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SURREJOINDER TO GARY BURGE—"THE LAND AS COVENANT BACKDROP"

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I was pleased that the *Criswell Theological Review* allowed Dr. Gary Burge to offer a reply ("Rejoinder to Boyd Luter—*Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to Holy Land Theology," CTR* n.s. 9/2 (Spring 20120 76-78) to my article "The Land as Covenant Backdrop: A Modest Response to Burge and Waltke," *CTR* n.s. 9/1 (Fall 2011) 59-73. Likewise, I am deeply grateful that *CTR* is willing to publish a response to Burge's rejoinder.

It will be helpful to bring the reader up to speed on how things got to this point. My review of Burge's *Jesus and the Land* (Baker Academic, 2010) appeared in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (54.1 [March 2011] 217-21). Reading Burge's book and writing the review prompted me to present a paper at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Dallas in March, 2011, taking aspects of Burge's work as my "jumping-off place." Then, I submitted the manuscript to *CTR* for publication. It was very gratifying that it was chosen to be published and that, surprisingly, it appeared in the next issue.

The reason I explained the sequence and interrelationship between what had occurred previously in this interchange is that I'm not sure Burge's rejoinder makes sense without that "context." Why? He did not respond to my *CTR* article nearly as much as to my *JETS* review.

That was confusing! I had never seen a rejoinder that largely ignored the force of the article in the very journal that allowed the rejoinder for the purpose of response to their previously-published article. To boil it down, Burge's "rejoinder" is basically a brief restating of his position in *Jesus and the Land* under the guise of claiming: 1) I had failed to understand his "subtle" argument that largely applied the findings of others (N.T. Wright, Greg Beale and Nicholas Perrin) in regard to a "deep trajectory in the NT" about the land (p. 77); and 2) Because I am a dispensationalist, my mind was made up before I ever read his argument.

I will reply to these two angles in reverse order. My surrejoinder will conclude by returning to the distilled argument of "The Land as Covenant Backdrop"—to which Burge offered no counter—which I submit as "the last word" in this discussion.

In regard to point 2) above, I have never said other than that I am a dispensationalist. However, in his rejoinder, Burge failed to engage in "full disclosure" by stating that *Jesus and the Land* is the third book he has written as passionate defenses of the Palestinians and their right to the land. Since I am *not* a Christian Zionist, I freely admit where primarily secular Israel has sinned and believe they should be held accountable. However, I do not believe an even-handed exegetical treatment covering the full range of relevant biblical passages concludes God has replaced His covenant promise in regard to Israel and the land. In my *JETS* review, I listed crucial biblical passages Burge overlooked in *Jesus and the Land* (and which are not addressed in his rejoinder).

In regard to point 1), Burge's argument was not "subtle," but the "trajectory" was so "deep" the way Burge developed it that readers beyond scholars and advanced students—not the book's primary audience—won't "get it" or "buy it." Why? An argument—not Wright's, Beale's or Perrin's—that gets down to "Jesus replaces the land because: 1) Jewish thinkers of the era—whose writings are not on par with Scripture last time I checked—suggest a changing view of the land; 2) subtle NT nuances suggest something similar; and 3) the remainder of the New Testament is silent (i.e., in Burge's mind) about the land promises to Israel—is an, at best, sketchy, and thus shaky, argument, substantially "from silence."

Regardless of Burge's argument from the rest of the New Testament, though, it falls flat if it is not sustainable to the end. That why I wrote "The Land as Covenant Backdrop," employing Revelation 11:1-2 as a test case for Burge's view—which were found wanting.

How? If Revelation 11:1-2 speaks of a *still-future* Temple *in the land*---and a detailed case was made for both—Burge's view collapses. His claim that Revelation was written before AD 70 was based largely on the unsubstantiated claim (i.e., untrue and no documentation) that "Most interpreters see genuine allusions [in Revelation] to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70" (*Jesus and the Land,* p. 105). I included a lengthy listing of acknowledged scholars who date Revelation in AD 95-96 in "The Land as Covenant Backdrop" (pp. 62-63), yet Burge did not choose to rebut in his rejoinder.

In conclusion, I respect Gary Burge as a fine scholar. However, I respectfully disagree with the argument he presents in *Jesus and the Land* and his *CTR* rejoinder to my *JETS* review and my article, "The Land as Covenant Backdrop."