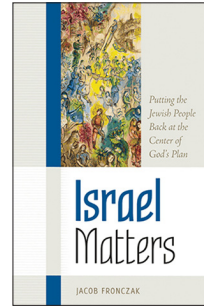


## Book Review

Jacob Fronczak.  
*Israel Matters: Putting the Jewish People  
Back at the Center of God's Plan*

Marshfield, MO: First Fruits of Zion, 2015. 186 pp., paperback  
\$15.00 ISBN 978-1-892124-98-2.

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This second book, part of the *Matters* series exploring various implications of Jesus as a practicing Jew and teacher of Judaism, intends to challenge supersessionist tendencies purportedly gaining ground in growing segments of evangelical Christianity in the form of “New Calvinism”. Identifying John Piper and Mark Driscoll as culprits (41), the author subtly shifts to a sequence of veiled charges against evangelical soteriology as being too exclusive and contributing to supersessionism. Fronczak self-identifies as a “Messianic Gentile” (1) within an extended introductory section that is largely an anecdotal explanation of his journey of discovery regarding the Jewishness of Jesus that changed core aspects of his once evangelical theology. Mark Kinzer is singled-out for special thanks (5), which is an important factor because Kinzer’s highly controversial theory of ‘Unrecognized Mediation’ is palpably in the background. This theory seems plainly to serve as the catalyst placing blame upon evangelical exclusivism as a primary contributor to supersessionism; therefore, it must be corrected—especially with respect to faithful, Torah-observant Jews. The reader is being prepared for an ultimate discussion that links Israel’s continued significance with a theology of corporate salvation; i.e., Kinzer’s *unrecognised mediation*. This

linkage is summarised well when the author states:

[T]he Old Testament doesn’t offer any kind of clear answer to the question of personal eternal destiny—or, as we might put it, the question of heaven and hell and who goes where. ... these concepts are hardly ever applied to individual people. Instead, we find that God’s promises of salvation and redemption were made to an entire nation—the nation of Israel. (8)

The lengthy, multi-faceted Introduction closes by piercing the heart of evangelical soteriology. Faithful, Torah-loving Jews “can be saved without hearing about, knowing about, or believing in Jesus” (12). Such will be the intrinsic notion used to bolster a discussion of God’s continued covenant relationship with Israel in order to argue against supersessionism. Fronczak then proceeds to present his material in two parts. The first proposes four key terms to broadly define the realm of Jewish-Christian relations. In Part Two, six chapters examine the Jewish-Christian relationship and how it is to be played-out in real life. A brief “Final Word” emphasises that Jewish people need to be restored in Christian theology and ecclesiology.

*Israel Matters* challenges a traditional framework of supersessionist theology that exists within segments of the Christian community in favour of Israel being God’s continued, chosen mechanism to reveal Himself to the world. The result, therefore, is that the Church must rediscover itself in light of Israel’s continued

role and calling. However, this challenge is undertaken in a suspect manner throughout. Fronczak states that all books in the *Matters* series “are not academic books” (62), and this becomes apparent from the very beginning with a tendency towards broad-brush statements based on eisegetical assertions rather than sound hermeneutics. Ironically, Messianic Jewish scholar Michael Rydelnik’s article “The Jewish People and Salvation”<sup>1</sup> is virtually a point-by-point, solid hermeneutical refutation of Fronczak’s core premises. For example, according to Fronczak Torah-loving Jews “can be saved without hearing about, knowing about, or believing in Jesus” (12), which Rydelnik convincingly argues against. Later, the author asserts: “Messianic Jews have a biblically ordained role and calling to show the rest of us what the early church would have been like” (83). No biblical justification is provided, only this bold assertion in light of the fact that NT writings nowhere provide detailed guidance on how the first-century believers ‘did church’. In Part Two, “Remembering the Poor” exudes a fragrance of Liberation Theology. Contending that Matthew 25 refers not to Jews or Christians, Fronczak assigns salvation to those from among the unbelieving nations “based on their actions ... how they treated those who were in physical need ... even more specifically ... how they treated poverty-stricken Jews and Christians” (111). Therefore he concludes: “giving money, food, clothing, and other necessities to Christians, Jewish people, and presumably others who are in need *actually makes a difference in one’s eternal destiny*” [author’s italics] ... those among the nations who neglect the poor will not have eternal life” (112). Finally,

Chapter four challenges why Jews don’t believe in Jesus by suggesting the need for “Repairing Jesus’ Reputation”. While there are some thought-provoking points regarding the need for Christians to reevaluate how they evangelise Jewish people, this chapter displays a shocking lack of awareness that the vast majority of non-believing Jews who come to faith in Yeshua are the result of Gentile evangelism efforts, not Jews evangelizing Jews.<sup>2</sup>

As a remedy for supersessionism, *Israel Matters* proposes a theological shift away from evangelical soteriology. What is to be favoured instead is Christians loving Jewish people by letting go of an exclusive individual salvation for a corporate salvation based on salvific mediation accomplished by Jesus even though unrecognised as such. In agreement with Rydelnik, many people understandably long for a wider hope for the Jewish people instead of the narrow way described in Scripture. Whilst motivated by love, concern and respect for corporate Israel, Fronczak seems to misunderstand how people have always been saved. Salvation has consistently been by grace through faith in God’s particular revealed will. In the Old Testament, salvation was by grace through faith in the God of Israel without a conscious faith in Yeshua as Messiah. Nevertheless, Hebrews 1:2 clarifies that, “In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son,” and Old Testament conditions for salvation have been superseded through an exclusive salvation by grace through faith in Yeshua alone.

1. Michael A. Rydelnik, “The Jewish People and Salvation”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165:660 (Oct 2008): 447-62.

2. Rich Robinson, ed., *The Messianic Movement: A Field Guide for Evangelical Christians, from Jews for Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2005), 17.