



STATEMENT DH005

JOHN HAGEE

Christians have listened for many years to the preaching of John Hagee, senior pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. Hagee attended Trinity University on a football scholarship, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree before earning his master's at North Texas State University. He also studied at Southwestern Bible College and was granted an honorary doctorate from Oral Roberts University.

Hagee's ministerial activities began in 1958 as an evangelist. In 1966 he went to San Antonio to become the founding pastor of what eventually became Trinity Church. After resigning his pastorate of Trinity in May 1975, Hagee took the helm of the 25-member Church of Castle Hill in San Antonio. That church — rebuilt to seat 5,000 and dedicated in October 1987 as Cornerstone Church — now has an active membership of over 13,000.

Through his writings (books, booklets, and articles in his bimonthly *John Hagee Ministries* magazine), taped messages, and daily appearances on his Global Evangelism Television broadcasts (*Cornerstone* and *John Hagee Today*) aired by the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) and other media outlets, Hagee has gained broad visibility and influence among evangelicals.

A number of people consider Hagee's teachings to be thoroughly biblical. We would disagree with Hagee, however, on the following points.

Preaching Prosperity

John Hagee believes that all Christians should be financially prosperous so long as they continue to walk in obedience to God's ordinances. Although he does not subscribe to every doctrine common to the so-called Faith movement, he does agree with the movement's view that "poverty is caused by sin and disobeying the Word of God."¹ Hagee, like most other prosperity preachers, believes that "poverty is a curse."²

Christians achieve prosperity through giving, asserts Hagee. "When you give to God, He controls your income. There's no such thing as a fixed income in the Kingdom of God. Your income is controlled by your giving."³ According to Hagee, Christians grow prosperous through giving because "God created a universe where it is impossible to receive without giving. Everything that God controls, gives. . . . Givers gain. You do not qualify for God's abundance until you give."⁴

Turning to the Bible, however, one finds a number of passages that run contrary to Hagee's teachings concerning prosperity. Jesus Himself said, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. . . . But woe to you who are rich . . ." (Luke 6:20, 24 NASB). James underscores this point when he asked, ". . . did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (James 2:5). James later follows with stern words to the rich (5:1-6; cf. Mark 10:25).

This is not to say that Christians should consider wealth as something inherently evil. The Bible simply tells us that material wealth is *not* the measuring stick for righteousness or God's blessing; its proper value lies in the purpose for which it is used.

This is precisely why Paul gave the following exhortation to Timothy: "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

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The power of wealth, however, is such that it can lead people into idolatry. Some, for instance, may become so caught up in matters of finances and wealth that they neglect or completely forget about their duties and responsibilities to God. God, for so many of these individuals, may begin to fade out of the picture altogether, being replaced by crass materialism. Rather than grounding their primary concerns on the eternal, they instead devote their lives to that which perishes (John 6:27; Matt. 6:19 -21).⁵

Promoting Positive Confession

Along with the prosperity message, Hagee accepts and promotes the doctrine of positive confession — a foundational teaching of the Faith movement which maintains that Christians can speak (i.e., positively confess) physical realities into existence as long as the believer exercises enough faith to accompany his or her verbal confession. “There is a relationship between your soul and physical and financial prosperity,” declares Hagee. “‘This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth’ [quoting Josh. 1:8 KJV]. That’s the spoken Word of God. ‘And then thou shalt prosper and have good success.’ When? After you speak and act upon the Word of God. And you’ve been hearing that tonight out of the mouth of [well-known Faith teacher] John Avanzini.”⁶

Like his teachings on prosperity, Hagee’s reiteration of the Faith movement’s doctrine of positive confession runs contrary to the teachings of Scripture. Nothing confessed by believers in faith — verbally or otherwise — automatically comes to pass. Only God has the power to create as He wills (Gen. 1:1). Christians are certainly instructed to pray to God for their *requests* (Matt. 6:8-13; 21:22). Ultimately, however, all such requests are subject to God’s sovereign will; whichever ones come to pass only do so as a *direct result of God’s will* and *not* the will of the believer (1 John 5:14).⁷

Salvation Without Conversion?

Hagee is recognized as a fierce foe of anti-Semitism. An outspoken supporter of the Jewish people, Judaism, and the nation Israel, he has been given the “Humanitarian of the Year” award by the San Antonio B’nai B’rith Council. Hagee has also been bestowed the “ZOA Israel Service Award” by the Zionist Organization in Dallas and honored with the “Henrietta Szold Award” by the Texas Southern Region of Hadassah.⁸

While his bold stance against anti-Semitism is certainly praiseworthy, Hagee’s zealotry for the Jewish people and their cause has led him to commit a most serious doctrinal error — salvation for the Jews without conversion to Christianity. One newspaper account puts it this way:

Trying to convert Jews is a “waste of time,” he [Hagee] said. . . .

Everyone else, whether Buddhist or Baha’i, needs to believe in Jesus, he says. But not Jews. Jews already have a covenant with God that has never been replaced with Christianity, he says.

“The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses,” Hagee said. “I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.

“The law of Moses is sufficient enough to bring a person into the knowledge of God until God gives him a greater revelation. And God has not,” said Hagee. . . .⁹

“There are right now Jewish people on this earth who have a powerful and special relationship with God,” declares Hagee in one of his books. “They have been chosen by the ‘election of grace’ in which God does what he does without asking man to approve or understand it. Let us put an end to the Christian chatter that “*all the Jews are lost*” and can’t be in the will of God until they convert to Christianity! . . . there are a certain number of Jews in relationship with God right now through divine election.”¹⁰

Hagee also affirms: “If God blinded the Jewish people to the identity of Jesus as Messiah, how could He send them to hell for not seeing what he had forbidden them to see?”¹¹ He continues, “All people will gain entrance into heaven through Christ. The question is one of timing.”¹²

Such rhetoric raises some thorny questions. When Hagee says “all people will gain entrance into heaven through Christ,” he is either advocating universalism (literally all people — Jewish and Gentile — will be saved), or he believes that all Jews will be saved. In either case, both positions are in serious error, but the latter is more consistent with his other statements.

The “timing” of the salvation of the entire Jewish nation is actually irrelevant to Hagee’s argument since he advocates that it is a waste of time attempting to convert them. At best, then, Hagee implies that even if they are not *currently* saved, God will save all Jewish keepers of the Law — past, present, and future — at some future point.

The Bible paints a different picture. The apostle Paul demonstrates that Israel had a responsibility to respond to the Gospel, but rejected it. In Romans 10:19-21, he asks, “Did they [the Jews] fail to hear?” The rhetorical answer is “no.” Paul relates that, as light and darkness are understood by all, so the gospel has been made known to all the Jews (cf. Acts 17:6; 21:28). He continues, “Did they fail to understand?” The answer once again is “no.” Since Israel has become disobedient through unbelief (Rom. 11:30), God has delivered the gospel to the Gentiles.¹³

But God has not entirely rejected Israel — Paul (himself a Jew) is living proof of this (Rom. 11:1). God has preserved a remnant, while the others were hardened as a consequence of their unbelief and trusting in works instead of the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 11:5-7; cf. 9:31-32; 11:20-23). Elsewhere the apostle writes, “. . . by the works of the Law *no* flesh will be justified in His [God’s] sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. . . . for *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:20, 23-24, emphasis added).

To drive the point home, Paul goes on to say, “. . . the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise nullified; . . . it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace” (Rom. 4:13-14, 16). Scripture draws no distinction between Jews and Gentiles on the issue of salvation, which is attained by *grace* through *faith* alone in Christ, “apart from works of the law” (3:28; cf. vv. 21-22).

Paul recognized that the Jews of his day had a misguided zeal that caused them to stumble on this very point (9:31-32; 10:2-4). Why would he suffer great anguish and wish he were accursed for Israel’s sake if none of them were truly lost? His anguish comes from the realization that many Israelites are *not* saved (Rom. 9:3, 6, 27; 10:1, 9-15; cf. Acts 2:14, 21, 37-39; Rom. 11:14, 17-23).

The Law, revealed through the Jews, was meant to be “our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:24-25). As the Bible clearly states: “There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (vv. 28-29). To be saved, a person — whether Jew or Gentile — must turn to Christ (5:4-6; cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9-13) who is “the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). In writing that the “message of the gospel was *from* Israel, not *to* Israel,”¹⁴ Hagee discourages Christians from sharing the Good News with unsaved Jews who, like everyone else, have need of the gospel if they are to spend eternity with God in heaven.

The Reluctant Messiah

In Hagee’s theology, the Jews can hardly be faulted for not flocking to Christianity since it was supposedly Jesus who declined their request for Him to be their Messiah. “The [Jewish] people wanted Him to be their Messiah, but He absolutely refused,” writes Hagee. “The Jews were not rejecting Jesus as Messiah, it was Jesus who was refusing to be the Messiah to the Jews!”¹⁵

Suffice it to say, Jesus’ explicit claim to be the Messiah (or Christ) during His trial before the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish tribunal (Matt. 26:64), flatly contradicts Hagee’s assertion. In that same passage, Jesus called Himself the “Son of Man,” an unmistakable reference to the Book of Daniel (7:13) which alludes to the Messiah. Jesus also applied the same title to Himself in revealing His identity to “a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council” (John 3:1, 14-15), as well as to the crowd who questioned His authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:10).

Furthermore, in response to Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am?” (Matt. 16:15), Peter answered, “You are the Christ [Messiah]” (v. 16). Surely, had the Jewish apostle been wrong, Jesus would have corrected him at that moment; instead, Peter received the Lord’s blessing (v. 17).¹⁶ Jesus, however, instructed Peter, along with several others, not to reveal His messianic identity until due time (v. 20). He did so to avoid the prevalent misconceptions about the title, which had by then become largely understood in political terms¹⁷ — something wholly inappropriate for Jesus’ mission at that time — though Jesus did, on occasion, give public indications of His messiahship (cf. Luke 4:17-21; 20:41-44).

Indeed, Hagee’s view is made especially ironic by the fact that Jesus Himself said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus’ own people rejected Him, and not the other way around (John 1:11; Mark 12:1-12).

Judging Alternative Viewpoints as Anti-Semitic

Hagee's personal view regarding the Jewish people has led him to render harsh and inaccurate statements about individuals who differ with him on Israel's relationship with the church. Those who believe the church is now the true Israel are, in his opinion, guilty of spreading the message of anti-Semitism.¹⁸ And along with amillennialism — “the view that when Christ returns, eternity begins with no prior thousand-year (millennial) reign on earth”¹⁹ — it is condemned as “ancient Godless heresy that is again raging through the Church masquerading as truth.”²⁰

Whether Hagee realizes it or not, a number of orthodox Christian denominations (especially in the Reformed and Presbyterian traditions) espouse the very view he caricatures and condemns. The view that there has always been and will only be one people of God (namely, Israel) and that the church comprises that faction of humanity (the new Israel, made up of both Jews and non-Jews) is a feature of what is commonly known as Covenant theology — a theological framework long recognized as biblical and in no way anti-Semitic.²¹

According to Hagee, this purported “heresy” goes by various names, including “Kingdom Now, Kingdom Age, New Wave and New Age.”²² He declares, however, that such “Replacement theology” (so-called by Hagee because of its view that the church is the new Israel or spiritual Israel — though Hagee did not originate the term) is in reality an “old heresy”²³ and “idolatry.”²⁴ He also claims that so-called “Replacement theologians are now carrying Hitler's anointing and his message.”²⁵

Judging from the quotes and references he cites, Hagee seems to have based his idea of “Replacement theology” primarily on the teachings of Earl Paulk, the premiere advocate of Kingdom theology.²⁶ While Paulk can be criticized for any number of unbiblical elements comprising Kingdom Theology (including positive confession, the “fivefold ministry,” and the “Manifest Sons of God” doctrine),²⁷ Hagee all but limits his attack on Paulk's view that the church is spiritual Israel — a view that is, in fact, orthodox.

Paul states, “. . . they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel” (Rom. 9:6). Going on, he clarifies that “. . . it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants” (v. 8). Paul explains that “. . . he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God” (2:28-29; cf. Phil. 3:3).

Clearly, then, believers in the One true God are, at least in a spiritual sense, identified with Israel — as God's chosen people. “Therefore,” as Paul so aptly puts it, “be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7; cf. vv. 26-29; 6:15-16).²⁸ Conversely, Judaizers — those who rejected justification by faith by their insistence that adherence to Jewish laws and practices is, at least in part, necessary for salvation — are called the “synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

“Is it important to be right on the Israel question?” asks Hagee. “When you consider that being wrong brings you under the curse of God and headed for eternal, everlasting fire with the devil and his angels . . . it's important! Israel is not a ‘take it or leave it’ subject. It is a life and death matter . . . eternal life!”²⁹

It is indeed unfortunate that Hagee would think one's personal view of Israel can radically affect an individual's eternal destiny. Nowhere does Scripture state that salvation hinges upon a person's perspective of the new Israel. Hagee has no biblical basis for his denouncement. By making such unwarranted statements, Hagee winds up condemning many erstwhile believers, theologians, and defenders of the faith — both past and present.

Though many may claim Hagee's preaching is helping to spread the Word of God and building a bridge of unity between the Christian and Jewish communities, the fact remains that his message contains elements which lie in direct and serious opposition to biblical truth.

NOTES

¹John Hagee, Praise-A-Thon broadcast, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), 16 April 1993.

²John Hagee, Praise-A-Thon broadcast, TBN, 4 November 1992.

³Ibid.

⁴Hagee, Praise-A-Thon broadcast, 16 April 1993.

⁵For extended critiques of the so-called “prosperity gospel,” see Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993), 181-231; and D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 170-83.

⁶Hagee, Praise-A-Thon broadcast, 4 November 1992. Avanzini, a leading figure in the Faith movement, focuses much of his message around the theme of financial prosperity. He teaches, among other things, that Jesus was a wealthy individual who “wore designer clothes” and “had a nice house, a big house,” while the apostle Paul “had the kind of money that people . . . would block up justice to try to get a bribe out of old Paul” (John Avanzini, *Believer’s Voice of Victory* program, TBN, 20 January 1991).

⁷Detailed discussions can be found in Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, 61-102, 285-90; and McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, 134-47.

⁸John Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?* (San Antonio, TX: Dominion Publishers, 1987), [174-75].

⁹Julia Duin, “San Antonio Fundamentalist Battles Anti-Semitism,” *The Houston Chronicle*, 30 April 1988, 1.

¹⁰Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 124-25, 127 (emphasis in original).

¹¹John Hagee, personal faxed correspondence to CRI, 18 October 1994, 3.

¹²*Ibid.*, 6.

¹³To cement the use of the rhetorical “no,” these verses are supported by the Greek negative particle *me*. Whenever the *me* particle is used in an interrogative sentence, the response is negative (cf. 1 Cor. 9:8-10; 11:22; 14:29-30; Rom. 11:1). Had a “yes” — rather than a “no” — response been intended, the Greek particle *ou* — instead of *me* — would have appeared (cf. Rom. 9:21). For documentation, see A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar Of The Greek New Testament In Light Of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 1173-74; and A. T. Robertson & W. Hersey Davis, *A New Short Grammar Of The Greek Testament*, 10th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977), 390.

¹⁴Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 61 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 67-68 passim; cf. 69, 72.

¹⁶For further discussions on the messianic identity of Jesus, see Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1990); and Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976 [orig. 1886]).

¹⁷See, for example, Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co./InterVarsity Press, 1992), 427; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 632-33; and D. A. Carson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 8:374-75.

¹⁸Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 1.

¹⁹Robert Lightner, *The Last Days Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 22. Quoted in Lightner’s book is amillennialist J. G. Voss, who defines the amillennial position as follows: “Amillennialism is that view of the last things which holds the Bible does not predict a ‘millennium’ or period of world-wide peace and righteousness on this earth before the end of the world. At the second coming of Christ, the resurrection and judgment will take place, followed by the eternal order of things — the absolute, perfect kingdom of God, in which there will be no sin, suffering, nor death” (72). For presentations and critiques of the various options regarding the millennium by theologians who take different sides on the issue, see Robert G. Clouse, ed. *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

²⁰Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 1.

²¹For an exposition of this particular view, see Edmund P. Clowney, “The New Israel,” *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 207-20. Paul E. Leonard presents the opposite point of view in the article following Clowney’s, titled “Two Peoples of God” (221-30), though he does not classify the former as anti-semitic. For a detailed treatment of Covenant theology, see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980).

²²Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 1.

²³*Ibid.*, 74. Hagee quotes Ignatius of Antioch (c. A.D. 30-107) as a teacher of this “old heresy.” Ironically, Ignatius was one of the earliest defenders of orthodoxy noted for his forceful responses against false teachings. He supported apostolic authority and became the bishop of Antioch, one of the leading churches in the first century (cf. Acts 11:19-29; 13:1-3). His view that the church was the new Israel would thus have been a teaching passed on to him by the apostles. Ignatius’s writings are reprinted and translated in J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harner, eds. *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984), 97-162; and Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 1:45-131.

²⁴Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 86.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 132.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 1, 59, 76-77, 105.

²⁷A reprint of the two-part *Christian Research Journal* article, “The Gospel According to Paulk: A Critique of ‘Kingdom Theology,’” is available through CRI (order part #DK-150).

²⁸Commenting on Galatians 6:16, Bible scholar Alan Cole writes: “This would identify the new group, the ‘third race of men’ of whom the Church fathers delighted to talk — neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christian — with God’s Israel. This is often put bluntly as ‘the Church is the new Israel’” (*The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965], 183). Cf. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans

Publishing Co., 1953), 227; and R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 321.

²⁹Hagee, *Should Christians Support Israel?*, 169.