

Hagee: “Defending” Israel to Death

The [CUFI website](#) (Christians United for Israel, John Hagee’s Christian lobbying organization on behalf of the state of Israel) boldly displays Isaiah 62:1, emblazoned across its masthead, “For Zion’s sake, I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet.” But given the content of Hagee’s new book, “In Defense of Israel,” I would personally prefer if Hagee would just *shaket* (*be quiet*)! His defense of Israel is *indefensible*, and his Zionist agenda is euthanizing my Jewish people.

Now, don’t misunderstand—I am very much in favor of Christians supporting and loving Israel, and I am as supportive of the State of Israel, and its peace and safety as much as the next Jew. But I am of the opinion that Israel’s security and blessing is not solely linked to the willingness of the United States to stand with her, but comes in conjunction with Israel’s fulfillment of her destiny as a light to the nations—which begins with knowing, accepting, and following Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel. And herein lies the major issue I take with Hagee’s unbelievably flawed—dare I say, heretical—theology. Before I get into that, however, I need to be fair: I haven’t read all of Hagee’s book. Nevertheless, I am prepared to throw his baby out with his bath water based solely on the content of pages 132-143. Why? Because by Hagee’s own confession, the “Jesus issue” appears to be the crux of the book. This is what he says,

“This book will expose the sins of the fathers and the vicious abuse of the Jewish people. ‘In Defense of Israel’ will shake Christian theology. It scripturally proves that the Jewish people as a whole did not reject Jesus as Messiah. It will also prove that Jesus did not come to earth to be the Messiah. It will prove that there was a ‘Calvary conspiracy’ between Rome, the high priest, and Herod to execute Jesus as an insurrectionist too dangerous to live. Since Jesus refused by word and deed to claim to be the Messiah, how can the Jews be blamed for rejecting what was never offered?” ([Hear it for yourself.](#))

Redefining “Messiah”

Any first year seminary student knows (and if they don’t, shame on them), that the words “Messiah” and “Christ” are linguistically equivalent. (“Christ” comes from the Greek *cristos*, meaning “anointed,” thereby sharing the same meaning as that of the Hebrew *mashiach*, from which we get the English, “Messiah.”) So, of course, when I read that Hagee thinks Yeshua didn’t want to or come to be the Messiah, my first thought was, “There’s no way that he means what he’s saying. There’s no way he means that Yeshua wasn’t ‘the Christ.’” Sure enough, that’s not what he means at all (or so it seems). When he says Yeshua did not come to be the Messiah of Israel, he means, “the Messiah who will lead the Jews in their revolt against Rome.” (p.140)

Now, aside from the fact that Hagee is partially correct—that the Jews were looking for a “Messiah” who would give them a military victory over Rome—the plain sense of what he is saying is utterly ridiculous. If Yeshua is the “Christ,” then he is the “Messiah”—the words simply mean the same thing. One can only assume that Hagee has either decided to hijack and unilaterally redefine the word “Messiah” for his own purposes, or his theological delusions were not the result of consulting Scripture, since Andrew—a nice Jewish boy—says so clearly in reference to Yeshua in John 1:41, “We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ).” (NAS)

Savior, But Not “Messiah”

Setting aside for a moment his irresponsible mistranslation, there’s a much deeper issue at stake—and that’s Hagee’s entire theological bent with regard to the people of Israel. Here’s a summary of Hagee’s view:

- › “The sovereign purpose for Jesus’s life was to be a light to the Gentiles” (p. 133)
- › “The [Jewish] people wanted him to be their Messiah, but he absolutely refused.” (p. 139)
- › “The Jews were not rejecting Jesus as Messiah; it was Jesus who was refusing to be the Messiah to the Jews.” (p. 140)
- › “He refused to be their Messiah, choosing instead to be the Savior of the world.” (p. 143)

So in short, Yeshua came to be the Christ of the Gentiles, but refused to be the Messiah of the Jews; therefore, since Yeshua never offered Messiahship to the Jews, they could not reject him as Messiah. I can only speculate, based on this train of thought, that Hagee believes that

- › either the Jews did not reject Yeshua as “Messiah,” but as “Christ,” though this is apparently not a problem; or
- › that since Yeshua Himself refused to show His own people the “real Jesus,” they are therefore beyond condemnation for their ignorance. Especially since Jews have been treated so badly by the Church over the last 2,000 years, Christians should just “bless” the Jewish people (and therefore secure a blessing for themselves, as per Genesis 12:3), and not try to get them saved.

In either case, there is no relationship between Yeshua and Israel, and this amounts to something as bad or worse than the Replacement Theology Hagee allegedly speaks against—it’s a teaching that says Jewish people either have an alternate path to salvation, or that the eternal salvation of the Jewish people is not only unnecessary, but not even worth mentioning.

In Defense of Scripture

Hagee claims his book contains “Scriptural proof” of his revolutionary “Christian theology.” Let’s see how his “proof” holds up.

1. On page 133, Hagee quotes Luke 2:27-32, in which Simeon, upon seeing the baby Yeshua, blessed him, and declared that Yeshua would be “a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles.” To this, Hagee reports “that the sovereign purpose of Jesus’s life was to be a light to the Gentiles (compare Isaiah 42:6).”

It is interesting that Hagee would note to compare the passage in Isaiah, since it is the very same Replacement Theology that he bashes which teaches that Isaiah 42 is a reference solely to Yeshua. On the contrary, the “light to the nations” in this passage of Isaiah is more likely the nation of Israel, especially since “My servant” is explicitly referring to Israel in Isaiah 41:8 (just one chapter earlier), Isaiah 44:1 (just two chapters later) and elsewhere. It is fundamental Messianic Jewish theology that recognizes the intertwined destinies of both Yeshua and the people of Israel, given other “servant” passages such as Isaiah 49—a very clear Messianic passage—which, again, calls “My Servant,” Israel.

But even more to the point, Hagee says that because of Simeon’s blessing in Luke 2, Yeshua’s sovereign purpose was to be a light to the Gentiles, despite the fact that the blessing ends with, “and the glory of Your people Israel.” What kind of glory can Yeshua be to His own people if His salvation is not for them? Apparently, if I’m understanding Hagee right, not much.

2. On page 136, Hagee states, “there is not one verse of Scripture in the New Testament that says Jesus came to be the Messiah...” Again, setting aside for a moment Hagee’s moronic definition of “Messiah,” here’s the verse Hagee must have missed:

“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am *He*.’” (John 4:25-26, NAS)

3. On pages 137-138, Hagee explains how in response to the Jews demanding that he give them a sign to prove he was the Messiah, Yeshua instead answered with an explanation about the sign of Jonah (Matthew 12:39-40), how, as Jonah “was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Hagee then goes on for several paragraphs with some nonsense about Jonah, Peter, Nineveh and Joppa, and how it all points to Yeshua’s purpose in being a light to the Gentiles, but his main point is that if Yeshua were the Messiah, he would have given the Jews a sign, but that he instead “refused to give a sign.”

Again, Hagee fails to read the very Scriptures he quotes. As plain as day, the Master says, “No sign will be given... except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” So, not only does Yeshua say that there *will* be a sign, that sign was clearly seen: “God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible...” (Acts 10:40, NAS)

4. Another argument that Hagee makes in support of his anti-Messiah stance is that since Yeshua was not “trying to gain national attention to rally the support of the general public for the overthrow of mighty Rome,” he instead repeatedly told his disciples and followers to “‘tell no one’ about his supernatural accomplishments.” On page 139, Hagee says, “The people wanted him to be their Messiah, but he absolutely refused.” Yet, in the very next paragraph, he states, “Jesus would not allow them to speak, for ‘they knew that He was the Christ.’” (Luke 4:41)

So, according to Hagee, these Jewish disciples and followers were to “tell no one” that they “knew that He was the Christ.” Why would it matter if people knew He was the *Christ*? According to Hagee, the only thing Yeshua was refusing to be was *Messiah*. So, “tell[ing] no one” does not prove He was refusing to be the Messiah, since all the disciples apparently knew was that “He was the Christ.” (Are you getting all this?) Again, based on the plain sense of Hagee’s words, this ludicrous concept is not only unsustainable by Scripture, but is hopelessly contradictory.

But it gets worse.

On page 140, he reports how Peter said to Yeshua, “You are the Christ.” Then Hagee expertly reinterprets and expands this fundamental declaration for us “in other words, ‘You are the anointed one! You are the Messiah who will lead the Jews in their revolt against Rome.’”

So now Hagee is saying that “Christ” *does* mean “Messiah.” Does this mean that I can reinterpret Hagee when he says, “Jesus refused by word and deed to claim to be the [Christ]”? Can such a statement be honestly reconciled with any orthodox Christian doctrine? Consider John 10:24-25, “‘If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe...’” Or how about Mark 14:61-62, “‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed *One*?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am...’” Even with Peter’s own declaration that Yeshua was the “Christ,” the Master did not deny it. And yet, we are supposed to believe that He *is* the Christ, just not “the [Christ] to the Jews”? If He is not the Messiah of the Jews, then he is the Messiah of no one, for “the gospel... is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16, NAS)

5. On page 141, Hagee refers to Acts 1:6 as evidence that “even after his resurrection and his repeated denials that he would not be the Messiah, his disciples were still hanging on to the last thread of hope that he would now smash Rome.” Let’s see what Acts 1 actually says.

So when [the Jewish disciples] had come together [after Yeshua’s resurrection], they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority...” Acts 1:6-7

There is no doubt that the disciples still didn’t “get it” with regard to Yeshua’s entire ministry and mission, so it can be supported that they were still looking to Yeshua as their “military Messiah,” even following His resurrection.

But look at how the Master responds when asked, essentially, if now was the time that He was going to lead them in overthrowing Rome (“restoring the kingdom to Israel”): “He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs...’” He doesn’t say, “Oh, you silly little Jewish people... I’m not your Messiah. I’m just the Christ of the Gentiles!” He doesn’t say, “Stop asking me about that, I’m never going to lead you in a victory over Rome.” He says, “It is not for you to know times or epochs.” So the ultimate answer to the question of whether or not Yeshua wanted or intended to be the Messiah to the Jews by “restoring the kingdom to Israel” is not a matter of “how,” but “when.” Indeed, though a 1st century military overthrow of Rome was not in the plans, self-rule would indeed be restored to Israel... it was just a matter of time.

6. Finally, on page 143, Hagee remarks, “[Yeshua] refused to be [the Jews’] Messiah, choosing instead to be the Savior of the world.” This, according to Hagee, was Yeshua’s “sovereign purpose.” To this I can only quote Scripture, and let the plain sense of the text speak for itself: “But [Yeshua] answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 15:24)

Let My People Go!

Pastor Hagee, you claim to renounce Replacement Theology, but your words are replete with it. You have taken the removal of my people from God’s first and only plan of world salvation to new depths, and you are killing my people with the false claim that they did not reject Yeshua as Messiah. The “proof” of your book is reprehensible, your theology is sloppy, your terminology is careless, and you are leading your global flock astray. I am hesitant even to offer you a modicum of thanks for your apparent desire to see Christians no longer blaming Jews for the past, but even this is overshadowed by the destruction you are heaping upon my people by perpetuating the lie that the God of Israel did not send a Messiah for Israel, only a “Christ” for everyone else.

Pastor Hagee, let my people go, that they may no longer serve as pawns in your warped, eschatological schemes, but that they may serve the living God of Israel by returning to Him through the salvation that comes only by way of the Son, the One and Only Messiah of Israel, Yeshua, the firstfruits of the Jewish people to be the light of the world!