. For he writes, *“When Israel failed as a nation, the Lord Himself provided a perfect Israelite as the blessing and the light for both Israel and the world. The promised Messiah will not fail,...”* (page 93) *“...it become clear that Jesus saw Himself in typological terms as the new Israel. In this way, Israel’s history is repeated and carried to a successful fulfillment in Christ before God.”* (page 65) The intent of such statements is to assert that because of Yeshua, Israel is irrelevant and erased from anything to do with the purposes of G-d.

It is important to be fair to Mr. LaRondelle. Of course we both agree that it is only in Yeshua (Jesus) that both Jew and Gentile have hope of salvation. However, our sharp disagreement rests in his absolute belief that G-d has no future purpose with the Land of Israel and that G-d will not in any manner bring the Jewish people who are alive in the End Times to faith. For LaRondelle, all Scriptures that affirm such promises must be understood only symbolically and their literal interpretation must be rejected for a spiritualized fulfillment. LaRondelle does not forbid Jewish individuals coming to faith in the past or in the future, but again, adamantly denies that Jewish people will come to faith when they behold His Second Coming and experience their deliverance from all the nations of the world which will go up to Jerusalem for war. In order to bolster such views he writes, *“Christ’s Church is not separated from the Israel of God, only from the Christ-rejecting Jewish nation.”* To me it is most telling that LaRondelle calls Israel *“the Christ-rejecting Jewish nation”*, but sees hope for the Gentiles. I, too, see hope for a remnant of Gentiles, realizing the vast majority of the Gentiles will in fact reject the Gospel. My problem is that LaRondelle uniquely proclaims only *“the nation of Israel.... is totally disinherited.”* (page 108-109) In his attempt to Biblically justify his viewpoint, he incorrectly interprets Paul’s words in Galatians chapter 4. LaRondelle wrongly associates what Paul meant when he related to the terms Hagar and Ishmael. LaRondelle links Hagar and Ishmael to the nation of Israel, while Paul in fact links them to reliance upon the Law of Moses for salvation instead of the Abrahamic Covenant which the Messiah is its foundation (see Galatians 3:16). Similarly, he states that Galatians 4:27, which he correctly associates with Isaiah 54:1, but he incorrectly relates this passage to the creation of the Church (page 109). Such an interpretation rips this passage from its proper context of the End Times. How could LaRondelle miss the fact that Isaiah stated that Israel, who was viewed as a barren and abandoned woman, would return to the desolate cities and inherit these cities once more (see Isaiah 54:3). He fails miserably in his understanding of Scripture, when he does not properly link the Messianic prophecy that Jacob receives in Genesis 28:14 to that of Isaiah chapter 54; for both these passages state that the Jewish people “will spread out to the west, east, north and south”, and when this occurs, then the covenantal promise that G-d made to Abraham will be fulfilled. This is what is meant by Isaiah when he speaks about such a great number Jewish people returning to the Land of Israel that the tents will have to be broadened and enlarged. In fact, Isaiah chooses the same word that appears in the passage from Genesis to assist the true student of the Bible to recognize the connection. The word is תַּפְרָצָי in Isaiah and in the passage from Genesis וּפְרָצָה. It appears in the feminine in Isaiah because Isaiah speaks of Israel as a woman and in Genesis in the masculine because this Messianic prophecy is addressed to Jacob. For LaRondelle, all the numerous prophecies concerning Jewish people coming to faith in the End Times are ignored so he can reinterpret them and gladly proclaim over and over the *“persistent rejection” of the Jewish people of Jesus and the “divine judgement” of Israel demands that one*

*understand such prophecies as now relating to Gentiles and have their fulfillment in the Church. LaRondelle writes, "With apostolic authority, Paul declares that Isaiah's restoration promise has found its concrete fulfillment in the Church."* (page 109)

Another great deficiency of LaRondelle is his errant understanding that G-d's faithfulness to the Jewish people would amount *"to a special class of people within the Church..."* (page 110) When examining Scripture, G-d uniquely created the Jewish people by opening up the womb of Sarah to established a people that He would use to bring blessings to the nations. Hence, those who will inhabit the Kingdom of G-d will be both Jews and Gentiles. LaRondelle errs when he interprets Ephesians chapter 2 and the middle wall of partition to be a barrier that separates Jews from Gentiles; and that it is the work of Christ on the Cross which removes this wall. The wall is not a division between Jew and Gentile, but rather between humanity and G-d. Yeshua did not die on the Cross to bring Jew and Gentile together in their lostness, but to bring the Gospel to all humanity, so that both Jew and Gentile can be restored to G-d through the blood of Yeshua. In addition, LaRondelle fails when he quotes Ephesians 2:15. He writes, *"He thereby destroyed also 'the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility' between Jews and Gentiles themselves, 'by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. This is an undeniable reference to Christ's abrogation of the Mosaic law with its earthly temple ritual."* (page 112) The law and the Temple regulations did not place enmity between man and G-d; rather it was sin that did this. The Law exposed the sinfulness of man and as Paul taught, the Law was given to drive the people back to faith, which the Abrahamic covenant was based upon (see Galatians 3:19-25).

Even something which is as obvious as the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) is twisted by LaRondelle. For him, the younger son represents the adoption of the Gentiles by G-d (page 113), whereas in reality it is simply a call to Israel to repent and return to G-d. Nowhere in the text is the idea of adoption taught. The father never ceased to see his younger son as his son. Although Gentiles are equally encouraged to repent and receive the message of the Father's forgiveness, in the same way that the Jews are called to do so, the Parable of the Prodigal Son does not speak primarily to the Gentiles, but the house of Israel. As one examines the writings of LaRondelle in this book, this person will learn that he simply refuses to accept that G-d, via the Messiah's Second Coming, will bring Israel (Jewish people) to salvation and He will accomplish this by the exact same faith which every Gentile and Jew must have to be saved. His unwillingness is clearly demonstrated in his handling of Romans chapters 9-11.

LaRondelle begins in a correct manner when he recognizes that Paul is concerned with his fellow Jews. He is also right when he states that an individual, whether Jew or Gentile, *"has no access to God through no other covenant than the new covenant..."* (page 126) Again LaRondelle is right when he writes, *"...Israel has not fallen beyond recovery ...salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. It is God's intention to bring natural Israel back to Himself by means of the Church of Christ."* (page 127) What LaRondelle misses is that Paul clearly states that the Church is not going to be very successful in accomplishing this. Paul scolds the Church that they should not boast (see Romans 11:20) against the Jewish people, but rather Gentile believers need to realize that all peoples, both the Jewish people and the Gentiles, have been disobedient and it is G-d Himself Who will show mercy to all (see Romans 11:30-32). How will G-d show mercy to Israel in the End Times? Paul answers this question in a most clear manner. But before studying the words of Paul, let us understand the perspective of LaRondelle and many others who prefer to spiritualize the simple meaning of Biblical texts to justify a most anti-Jewish theology.

LaRondelle turns to Bruce Corley, whom he apparently agrees with, to express a false narrative which furthers their theological objectives. Corley states,

*“Are we to wait for an apocalyptic miracle to happen seven years after the ‘fulness of the Gentiles’ have been raptured out of the world? Will the Jews come by preferential treatment or through justification by faith? The former opinion cut the heart out of the Pauline gospel.”* (page 128)

Such a statement shows a great void in Mr. Corley’s competency of the Prophetic writings. Israel will suffer a harsh time of persecution, worse than the Holocaust, when in the End Times, two thirds of the Jewish people will be slain. Yet, several of the Biblical prophets reveal that a remnant of the Jewish people will come to faith at the end of the seven years, i.e. Daniel’s seventieth week. Not through some preferential treatment, but by the same Gospel that justifies all people who receive it by faith. It is utterly a false misrepresentation to state that the correct understanding of the prophetic testimony which reveals that a remnant of the Jewish people will be saved in the End Times, *“cuts the heart out of the the Pauline Gospel”!*

When this prophecy will be fulfilled, the Jewish people are not spoken of by the prophets as *“a people who trust in a blood relation to Abraham”* as LaRondelle states (page 128), but as a people who are brought to faith when Yeshua delivers them from all the Gentile nations who will wage war against them (see Zechariah 14:3-4). What is so unbelievable is that although LaRondelle examines the relevant texts in Romans chapter 11, he fails to perceive the proper message of the text. Paul easily reveals to a competent student of the Bible that one should expect Yeshua to move specifically in the End Times to bring the Jewish people to accept the Gospel. Paul writes,

*“But since their transgression richness of the world and their failure richness of the nations; how much more their fullness.”* Romans 11:12

Here Paul teaches that although Israel (the majority of Jewish people) transgressed and rejected the Gospel, G-d has used this to offer the world a spiritual “richness”, i.e. salvation and many of the nations (Gentiles) came to faith, **Praise G-d for this!** It is important to recognize that Paul clearly expected, based upon prophetic truth, that there will be a fullness of the Jewish people in the End Times who will accept the Gospel; therefore he asked, *what will their fullness*, i.e. the acceptance of the Jewish people of the Gospel bring about? A few verses later Paul answers this question when he states,

*“For since their casting away is the reconciliation of the world, what is the acceptance? If not life from death.”* Romans 11:15

It is important for the reader to understand that when the Bible refers to the resurrection (life from death), it is alluding to the Kingdom. Hence, Paul is teaching that once G-d moves and the Jewish people respond to the Gospel, the next event that one should expect is the establishment of the Kingdom of G-d. The question which must be asked and answered is “What will G-d do to bring about the salvation of the Jewish people in the End Times? LaRondelle gets it right when he quotes Romans 11:26. He writes,

*“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD* (Isaiah 59:20; emphasis added).” (page 131)



Although LaRondelle arrives at the verse which Paul provides, it is actually Paul who answers the question in Romans 11:26-27. Paul writes,

*“And thus all Israel will be saved just as it has been written, The Redeemer will come out of Zion and turn away the ungodliness of Jacob from Jacob. And this to them is My covenant when I will lift up their sins.”*

Paul leaves nothing in doubt! He reveals, based upon prophecy, that it will not be the Church which will bring about a national time of salvation for the Jewish people, but the Redeemer, i.e. Jesus Christ upon His Second Coming Who will accomplished this. This is not a difficult passage to comprehend; however, how does LaRondelle understand Paul’s teaching in Roman chapter 11? Once again, he spiritualizes the text and runs to a symbolic interpretation that removes the verses away from and out of their proper context. Why does LaRondelle do all these interpretative acrobatics? The answer is that it is offensive to him that Jewish people come to faith in the End Times. Rather than accept the fact that Paul is speaking about a period after the fulness of the Gentiles have come to faith, i.e. the End Times, LaRondelle proclaims the fulfillment of these verses was during “*Christ’s first advent*”. (page 132) He writes, “*Christ still comes to Israel through the gospel preaching in order to redeem them from their sins....*” (page 132) Please notice that for LaRondelle, it is not the literal coming of Yeshua at the end of the age that will be the impetus for Jewish people to repent and receive G-d’s grace, but he prefers to spiritualize the text and to reinterpret the coming of the Messiah, only to be the preaching of the Gospel. LaRondelle is quick to deny that G-d will bring the Jewish people back to the Land of Israel as the prophets reveal and as the proper understanding of the word Zion demands. Rather, he incorrectly asserts, “*nothing is said about Israel’s physical return to the land of Palestine... or a national reinstatement in the land of Israel.*” (page 132) In a very disturbing manipulation of the text LaRondelle writes,

*“The text of Isaiah 59:20 states literally that the Redeemer will come ‘to Zion’; ...Paul modifies this phrase of Isaiah by stating the the Deliverer will come ‘from Israel’ (Romans 11:26), because Christ had now come from Israel. ‘Out of Zion refers to Christ’s first advent.’ (page 132)*

In other words, LaRondelle is attempting to exploit a simple difference between the languages of Hebrew and Greek, so that he can find a justification to change the timing of the verse from its original context (End Times) to the first coming of Yeshua 2,000 (years ago) and affirm his view that it is only the ministry of the Church which G-d may use to bring Jewish people to faith and not Israel (Jewish people) seeing Yeshua upon His Seconding Coming and accepting Him by faith. The change from  $\text{לְצִיּוֹן}$  (to Zion) in Hebrew to  $\text{ἐκ Σιῶν}$  (“out of” or “from” Zion) in Greek has nothing to do with a justification of a different period of time. Rather the phrase  $\text{ἐκ Σιῶν}$  emphasizes purpose. This means that Yeshua’s work in the End Times has a Kingdom purpose attached to it, which the phrase “from Zion” or “out of Zion” in Hebrew does not as strongly reflect. It is not that the Hebrew denies such a purpose, but the Greek simply emphasizes it more. It is out of Yeshua’s desires for the establishment of Zion (His Kingdom) that He has come. Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to translate the verse from Hebrew in a manner that conveys not simply the fact that the Redeemer will come to Zion, but the why, i.e. the primary purpose of His coming, which was to complete the salvation of the Jewish people. The salvation of the Jewish people in the End Times is a prophetic requirement for the Kingdom to be established and is exactly what Paul intended in Romans 11:15.

When examining the theology of Replacement theologians, one finds that LaRondelle holds a similar view which denies any future significance to the Land of Israel. This point has been previously alluded to, but now will be briefly discussed. LaRondelle states,

*“Israel (the Jewish people) cannot claim an immediate relation to its land, cannot have it at its disposal in an autonomous way, cannot idolize the land into an absolute possession. Israel (the Jewish people) does not own the land.”* (page 136)

LaRondelle is most strong in his desire to separate the Jewish people from the Land of Israel. He bases his view on *“the Jewish people persistently unfaithful to its covenant, and therefore the Lord took His inheritance back from Israel. With the rejection of Israel (the Jewish people) as a faithless nation, God thus also rejected its land as no longer under His blessing.”* (page 137) Instead of using the Scriptural designation of Israel for the land, LaRondelle frequently prefers to refer to Israel by the term *Palestine*. The term Palestine comes from the Biblical term פלשת which refers to the unfaithful people who persecuted the Israelites. It is remarkable that LaRondelle makes bold assertions concerning the Land of Israel, but fails to deal with the primary prophetic passages that address the Land and the Jewish people in the End Times. Once again, LaRondelle spiritualizes the covenantal promises of the Land which G-d gave to the descendants of Jacob to now being for Gentile believers,

*“Israel’s territorial promises are made sure in Christ and guaranteed through Him to all believers.”* (pages 139-140)

Although he offers verses from Romans chapter 4 to support his views, he fails to understand that these promises in Romans chapter 4 are not regarding the physical Land of Israel, but primarily the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. He also does not understand the Hebrew mind, as the term העולם “the world”, often refers to the Kingdom. In other words, Paul is clearly affirming that by faith the Gentiles inherit the same Kingdom promises, but in no way do these Kingdom promises relate to the Land of Israel prior to the establishment of Millennial Kingdom. LaRondelle continues and writes,

*“Paul interprets God’s promises to Abraham concerning land and offspring ‘in the sight of God’ as being fulfilled through Christ. That is not according to the hermeneutic of literalism, but Paul’s theological exegesis. The land becomes the world;....”* (page 139)

So for LaRondelle, when the prophets speak about G-d returning the Jewish people to the literal Land of Israel, they did not mean this, although they literally said this. These prophetic passages which are proclaimed for the End Times are now rendered void for Jewish people and fulfilled in Christ and are now primarily for the Gentiles. In order to arrive at such errant and anti-Scriptural interpretations, he is vehemently opposed *“to the hermeneutic approach which literally understand ethnic and geographic terms in the simple meaning of the text.”* (page 141) He claims further that *“Literalism denies the inherent biblical structure of an escalating typology.”* (page 141) Instead of a literal or simple approach to interpreting the Bible, he states his strong preference for an hermeneutic methodology which relies *“to a large extent, figurative and symbolical. One may therefore also view the promised land— Palestine— as ‘a miniature world in which God illustrated His kingdom and His way of dealing with sin... The full scope of Israel’s prophets was not nationalistic, but universal with an increasing cosmic dimension....”* (page 141)

I hope now one can understand what I mean when I state that Replacement theologians strongly prefer to interpret the Bible by spiritualizing the text and relying upon a symbolic

and figurative methodology. It is this same hermeneutic approach that those who deny many of the foundational tenets of true Biblical faith utilize. For one could employ this same mythology and say the resurrection is only symbolic, that Miriam (Mary) was called a virgin, not because she truly was a virgin, but because she was simply a righteous woman. In short, such a hermeneutical approach can empty the Scriptures from the truth that they do in fact contain. In regard to the End Times and the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, one should not understand the people to whom the prophets refer to as the Church, nor the the Land of Israel as the world. Let us examine briefly what Ezekiel the prophet says concerning G-d's plan in the End Times. For he writes in chapter 37,

וַדְבַר אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנֵּה אֲנִי לֹקֵחַ אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֵּין הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הָלְכוּ-שָׁם וּקְבָצְתִי אֹתָם מִסָּבִיב וְהִבֵּאתִי אוֹתָם אֶל-אֲדָמָתָם: וַעֲשִׂיתִי אֹתָם לְגוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ בְּהָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמֶלֶךְ אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם לְמֶלֶךְ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה- (יְהִי-) עוֹד לְשְׁנֵי גוֹיִם וְלֹא יִחָצוּ עוֹד לְשְׁתֵּי מַמְלָכוֹת עוֹד: וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד בְּגִלּוּלֵיהֶם וּבִשְׁקוּצֵיהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֹתָם מִכָּל מוֹשָׁבֵתֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ בָהֶם וְטַהַרְתִּי אוֹתָם וְהִי-לִי לְעָם וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים: וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶם וְרוּעָה אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם וּבִמְשָׁפְטִי יֵלְכוּ וְחֻקוֹתַי יִשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשׂוּ אוֹתָם: וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי לְיַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר יָשְׁבוּ-בָּהּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ הֵמָּה וּבְנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵיהֶם עַד-עוֹלָם וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי נָשִׂיא לָהֶם לְעוֹלָם: וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם בְּרִית עוֹלָם יִהְיֶה אוֹתָם וּנְתַתִּים וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אוֹתָם וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם: וְהָיָה מִשְׁכְּנִי עֲלֵיהֶם וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהֵמָּה יִהְיִי-לִי לְעָם: וַיִּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהִיּוֹת מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם:

יחזקאל ל"ז.כ"א-כ"ח

*"And speak unto them, thus said the L-rd G-d, behold I am taking the Children of Israel from among the nations which they went there and I will gather them from around and I will bring them to their land. And I will make them for one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel and one King will be to all of them for King and they will no longer be two nations and they will not be divided again into two kingdoms again. And they will no longer be defiled with their idols and abominations and in all their sins, but I will save them from all their dwellings which they sinned in them and I will purify them and they will be to Me for a people and I will be to them G-d. And My servant David, King over them and one Shepherd will be to all of them and in My judgments they will walk and in My statutes they will keep and they will do them. And they will dwell upon the land which I gave to My servant Jacob which dwelt in it your fathers and they will dwell upon it, they and their children and their children's children forever and David My servant, Prince to them forever. And I will cut for them a covenant of peace, an eternal covenant will be with them and I will give them and I will multiply them and I will put My sanctuary in the midst of them forever. My tabernacle will to them and I will be for them G-d and they will be to Me for a people. And the nations will know that I am the L-rd Who sanctifies Israel when My sanctuary is among them forever." Ezekiel 37:21-28*

This passage is not unique, for there are numerous prophetic passages like it throughout the Biblical prophets. It proclaims the faithfulness of G-d and that it will be Him Who brings the Jewish people, not only back to the Land of Israel, but to faith in their King. When one closely examines what is actually stated, rather than emptying the passage by a spiritualization of the text and a figurative interpretation, such a person will see that G-d is at work even in our days to keep His word to His people. Notice that it is G-d Who promises to take the Jewish people from many nations and return them to their land. One cannot properly understand this land to be an allegory relating to the world, for it clearly states, *"upon the mountains of Israel"*. If one ignores this fact and rejects the dozens of texts which state the same thing, then why believe anything that the Scriptures reveal? LaRondelle's methodology of Biblical interpretation gives to man the false authority to render the Scrip-

tures any way one desires. This hermeneutical approach, when applied to the New Testament, brings about tragic results and is the cause of much heresy.

This prophetic passage also reveals that the Jewish people will not return to the Land of Israel because of some merit or faithfulness; rather even in the midst of idolatry and spiritual abominations, G-d will still bring His people back to Israel. The reason for this is His faithfulness and it will be while in the midst of sins and transgressions the Jewish people will return to the Land and David, i.e. Messiah will be received as their King by means of repentance and faith. It is most significant that the Messiah (Yeshua) is called by G-d “*My Servant*” as it is Yeshua Who, when He returns at the Second Coming, will bring the Jewish people to faith when they see Him and will receive first, the physical deliverance from their enemies (all the Gentile nations that will go up to Jerusalem for war) and then true redemption, i.e forgiveness of their sins, accepting His death and the shedding of His blood for eternal redemption. Two times the following expression appears in this passage, “...and they will be to Me for a people and I will be to them G-d.” This verse and many which are like it appear several times both in the Old and New Testaments and is understood as a reference to the redemptive work of G-d, as it is only by means of redemption that one can enter into the New Covenant and become part of His people and that the L-rd, the Holy One of Israel, will be one’s G-d. An additional truth concerning this passage is that the Gentiles, when seeing G-d’s faithfulness to the Jewish people according to His word, will also know the faithfulness of the L-rd.

Instead of accepting that G-d will indeed bring the Jewish people to faith in the Gospel at the end of the age, LaRondelle prefers to state in contrast to the prophetic testimony that “*Israel has no part whatsoever in the kingdom promise. Believing Gentiles will take their empty seats at the eschatological festival of Abraham’s offspring. With apostolic authority Peter transfers the hope of Israel to the Church.*” (page 144)

What Scriptures does LaRondelle offer to support such a view? He provides three passages which do not at all teach what he believes. The first is 2 Peter 3:12-13. These verses only speak about the Kingdom, they say nothing whatsoever about the Church replacing Israel and that G-d will not bring the Jewish people to faith in the End Times. Secondly, he offers Isaiah 65:17 which also speaks about the Kingdom. A true student of the Scriptures would also understand the meaning of verse 9 in this same chapter,

וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִיַּעֲקֹב זֶרַע וּמִיִּהוּדָה יִרְשׁוּ הָרִי וְיִרְשׁוּהָ בְּחִירִי וְעַבְדִּי יִשְׁכְּנוּ-שָׁמָּה:

“*I will bring forth from Jacob, a seed and from Judah, an heir; upon My mountains My elect will inherit it and My servants will dwell there.*” Isaiah 65:9

Isaiah has informed the reader that the Jewish people had been rebellious, but nevertheless G-d will bring a remnant of the Jewish people to repentance and they will rejoice in the Kingdom. For LaRondelle to remove the clear references to Jacob and ignore the original context of this prophetic revelation must be rooted in blinding anti-Israelism which dominates and obscures the obvious message of the text. This anti-Israelism also blinds many others to deny the Millennial Kingdom. It is clear that LaRondelle, like most Replacement theologians, cannot accept the literal words of Revelation chapter 20. Therefore, they reject the thousand year rule of Messiah from Jerusalem as a future event which will begin at His Second Coming. Rather than accepting the simple and clear meaning, once again they spiritualize the Scriptural texts which speak to such a literal Kingdom by stating, “*In the appearance of Christ, God did return to Israel. God restored the throne of*

*David in the resurrection, accession, and inauguration of Christ as Lord and Redeemer of Israel...so Christ is now seated with His Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21)...and is no longer unoccupied or ineffective, but is transferred from Jerusalem to the throne room in heaven....*" (page 149) Although Yeshua is at the right hand of the Father and upon the throne, this does not replace Him returning to Jerusalem and ruling from Jerusalem as the word of G-d demands. Such a figurative and symbolic understanding would mean that Satan is bound in hell now and the world in which we live is currently a Kingdom of righteousness. Once again, such theologians spiritualize the Kingdom of righteousness and peace to be an inward and individual experience, and not one that actually fulfills the words of Yeshua. In order to justify such theological positions, LaRondelle twists Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah chapter 11. Isaiah states that the L-rd will strike the river and this action will make a highway for the remnant of His people to return to the Land of Israel in the End Times (see Isaiah 11:15-16). However, LaRondelle incorrectly and allegorically attributes this to the activity of the Persian general Cyrus in 539 B.C. (see page 152) Then he continues and writes,

*"The deeper meaning of Isaiah's prophecy of this drying up the Euphrates' waters on behalf of Israel is brought to light in the New Testament Apocalypse (Revelation 16:12) in connection with the remnant church of the time of the end."* (page 152)

LaRondelle errs in associating these two passages together. Instead of the L-rd drying up the river's waters to bring the kings of the east to the battle of Armageddon, where He will deliver the Jewish people who have returned to the Land of Israel, and lead them to faith, LaRondelle states,

*"Isaiah's forecast of the gathering of Israel is deeply God-centered and Messiah-centered. The gathering is primarily to the Messiah Himself and only secondarily to the land of Israel. Furthermore, the gathering is not for Israel only, but explicitly for all believing Gentiles (Isaiah 11:10)." (page 153)*

There is absolutely nothing in Revelation chapter 16 which should cause one to make the association which LaRondelle does between Isaiah chapter 11 and Revelation chapter 16. The book of Revelation is most emphatic that G-d's wrath will not bring Gentiles to repentance. In fact, one reads in Revelation chapter 16,

*"...and they blasphemed the Name of G-d Who had authority over these plagues and they did not repent to give Him glory."* Revelation 16:9

The linking of Isaiah chapter 11 and Revelation chapter 16 is not warranted, although there is a connection in regard to the same approximate time, i.e. the End Times. Careful study of the verse which LaRondelle provides actually leads to a very different conclusion. He mentions the following Scripture,

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שֶׁרֶשׁ יֵשׁוּי אֲשֶׁר עֲמִיד לִנֵּס עַמִּים אֵלָיו גּוֹיִם יְדַרְשׁוּ וְהָיְתָה מִנְחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד: יִשְׁעִיהוּ י"א.

*"And it will be on that day the root of Jesse stands for a banner, peoples unto Him, Gentiles will seek and His resting place will be glorious."* Isaiah 11:10

LaRondelle understands the words "peoples and Gentiles (Nations)" (גּוֹיִם וְעַמִּים) as not connected to the Jewish people. However, there are times when such terms do, in fact, relate to the Jewish people. What is the context for this passage? In the next verse, Isaiah

reveals that it will be precisely at this time, at the End of the age, that a second time G-d will set His hand to recover the remnant of His people (see Isaiah 11:11). It is when one reads and studies verse 12 that the true intent of this passage becomes most clear.

וְנִשָּׂא נֵס לְגוֹיִם וְאֶסַף נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִפְצוֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ: יִשְׁעִיהוּ י"א.י"ב

*"And a banner will be raised to the nations and He will assemble the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed ones of Judah and He will gather from the four corners of the earth."* Isaiah 11:12

Based upon this verse, the reason why the Banner will be lifted to the nations is for the expressed purpose of assembling and gathering the outcasts and the dispersed ones of specifically the Jewish people (Israel and Judah). Please note that the Hebrew word גוֹיִם can refer to either nations or Gentiles. There are times when this word also refers to the Jewish people. LaRondelle states, *"The New Testament does not predict another restoration of Yahweh's glory in old Jerusalem..."* (page 159) To such a statement I would offer Acts 1:6 when Christ's disciples ask Yeshua, *"if at this time He will restore again the Kingdom to Israel?"* The Scripture is also clear that when Messiah returns, He will come to the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:11). Once again, for "theologians" like LaRondelle, they ignore such significant Scriptures and recommend that if one *"takes Christ as its guiding norm of prophetic interpretation instead of geographic literalism, then no longer would one regard old Mount Zion as the holy center of prophecy."* (page 159) The so-called taking of Christ as the guiding norm is simply a manipulative use of the term Christ, in order to conceal and justify their true intentions of rejecting the actual revelation of Scripture. What motivates them to perform such hermeneutical maneuvers? The answer is that they cannot tolerate a Savior Who will have compassion upon the Jewish people and bring them to faith. One would think that true disciples of Yeshua would rejoice in this, but for LaRondelle and others who embrace Replacement theology, they prefer to slander Yeshua and distort what the word of G-d clearly reveals.

Let us all agree that there is only one way into the Kingdom. Salvation comes by faith in the grace of G-d which was achieved by the sufficiency of the Cross. In other words, it is ONLY by means of the Gospel that both Jew and Gentile receives redemption. There is no other way, one Gospel for all! The slander of LaRondelle is that he accuses the Biblical testimony concerning the Jewish people coming to faith in the Gospel as a different gospel which violates the true message of salvation. LaRondelle misrepresents what the Scripture reveals when he writes,

*"...insisting on interpreting Jesus' words, 'Until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' as a promise that an eschatological remnant of Israel will acknowledge Christ when He returns in glory. They will be saved because they confess, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord?' Must we then assume that Christ predicts a forced acceptance of Himself by Jews at His glorious second advent? Such a new way of salvation— 'by sight' instead of 'by faith'— goes against the very grain of the eternal gospel of God."* (page 162)

When examining the passage in question (Matthew chapter 23), Yeshua was scolding Israel's leadership for their improper behavior and their failing to understand the word of G-d. He remarks that at His first coming He was desiring to gather up the Children of Israel as a mother hen would gather her chicks, but Israel was unwilling. Next, Yeshua correctly prophesied that judgment would come upon Israel and the Jewish people would not see

Him again until they will say, *“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the L-rd.”* This proclamation has its origin in Psalm 118 and concludes a grouping of six Psalms (Psalms 113-118) known in Judaism as the Hallel (Praise). This group of Psalms represents praises and thanksgiving to the G-d of Israel for His deliverance of His people. The Hallel is recited in joyful times such as Biblical festivals and the celebration of the Rosh Chodesh, the New Month. Yeshua uses this verse (Psalm 118:26) to foretell that in the End Times the Jewish people will recognize Him and praise G-d for Him delivering them. If LaRondelle would have actually read the entire section, he would have seen that in verse 24 the people are rejoicing in that day. In verse 25, they are shouting Hosannah הושיע נא which means *“Save us now please”*. In verses 28-29, the Jewish people are seen acknowledging the L-rd as their G-d and exalting Him and giving Him thanks for His mercy and grace. The Hebrew phrase *“Blessed is He Who comes”* is always understood as a joyful welcoming and is still used in the modern Hebrew language as a greeting. LaRondelle rips these words out of their proper context and states,

*“...that the Jews who have rejected Him will have to acknowledge at His glorious appearing Him as Messiah-Judge that this Jesus, whom they now despise is the true messianic King of Israel. Only then will they see Him again, the Blessed One ‘who comes in the name of the Lord.’ They will meet Him as their Judge.” Jesus words are spoken in the context divine judgment on the (Jewish) nation.”* (pages 163-164)

Such words are in stark contrast to the prophetic testimony of this event. For example, Zechariah prophesies that it will be God (the Messiah) Who will defend the Jewish people from all the Gentile nations which will go up to Jerusalem to make war. The reader is told that Yeshua will destroy, not the Jewish people as their Judge as LaRondelle states, but He will destroy the nations who war against the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Next He will pour out His Spirit, the spirit of Grace and Supplication, upon the Jewish people and they will see Him and recognize Yeshua and mourn Him because they had not acknowledged His death previously (see Zechariah 12:8-12). As the prophecy continues, a fountain is opened up for the cleansing away of Israel’s sin and their spiritual uncleanness. The passage concludes with G-d refining His people as silver and as gold as they call upon His Name and He will say that they are His people and they will say that He is their G-d (Zechariah 13:1,9). Quite a different understanding from that of which LaRondelle presents. This man is simply dishonest and a willful distorter of the Scriptures. Rather than accepting and acknowledging that a remnant of the Jewish people will indeed come to faith when Yeshua returns, he simply cannot conceal his hate for Israel (the land and the people) and writes,

*“Instead of another opportunity for salvation for those who have rejected Him as the Lamb of God, we hear them all cry out, ‘Hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?’”* (page 163)

I am sure this man stands by his faulty interpretation, but the fact of the matter is when examining the verses he quotes, one actually learns who it will be who will say, *“Hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand?”* Is not the Jewish people as LaRondelle desires and proclaims loudly, but if he would have simply read the first half of the verse he cites, he would have clearly seen that it is *“The kings of the earth and the rich men and the head captains, and mighty men and every slave and free man...”* (see Revelation 6:15-16) These errors are not only as a result of poor hermeneutical methodology, but are rooted in a strong bias against the Jewish people. Why does he neglect the next chapter when the

reader is told that the wrath of G-d is delayed until the Jewish people are sealed, i.e. protected from this divine wrath? His consistent failings and errant interpretations are always to enable him to pronounce judgment of the Jewish people.

Within his anti-Jewish rant, it would be proper to examine his assertion that if one understands the Jewish people seeing Christ at His Second Coming and receiving Him, then this truly *"goes against the very grain of the eternal gospel of God."* (page 162) I do not know anyone who believes that understanding Israel when seeing the Messiah and believing in Him at the End of this age, violates the tenets of the Gospel. It is of course preferable to come to faith, by the testimony of the Scriptures and what is recorded about Yeshua. However, it would be well to remember the words of Yeshua to Thomas and their context. It was after His resurrection and testified and said, *"We have seen the L-rd"*. Thomas remarked that despite their testimony and in disbelief to Yeshua's own promise that He would rise again on the third day, that he would not believe unless he could put his own fingers into the wounds of Christ. Eight days later, Thomas did in fact have the opportunity to see Yeshua and examine His wounds and he then believed. Yeshua said to him, *"...because you have seen you believe, blessed are those who have not seen, and believed"* (see John 20:24-30). Yes, Yeshua scolded Thomas for not having a strong faith, but is it correct theologically to assert as LaRondelle does, that because one sees, this amounts to a different means of salvation and *"goes against the very grain of the eternal gospel of God"*? Is he right when he states further, *"Christ is not interested in being adopted on the basis of His divine miracles"*? (page 164) What should one make of the numerous miracles that Yeshua did and John's statement, *"Therefore, also many other signs Yeshua did before His disciples..."* (see John 20:30). Seeing miracles and receiving deliverance from one's enemies does not violate faith, but throughout Scriptures such signs and miracles were used to bring people to faith. Are not the Gospels full of accounts of individuals who saw the wondrous power of G-d and were moved to faith? What about Paul, whose Damascus road experience brought him to faith and was the catalyst for a changed life? Obviously, it would be of greater faith and more pleasing to G-d for all the Jewish people to accept Yeshua today; rather than at His Second Coming. Many Jewish people will die prior to this time and be eternally lost; nevertheless, the Scriptures do in fact reveal a national day for Israel coming to faith at the time of Yeshua's Second Coming and LaRondelle's use of Scriptures against this prophetic promise only serves to demonstrate his inability to handle the word of G-d properly. A most convincing example of this is how LaRondelle understands the famous prophecy of **Daniel's seventy weeks**.

LaRondelle proclaims, *"There can be no doubt that Christ applied the desolating abomination of Daniel 9:27, ...to His own immediate future, when the Roman army would destroy Jerusalem and the temple in His own generation (see Luke 21:20-24). Thus Christ applied the seventy weeks prophecy of the coming Messiah and the subsequent devastations of Messiah's enemy to His own time and not to either the past or the indefinite future. Christ related the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to Israel's final refusal to accept Him as her King and Savior. The seventy-weeks prophecy is basically a messianic prophecy announcing the consequences of Jerusalem's rejection of her Messiah. It is God's ultimatum to national Israel. Seventy 'sevens' were decreed, or determined, by God as a final probationary period for Jerusalem and the Jewish people..."* (page 171)

Wow, three times on one page LaRondelle states that G-d must not, never ever, reach out to the Jewish people collectively to bring them to salvation after A.D 70. Of course he allows for individual Jews being led to faith in the Gospel after the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, but never must G-d act in a miraculous saving manner for the Jewish people in the End Times. It is most telling that LaRondelle understand **Daniel's**



**70th week** as fulfilled during Yeshua's first advent. My purpose is not to provide the reader my understanding of Daniel's prophecy, but simply to point out LaRondelle's major conclusions for Daniel's 70th week are most disturbing and highly contradictory to the words of Daniel. A major problem that LaRondelle frequently makes is to fail to pay attention to what is actually said in the text. This tendency usually is the cause of him interpreting a passage figuratively or symbolically. In Daniel 9:26, the reader is informed,

וְאַחֲרֵי הַשָּׁבָעִים שָׁשִׁים וּשְׁנָיִם יָכָרַת מָשִׁיחַ וְאֵין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ יִשְׁחָתוּ עִם נֹגִיד הַבָּא וְקִצּוֹ בְּשָׁטָף וְעַד קֵץ  
מִלְחָמָה נִחָרֶצֶת שְׁמָמוֹת: דְּנִיאל ט.כ"ו

*"And after the 62 weeks, Messiah will be cut, but not for Himself, and the city and the sanctuary, the people of the coming prince will destroy and his end with quickness and unto the end of war, the determined desolation."* Daniel 9:26

Please notice that the text says after 62 weeks. These 62 weeks were preceded by a seven week period, so it is actually after a total of 69 weeks or 483 years. In regard to this, there are no differences. The difference of opinion relates to the Hebrew phrase וְאַחֲרֵי which means "and after". There is no difference in how it should be translated, but the implications of this phrase. In addition to this, I understand the death of Messiah on the Cross as the intent of the statement יָכָרַת מָשִׁיחַ *Messiah will be cut off* and so also does LaRondelle. I believe that Cross of Christ occurred immediately after the 69 weeks (483 years) had ended, i.e. at the conclusion of the 69th week; **while LaRondelle actually places the Cross in the middle of the 70th week.** LaRondelle spiritualizes this prophecy which allows him to proclaim that Daniel's 70th week has already been fulfilled and should not be understood as relating to the final seven years of this world which will conclude with the Second Coming.

When reading from Daniel's prophecy about the 70th week, one learns that the final week begins with a covenant being established.

וְהִגְבִּיר בְּרִית לְרַבִּים שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְחָצִי הַשָּׁבוּעַ יִשְׁבִּית זֶבַח וּמִנְחָה וְעַל כָּנָף שְׂקִיזִים מְשָׁמֵם וְעַד-כָּלָה וְנִחָרֶצֶה  
תִּתֵּן עַל-שָׁמָּה: דְּנִיאל ט.כ"ז

*"And he will make strong a covenant for many, one week, but (in) the middle of the week, he will cease the sacrifice and offering and upon the wing of abominations of desolation until the end and (the) determination cut out concerning desolation."* Daniel 9:27

The text states emphatically that one will strengthen a covenant and this will begin the final seven years (week). For LaRondelle, he ignores this fact and states that it is actually Yeshua's baptism which begins the 70th week. **The Abominations of Desolation**, which not only Daniel spoke of but so did Yeshua Himself and Paul, LaRondelle interprets as the Crucifixion of the Messiah!

*"...the Messiah Himself is predicted to end the sacrificial system in the middle of the seventieth week, exactly three and one-half years after his baptism and the Anointed One. The Gospel of John verifies the precise historical fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ's life; the time between His baptism and cross was exactly three and one half years."* (page 176)

It is most interesting that no Scripture is provided to support this claim. LaRondelle quotes another author who also holds this same view, but such a precise timing of exactly 3 1/2 years from the Yeshua's baptism to the Cross cannot, in fact, be proven Biblically! It may

indeed be approximately correct; however, the greater problem is that LaRondelle says nothing in regard to the fact that baptism is not what prophetically begins the final week, but it is actually a covenant. The greater heresy is to associate the **Abominations of Desolation** with the Cross! Once more, it is spiritualizing the text and ignoring the literalness of what G-d's Holy Word actually states that allows LaRondelle to arrive at one of the most offensive interpretations of a Scriptural passage by a "believer" which I have ever heard.

What is the **Abominations of Desolation**? Although Daniel only refers to it in chapter 9, in chapter 11 he clearly defines it for the reader.

וְעָשָׂה כְּרָצוֹנוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּתְּרוּמִם וַיִּתְגַּדֵּל עַל-כָּל-אֵל וְעַל אֵל אֱלִים יִדְבֹּר נִפְלְאוֹת וְהִצְלִיחַ עַד-כֹּלָה זַעַם כִּי נִחְרָצָה  
נִעְשְׂתָה: דְּנִיאל ט.ל"ו

*"And the king will do according to his will and he will exalt himself and magnify himself over every god, and against gods, he will speak wondrous things and will succeed until the end of wrath because it is determined what is done."* Daniel 11:36

This verse makes mention of a king who will act in accordance with his desire and will attempt to exalt himself and be greater than every god. Based on chapter 9, this king will even enter the sanctuary in Jerusalem and bring to an end the sacrifices and offerings there. The Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use both of these verses to reveal to the reader, in most specific terms, what the **Abomination of Desolation** is. He writes in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 about the son of destruction and the man of lawlessness (the anti-christ) the following words,

ο αντικειμενος και υπεραιρομενος επι παντα λεγομενον θεον η σεβασμα ωστε αυτον εις τον ναον του θεου ως θεον καθισσαι αποδεικνυντα εαυτον οτι εστιν θεος

*"The one who opposes and exalts himself above all which is called god or godly, so that he, in the Sanctuary of G-d as G-d, he sits manifesting himself that he is God.*

2 Thessalonians 2:4

Paul emphatically states the **Abomination of Desolation** is clearly committed εις τον ναον του θεου (in the Sanctuary of G-d). Daniel also reveals that the **Abomination of Desolation** brings an end (will cease) to the sacrifices and the offerings at the Temple. How does then LaRondelle interpret that it is our Blessed Savior when He died on the Cross who actually committed the **Abomination of Desolation**? Here is his explanation concerning his blasphemous view.

*"The fulfillment of Daniel's prediction that 'in the middle of the 'seven' he [the Anointed One of Daniel 9:25, 26] will put an end to sacrifice and offering' (chap. 9:27) was strikingly confirmed by an act of God Himself. When Jesus died,..." (page 177)*

*"The death of Christ signified the end of Israel's sacrificial temple ritual by an unmistakable act from heaven. The legitimacy of the temple sacrifices had come to an end... the sacrifices offered after His death could no longer be regarded as legitimate and valid in God's sight." (page 178)*

Please notice how firm Mr. LaRondelle writes these words, as though his view is unquestionable. If his slanderous statements were correct, then why would the Apostle Paul enter into the Temple, which LaRondelle states is not legitimate or valid, and make the offering there which the Torah (Law of Moses) required? In Acts chapter 21, Paul is being accused of teaching Gentiles to forsake the Law of Moses; therefore, he is commanded by James (the brother of Jesus) and the believing elders in Jerusalem, to take four men who were under the vow (Nazarite) and to purify himself with these four men, thereby completing the commandment (see Acts 21:20-26). It is wise to pay close attention to what is written in Acts 21:26,

τοτε ο παυλος παραλαβων τους ανδρας τη εχομενη ημερα συν αυτοις αγνισθεις εισηει εις το ιερον διαγγελλων την εκπληρωσιν των ημερων του αγνισμού εως ου προσηνεχθη υπερ ενος εκαστου αυτων η προσφορα

*"Then Paul took the men for the next day with them being purified, he entered into the Temple declaring the fulfillment of the days of purification until that he offered in behalf of each one of them, the sacrifice."* Acts 21:26

This act which Paul did in the Temple was called **"the sacrifice"** η προσφορα. The use of the definite article η (the) places an emphasis on the act which Paul performed. This sacrifice was of course after the Crucifixion of Christ. Therefore, what Paul did, was it illegitimate? Did Paul behave in a spiritually invalid manner? Were James and the elders spiritually uninformed? Or rather did, in fact, Mr. LaRondelle twist the Scriptures again in a most offensive manner, in order to justify his obsession that Christ is forbidden to bring Jewish people to faith at the time of the Second Coming? He concludes chapter 11 of his book with the words,

*"The messianic prophecy of Daniel 9 placed upon Israel the ultimate test: either to remain God's theocracy by accepting Christ as her Messiah or to be judged by Christ Himself."* (page 182)

So per LaRondelle's words, God finished with the Jewish people and Yeshua will not reach out to them in the End Times as the Biblical prophets states in the Scripture. In order to justify his theological position in this regard, he mentions Jeremiah chapters 30 and 31. He absolutely rejects that the Jewish people will go through tribulation in the End Times in order to bring them to faith and experience Messiah Yeshua's deliverance and accept Him. He writes in opposition to this truth,

*"A closer look at Jeremiah, chapters 30 and 31, reveal the well-know anthology of restoration promises for the twelve tribes in the Assyrian-Babylonia captivity."* (page 189)

Hence, according to LaRondelle, the well-known verse about Jacob's Trouble, Jeremiah 30:7, and G-d's promised salvation from it, should properly be understood as applied to the Assyrian-Babylonia captivity centuries before the birth of Messiah. Could LaRondelle be correct in his assertion that this wonderful prophecy is not about the End Times, but was fulfilled over 2,500 years ago? LaRondelle, in order to twist and distort a marvelous promise of G-d to the Jewish people, attesting to His love and faithfulness, fails to continue reading in the passage. Had LaRondelle continued reading just a few verses, he would have encountered,

הוּ כִּי גָדוֹל הַיּוֹם הַהוּא מֵאִין כְּמֵהוּ וְעַתְצָרָה הִיא לַיַּעֲקֹב וּמִמֶּנָּה יִנְשָׁע: וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ מֵעַל צִוְאָרָךְ וּמוֹסְרוֹתֶיךָ אֲנִיתִּיךָ וְלֹא-יַעֲבֹדוּ-בּו עוֹד זָרִים: וְעַבְדוּ אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְאֶת דָּוִד מֶלֶכָם אֲשֶׁר אָקִים לָהֶם: וְאַתָּה אֶל-תִּירָא עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה וְאֶל-תַּחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעַךְ מִרְחוֹק וְאֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ שָׁבִים וְשָׁב יַעֲקֹב וְשָׁקֵט וְשָׁאֵן וְאִין מִחֲרִיד: כִּי-אַתָּה אָנִי נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה לְהוֹשִׁיעַךְ כִּי אֶעֱשֶׂה כָלָה בְּכָל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִפְצִוְתִּיךָ שָׁם אַךְ אַתָּה לֹא-אֶעֱשֶׂה כָלָה וְיִסְרְתִּיךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט וְנִקָּה לֹא אֶנָּקֶךָ:

*“Woe! for great is that day, there is no like it, a time of trouble for Jacob, but from it he will be saved. And it will come about on that day, declares the L-rd of Hosts I will break the yoke from upon your neck and your bonds and I will cut off, and they will not serve with him strangers, but they will serve their G-d, and David their King Who I will raise up for them. And you, do not fear O’ My servant Jacob, declares the L-rd and do not be dismayed O’ Israel, for behold I am saving you from afar and your seed from the land of captivity and Jacob will return and in quietness and tranquility, and there is no one making afraid. For with you am I, declared the L-rd to save you for I will make an end with all the nations who scattered you there, but you I will not make an end, but I will discipline you for judgment and I will not leave you unpunished.”* Jeremiah 30:7-12

These verses contain compelling evidence that this passage does not concern the Assyrian-Babylonia captivity. The term “on that day” relates to judgement and usually the final judgment day, i.e. the Day of the L-rd. That the Jewish people will no longer serve זָרִים this would mean “*strangers*”, but often in the sense of foreign gods. This will occur only for Israel at the End Times. One also reads that instead of serving foreign gods, they will serve David, their King. This David is obviously a reference to the Son of David, i.e. the Messiah, as David the son of Jesse had been dead in Jeremiah’s days approximately 400 years. The reader is also told that the Jewish people will have no one who makes them afraid. Here again, this is only fulfilled in the End Times when Messiah Yeshua defeats all their enemies. This is why one also reads, “*I will make an end with all the nations who scattered you there, but you I will not make an end....*” When did G-d make an end with all all other nations which scattered Israel? The answer is not related to the Assyrian-Babylonia captivity as LaRondelle erroneously and flippantly asserts. This passage can only be referring to the End Times.

Have these promises have been delegitimized and rendered void by the Cross of Christ as LaRondelle affirms and continuously teaches? His statements are truly offensive to the G-d of Israel and His Only Begotten Son! It is scandalous that LaRondelle asserts that it was Christ Who committed the **Abomination of Desolation**, when Paul calls the one who will commit the **Abomination of Desolation**, a son of destruction and the man of lawlessness. This is truly blasphemous!

The final issue which I will respond to in this article is LaRondelle’s view of the Rapture of the Church or as it is called by Paul, “*Our Blessed Hope*”. There are a few points in which we concur, but there are far more issues of sharp disagreement between us. For example, I strongly disagree with him that the Rapture and the Second Coming are **one and the same events**. LaRondelle writes,

*“The vocabulary of the New Testament does not allow for the idea of two coming, or two phases of Christ’s coming...”* (page 189)

Furthermore, LaRondelle asserts that Matthew chapter 24 contains information only concerning the Church, i.e. believers. I would argue and say that it is addressed to believers, but also provides clear revelation concerning Israel and the Jewish people in the End

Times. Of course LaRondelle does not allow for this view. In Matthew chapter 24, the first two verses speak about the time of Yeshua and His 12 disciples and the destruction of the Temple which did take place in A.D. 70. However, it is an error to believe the entire chapter deals with this time period. In verse 3, there is a change in location to the Mount of Olives. This location has eschatological implications, as this is where Yeshua will return at His Second Coming according to Acts 1:6-11 and Zechariah 14:4. It is while Yeshua is at the Mount of Olives, His disciple approach Him with a few questions. The first question did indeed have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and as Yeshua's words were absolutely accurate concerning this, so too will His words be accurate concerning the End Times. Please notice that the next two questions concerned His Coming and the End of the world. Hence, Matthew 24:4-51 concerns the End Times and assists those believers who will be alive at this time to be ready and not to be deceived. It is very important that one recognizes that this chapter can be broken down into sections based upon grammatical indicators. For example, from verse 4 until 15, Yeshua is speaking to His disciples about what will happen to disciples in the End Times. It is most significant that the word τέλος "end" appears three times in this first section. Proper understanding of this chapter demands one to understand to what "end" Yeshua is referring. Yeshua stated,

και κηρυχθησεται τουτο το ευαγγελιον της βασιλειας εν ολη τη οικουμενη εις μαρτυριον πασιν τοις εθνεσιν και τοτε ηξει το τελος

*"And will be proclaimed this the Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world for a testimony to all the nations and then will come the end."* Matthew 24:14

The phrase "end" has the definite article, i.e. το τελος "**the end**" which demands the reader to understand that Yeshua was speaking to a specific end. The end to which He was referring was the End of the Church Age. This Church Age will come to its end with the Rapture. Once again, the question which must be addressed is when does this Rapture take place? LaRondelle states there is no difference in time between the Rapture and the Second Coming so he places the Rapture at the end of the age, i.e prior to the Kingdom of G-d being established. In other words, he see no difference between the End of the Church Age and the End of the Age. Is LaRondelle correct? I will most certainly return to this question, but first it would assist the reader to continue with our examination of Matthew chapter 24. In the next verse, Yeshua refers to a very important event, the **Abomination of Desolation**. One needs to remember that LaRondelle said this event was the Crucifixion of Christ. Yeshua stated,

οταν ουν ιδητε το βδελυγμα της ερημωσεως το ρηθεν δια δανιηλ του προφητου εστος εν τοπω αγιω ο αναγινωσκων νοειτω

*"There whenever you should see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place, let the reader know."* Matthew 24:15

It is most significant that immediately after Yeshua mentioned the Abomination of Desolation in verse 15, there is a grammatical change in this passage. When one does not figuratively interpretative the Scriptures only using Biblical texts to justify ones beliefs, but demands that one's theological beliefs be firmly rooted in the revelation of the text itself, then such a Bible student will closely examine the text and pay attention to all the indicators contained in the text. Grammar holds a high place in assisting one to properly interpret the word of G-d.

There is a grammatical change beginning in verses 16 to 31. This change is from the second person to the third person. This means that in verses 2-15, Yeshua used the pronoun “you” when referring to His disciples. However, immediately after the Abomination of Desolation He switches to the third person and addresses “those who are in Yehudah (Judah or Judea)”. There are clear indications based on the term Judah (Judea), Shabbat (Sabbath), and Winter time, that Yeshua is speaking about the Jewish people residing in Israel (Judea) in the End Times. However, LaRondelle sees this entire chapter as referring to the Church and having no implications whatsoever to the modern Nation of Israel or the Jewish people. (pages 194-200) In support of this position, he states that those who apply Matthew 24:16-31 to the Jewish people and specially to the Land of Israel ignore the same discourse from Luke’s Gospel. LaRondelle claims that Luke’s account is undeniable about Titus and A.D. 70. I strongly disagree. The language which LaRondelle and others assert describe the events of A.D. 70 are not at all convincing. In fact, a literal reading of the text points to the End Times. For example, let us examine Luke 21:21

ΤΟΤΕ ΟΙ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΑ ΦΕΥΓΕΤΩΣΑΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΑ ΟΡΗ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΕΝ ΜΕΣΩ ΑΥΤΗΣ ΕΚΧΩΡΕΙΤΩΣΑΝ ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΕΝ ΤΑΙΣ ΧΩΡΑΙΣ ΜΗ ΕΙΣΕΡΧΕΣΘΩΣΑΝ ΕΙΣ ΑΥΤΗΝ

*“Then the ones in Yehudah (Judea), let them flee into the mountains and the one in the midst of her, let them withdraw out and the one in the countries let them not enter into her.”*

When one properly studies this verse, he learns that the subject are those individuals in Judah (Judea) “**the ones in Judah**”. The word “Judah” is a dative feminine singular noun. Later on in the verse, one reads, “**the ones in the midst of her**” (αυτης) and then finally, “**not enter into her**” (αυτην). It is vital that one understands that the possessive pronoun “**her**” is in the feminine singular and relates to the term Judah (Judea) as Judah is also a feminine noun. Most English translations will frequently render the feminine or masculine when it is applied to an object or location in the neuter or substitute another word which relates to the noun. For example, let us see what the **New American Standard Bible** has for this verse,

*“Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of **the city** must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter **the city**,”*

Another translation which agrees with my rendering is the **Berean Literal Bible**:

*“Then those in Judea, let them flee to the mountains; and those in **her** midst, let them depart out; and those in the countries, let them not enter into **her**.”*

The NASB was extremely careless and failed to understand that it was incorrect to substitute the phrase “**the city**” in referring to Judah, as Judah is a region or another term which relates to the **Nation of Israel**. Why is this so important? Because in A.D. 70, Jewish people did not need to be warned not to enter Judah. It had been known for quite some time that there was great danger in Judea. However, in the End Times, Jewish people will be persecuted not just in Israel, but throughout the world and many will attempt to make it to Israel. Therefore, Yeshua is warning them that during the End Times it will be very dangerous and Jewish individuals should flee from Jerusalem and the rest of Judea (Israel) to the mountains. This is because specifically in the End Times, G-d will prepare a place in the wilderness (mountains) for them. This corresponds to what Revelation chapter 12 also reveals; namely that Israel (the woman) fled into the wilderness where G-d had prepared a place for her for 1,260 days (see Revelation 12:6).

Please notice another most informative part of the passage. In Luke 21:24 Yeshua says,

και πεσουνται στοματι μαχαιρας και αιχμαλωτισθησονται εις παντα τα εθνη και ιερουσαλημ  
εσται πατουμενη υπο εθνων αχρι πληρωθωσιν καιροι εθνων

*“And they will fall by the mouth (edge) of a sword and they will be led captive into all the nations and Jerusalem will be trodden upon by the nations until the times of the nations are fulfilled.”*

Many theologians read this and they assert that this verse describes A.D. 70 and not the End Times. Are they in fact correct? First of all, there will be similarities between the Roman Empire’s persecution of the Jewish people in A.D. 70 and what will occur in the End Times at the hands of the antichrist and his armies. There are a few things mentioned in this verse which clearly confirm that Yeshua is indeed speaking about the End Times and not A.D. 70. Please notice the phrase, *“and Jerusalem will be trodden upon by the nations until the times of the nations are fulfilled.”* Has Jerusalem from A.D. 70 been *trodden upon by the nations until the times of the nations are fulfilled*? The answer is no! The Greek word πατέω used in verse 24 implies the type of actions that happened to Jerusalem during its destruction in A.D. 70 and will be repeated in the End Times. It does not accurately describe the Jerusalem of today. In other words, *“to be trodden upon”* expresses great suffering and destruction which one cannot say has taken place in Jerusalem since A.D. 70. In addition to this, it is written, *“... until the times of the nations are fulfilled.”* This is a clear reference to the End Times. In Revelation 11:2, one reads a prophecy concerning the last 42 months prior to Yeshua’s Second Coming. This prophecy states, ...και την πολιν την αγιαν πατησουσιν μηνας τεσσαρακοντα δυο (*“...and the Holy City will be trodden upon for 42 months.”*). The same word is used both in Luke 21:24 and Revelation 11:2 for being trodden up (πατέω).

Some have pointed out that the Jewish people being *“led captive into all the nations”* fits perfectly into A.D. 70 and not the End Times; however this is not the case. In the prophecy of Zechariah, during the final battle for Jerusalem, the reader is told that half the city of Jerusalem will go into captivity (see Zechariah 14:2). Who is taking those Jewish people into captivity? The answer is found in the same verse where it is stated, אֶסְפְּתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם, אֶל-יְרוּשָׁלַם לְמִלְחָמָה *“I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for war....”* So it is all the nations of the world who are in fact taking Jewish people at the End Times into captivity. This chapter is undeniably referring to the End Times and in verse 5, G-d once more instructs the Jewish people to flee into the mountains.

There is something most disingenuous about LaRondelle in his handling of this passage from Luke chapter 21. He strongly insists that Luke Chapter 21 must relate to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70. He limits his remarks only dealing with Luke 21:20-24. Why does he end this section with verse 24 and not continue on into the remaining verses of this section? The answer is that Yeshua continues and speaks about cosmic signs in the heavens and the earth which will take place (verse 25) and which will cause the hearts of men to fail as they see such events and witness the very powers of heaven being shaken (verse 26). This section concludes with verses 27 and 28 which describe the coming of the Son of Man, i.e. Yeshua. The complete passage is actually Luke 21:20-28. LaRondelle leaves numerous verses out of this section in making his claims for one reason. The verses which he ignored do not support his errant views. It was willfully false on the part of LaRondelle to state,

*“...Luke wrote nothing about the ‘final’ abomination and tribulation that the antichrist has in store for the ‘finally regathered’ Jews.” (page 199)*

Jews being killed by the sword, Jerusalem being trodden down, (Luke 21:24) and the Holy City being surrounded by armies and being told to flee from Judah to the mountains (Luke 21:20-21) have nothing to do with the Jewish people being regathered to Israel and the persecution of the antichrist? LaRondelle’s teachings are not based upon the Scriptures, but he only cites the Bible to lead others to accept his theological bigotry against Israel and the Jewish people.

In returning to the subject of the Rapture, there are a few points which must be explored. The first is whether the Rapture takes place as a different event from the Second Coming of the Messiah. LaRondelle states they happen together and should not be separated into two distinct events. I have mentioned that in Matthew chapter 24 there are significant grammatical indicators present. When Yeshua is speaking about and to His disciples, He uses the second person, i.e. “you” and when He speaks about the Jewish people He uses the third person “they or those in Judea”. In examining Matthew chapter 24, in verses 2-15 Yeshua is speaking directly to His disciples about what His disciples who are living in the End Times will see and experience. However, in verses 16-31, Yeshua informs those disciples what will happen specifically in Israel and to the Jewish people in the End Times.

When one comes to Matthew 24:32, He returns to the disciples as the second person is once used by Him. He instructs believers to pay attention to and to watch the Fig Tree, i.e. Israel, as a prophetic indicator for discerning the End Times (verse 32). Yeshua also states that concerning His coming, no one but G-d the Father knows the day and the hour (verses 36-37). LaRondelle also speaks about the coming of the Messiah and provided some Greek words used in the New Testament to support his point that there is only one coming of the Messiah and the Rapture and the Second Coming are the same event. He spoke about the Greek word *parousia παρουσία*. It is important that we remember that he stated,

*“The vocabulary of the New Testament does not allow for the idea of two comings, or two phases of Christ’s coming...” It substantiates only one appearance of Christ in glory, to rescue the Church from the antichrist at the end of the tribulation.” (page 189)*

LaRondelle follows a most common error, which is to define the Rapture in light of Daniel’s 70th week, i.e. the final seven years prior to establishing the Kingdom. Nowhere in the Scripture can one justify such a view. The Bible only promises that believers will not experience the wrath of G-d,

οτι ουκ εθετο ημας ο θεος εις οργην αλλ εις περιποιησιν σωτηριας δια του κυριου ημων ιησου χριστου

*“Because G-d did not appoint us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our L-rd Messiah Yeshua.” 1 Thessalonians 5:9*

LaRondelle also quoted this verse, but there is a fundamental difference between us. This issue is whether G-d keeps believers from His wrath, but we are still on earth or whether it is in fact the Rapture which He uses to actually remove believers from the earth while the wrath of G-d falls? LaRondelle believes in the former (believers are kept from G-d’s wrath while on still on the earth) and I believe the latter (it is by means of the Rapture, that G-d removes believers from the earth and takes them to heaven, while His wrath is falling).



Can it be proven Biblically which is correct? The answer is a strong affirmative. The primary verses which provide the answer are found also in Matthew chapter 24.

περι δε της ημερας εκεινης και της ωρας ουδεις οιδεν ουδε οι αγγελοι των ουρανων ει μη ο πατηρ μου μονος  
ωσπερ δε αι ημεραι του νωε ουτως εσται και η παρουσια του υιου του ανθρωπου  
ωσπερ γαρ ησαν εν ταις ημεραις ταις προ του κατακλυσμου τρωγοντες και πινοντες  
γαμουντες και εκγαμιζοντες αχρι ης ημερας εισηλθεν νωε εις την κιβωτον  
και ουκ εγνωσαν εως ηλθεν ο κατακλυσμος και ηρεν απαντας ουτως εσται και η παρουσια  
του υιου του ανθρωπου  
τοτε δυο εσονται εν τω αγρω ο εις παραλαμβανεται και ο εις αφιεται  
δυο αληθουσαι εν τω μυλωνι μια παραλαμβανεται και μια αφιεται  
γρηγορειτε ουν οτι ουκ οιδατε ποια ωρα ο κυριος υμων ερχεται

*“But concerning that day and hour, no one knows, not the angels in heaven, except My Father only. But just as the days of Noah, thus will also the coming of the Son of Man. For just as they were in the days, the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until that day Noah entered into the ark. And they did not know until the flood came and He lifted all, thus will be also the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field, the one will be taken and the one left. Two grinding at the mill, one will be taken and one will be left. Therefore watch, because you do not know what hour your L-rd comes.”* Matthew 24:36-42

In this passage, the flood is likened to the coming wrath of G-d. The purpose of these verses is to teach the reader about the coming of the Son of Man. Was LaRondelle correct when he asserted that the Greek word παρουσία (*parousia*) only is used in regard to one event and cannot be used in regard to the Rapture and the Second Coming as two separate and different events? **There is no doubt that the issue here is the Rapture. LaRondelle concedes this when he writes about Matthew 24:40-41.** He states,

*“But if one connects the expression in these verses (Mt. 24:40-41) ‘one will be taken,’ to the rapture of the Church which has linguistic support in John 14:1-3, where the root verb paralambanein is the same as that used in Matthew 24:40, 41,...”* (page 195)

So although LaRondelle agrees that these verses are indeed about the Rapture, and he is also correct about the linguistic support from the Greek word παραλαμβάνω to aid the reader to arrive at this view, he errs in his association of these verses with Matthew 24:31,

*“...this rapture is still described in connection with the rapture of the elect in verse 31”* (page 195)

Why is he wrong? Mr. LaRondelle failed to recognize that **the one who is taken in the field or while grinding at the mill, were in fact taken, i.e. removed from the wrath of G-d, just as Noah and his family were removed from the flood by entering in the ark.** Matthew uses the word ηρεν from the root αἶρω, which means “to lift up”. The use of this word signifies a “lifting up”, a “taking away” or a “removal”. Furthermore, to assert that the Church will be on earth during the wrath of G-d goes against the clear context of this passage. Why is this? One needs to remember that these verses were given to teach about the παρουσία (*parousia*), i.e. the coming of the Messiah. Yeshua stated that His coming will be like *“... as the days of Noah, thus will also the coming of the Son of Man. For just as they were in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until that day Noah entered into the ark. And they did not know un-*

*til the flood came and He lifted all, thus will be also the coming of the Son of Man.*" These verses clearly inform the reader that prior to the coming of the Son of man, the world will be in a state of normalcy, as it is written, "...*they were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until that day Noah entered into the ark. And they did not know until the flood came.*" How does such a statement agree with what the Scriptures say about the wrath of G-d in Revelation chapters 8,9,16, and 19? In these chapters, horrible events happen with great destruction which has never happened before and such things can only be understood as supernatural and originating from the Hand of G-d. Therefore, to say that people, i.e. unbelievers who will be receiving the wrath of G-d will be in a state of normalcy when the Rapture happens, its simply impossible! Rather, it will be prior to the Rapture, i.e. before the wrath of G-d, that non-believers will be "...*eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until that day Noah entered into the ark. And they did not know until the flood came...*" In other words, the Rapture must occur prior to the wrath of G-d and not the time of the Second Coming, when the wrath of the Lamb will be completed.

LaRondelle and I both agree that prior to the wrath of G-d, believers will suffer intense persecution for their faith at the hand of the antichrist. The difference between us is that LaRondelle believes (I do not) that this suffering will continue during the time the wrath of G-d is poured out on this world. Of course, LaRondelle does not believe that Christians will suffer the wrath of G-d, but be sheltered from it, but still in the world, and still being persecuted by the antichrist and his armies during the time of G-d's wrath.

The final matter which must be discussed is the difference between the *Day of Christ* and the *Day of the L-rd*. Please beware that in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 there is a textual variant between the Textus Receptus (TR) Greek New Testament and the Nestle-Aland (NA) Greek New Testament. The TR has the *Day of Christ* while the NA has *Day of the L-rd*. LaRondelle writes concerning this issue,

*"Some create an artificial distinction between 'the day of Christ' (which they apply to the rapture ) and 'the day of the Lord' (in their view, the subsequent tribulation of G-d). (page 202)*

Please note that I strongly believe in this distinction. And I appreciate Mr. LaRondelle bringing this issue up for discussion. He continues to speak of it when he writes and asks the question,

*"But how can the Day of the Lord include tribulation by the antichrist when Paul declares the Lawless one will bring his apostasy before the Day of the Lord?" (page 202)*

LaRondelle provides 2 Thessalonians 2:3, using the translation of the RSV,

*"Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion [apostasy] comes first [protos], and the man of lawlessness is revealed."*

The answer, which for some reason escapes LaRondelle, is quite simple. The antichrist will begin to function at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week. LaRondelle is correct when he says that it is the apostasy which will bring about the activity of the antichrist. This apostasy, as LaRondelle has stated, is a departure from Biblical truth.

*"The simple fact is, however, that the term apostasia in the New Testament and in the Septuagint is used exclusively for religious defection, a departure from the faith. It never refers to the departure of the Church from earth." (page 203)*

The exact time when the apostasy begins is not stated in the Scriptures and I believe it is taking place now, and in the future such apostasy by "believers" will indeed provide the impetus for the antichrist to act in a very visible way in this world. Why does LaRondelle refuse to allow that during the pouring out of the wrath of G-d so too will the antichrist be present in this world and will be functioning? Why is it difficult to accept that the antichrist will be alive and functioning before and until the Second Coming? A simple reading of Revelation 19:19-20 reveals that the Beast (the antichrist empire) with its armies will be waging war against *"Him that sits upon the horse"*, i.e. Christ Jesus Himself (see verse 19). Then it is said that Yeshua will take the beast and the false prophet (antichrist) and cast them into the lake of fire and brimstone (see verse 20). The reason for LaRondelle's error is found in his quotation, "... *Paul declares the Lawless one will bring his apostasy before the Day of the Lord?*

The apostasy is the departure of the Church from Biblical truth and it will bring about the **Abomination of Desolation** which is the key event that reveals with certainty the identity of the antichrist. This happens prior to the Rapture (the *Day of Christ*) and prior to the *Day of the L-rd*. Let us examine the verse that LaRondelle provides to support his view,

*"Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion [apostasy] comes first [protos], and the man of lawlessness is revealed."*

2 Thessalonians 2:3 RSV

What does in fact this verse teach? It teaches that believers need to know Biblical truth, especially prophecy, so as not to be deceived with the majority of the "church" in the End Times (*Let no one deceive you in any way*). Next, Paul states that the day, i.e. the *Day of Christ* (Rapture), will not happen unless the apostasy happens first (*or that day will not come, unless the rebellion [apostasy] comes first [protos]*). Both the apostasy and the revealing of the antichrist must happen before the Rapture and of course also before the *Day of the L-rd*. If *"that day"* is only a reference to the *Day of the L-rd*, the whole issue becomes mute. Why did the Thessalonians write to Paul in the first place? If Paul's teaching was that the Church (believers still alive in the End Times) would be on earth until the Second Coming and only be lifted up for a moment to meet Yeshua in the sky and to receive their new bodies before immediately returning to earth, then they had no reason to be concerned that they missed out on *"that day"*. According to this interpretation, they do not miss out on the *Day of the L-rd*. Paul simply could have said, "Until you see Yeshua in the sky you will be on the earth." Why mention the apostasy or the antichrist at all? If it were true that the Church will be on the earth at the time of the Second Coming, Paul should have answered very differently.

It is important for believers to understand the true intent of Paul. He knew that The *Day of the L-rd* relates to G-d pouring out His wrath upon the world and not believers. The Day of the L-rd cannot start until after the **Abomination of Desolation**, the sealing of the Tribes of Israel (Revelation chapter 7) and in fact the Rapture of the Church. Therefore, based upon the best manuscripts, the purpose of this chapter and a relevant response from Paul, *"that day"* must be understood as the *Day of Christ*.

Why does then LaRondelle struggle with this issue? He struggles and errs because for him, as we have previously discussed, the Second Coming is for the Church and has nothing to do with Israel's salvation. If the Church has been previously removed, i.e. the Rapture, then whom is Christ delivering? It certainly for him cannot be the Jewish people! No, for LaRondelle, Yeshua is returning not to save Israel, but to judge them, "*Then they (the Jewish people) will meet Him (Christ) as their Judge.*" (page 164) Once again, LaRondelle never fails to twist the Scripture to find a way to proclaim judgment upon Israel.

I do want to end this article with compliment to Mr. LaRondelle. He was very accurate when He wrote the following words:

*"We conclude, therefore, that the Church under Christ will go through fierce tribulation but will be victorious and withstand the final, great tribulation of the antichrist. Paul writes that the Church is destined for trials. But he added that 'God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Consequently, we need to distinguish between the tribulation of persecution by the antichrist and the retributive wrath of God appointed to the impenitent world."* (page 191)

In conclusion, those who embrace Replacement theology or have similar views which cause them to teach that much of the prophetic word concerning Israel and the Jewish people is either already fulfilled or rendered void, are not dealing with Scripture correctly. It is their refusal to accept the literalness of the word of G-d and their tendency to spiritualize texts and interpret them figuratively and symbolically that causes them to fail to receive G-d's truth. In short, they are not misguided, for upon close examination of their methodology and their use of the Scripture, I find them to willfully and intentionally twist, and distort verses from G-d's Holy Word, in order to mislead others and to illicit support in their anti-Jewish and anti-Israel theological positions. These are not simply individuals who see Biblical texts differently, but they exploit the Scripture and thereby tarnish the wonderful Name of Yeshua (Jesus) in an attempt to validate their anti-Semitism. There is no other explanation for individuals who consistently err and always ignore the places in the Scriptures that affirm G-d's love for Israel and His prophetic promises to redeem a remnant of the Jewish people in the End Times. My hope is that this article will encourage other believers to call them out and not to tolerate such teachers, pastors, etc. within the Body of Christ.