

What Is Replacement Theology?

Replacement Theology was introduced to the Church shortly after Gentile leadership took over from Jewish leadership. What are its premises?

1. Israel (the Jewish people and the land) has been replaced by the Christian Church in the purposes of God, or, more precisely, the Church is the historic continuation of Israel to the exclusion of the former.
2. The Jewish people are now no longer a "chosen people." In fact, they are no different from any other group, such as the English, Spanish, or Africans.
3. Apart from repentance, the new birth, and incorporation into the Church, the Jewish people have no future, no hope, and no calling in the plan of God. The same is true for every other nation and group.
4. Since Pentecost of Acts 2, the term "Israel," as found in the Bible, now refers to the Church.
5. The promises, covenants and blessings ascribed to Israel in the Bible have been taken away from the Jews and given to the Church, which has superseded them. However, the Jews are subject to the curses found in the Bible, as a result of their rejection of Christ.

How Do Replacement Theologians Argue Their Case? They Say:

1. To be a son of Abraham is to have faith in Jesus Christ. For them, Galatians 3:29 shows that sonship to Abraham is seen only in spiritual, not national terms: "And if you be Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Rebuttal: While this is a wonderful inclusionary promise for Gentiles, this verse does not exclude the Jewish people from their original covenant, promise and blessing as the natural seed of Abraham. This verse simply joins us Gentile Christians to what YHWH (God) had already started with Israel.

2. The promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham was only a "starter." The real Promised Land is the whole world. They use Romans 4:13 to claim it will be the Church that inherits the world, not Israel. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

Rebuttal: Where does this verse exclude Abraham and His natural prodigy, the Jews? It simply says that through the law, they would not

inherit the world, but this would be acquired through faith. This is also true of the Church.

3. The nation of Israel was only the seed of the future Church, which would arise and incorporate people of all nations (Mal. 1:11): "For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be great among the nations, and in every place, incense shall be offered to My Name, and a pure offering for My Name shall be great among the nations, says the Lord of Hosts."

Rebuttal: This is great, and shows that the Jewish people and Israel fulfilled one of their callings to be "a light to the nations," so that God's Word has gone around the world. It does not suggest God's dealing with Israel was negated because His Name spread around the world.

4. Jesus taught that the Jews would lose their spiritual privileges, and be replaced by another people (Matt. 21:43): "Therefore I am saying to you, 'The kingdom of God will be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it.'"

Rebuttal: In this passage, Jesus was talking about the priests and Pharisees, who failed as leaders of the people. This passage is not talking about the Jewish people or nation of Israel.

A true Jew is anyone born of the Spirit, whether he is racially Gentile or Jewish (Rom. 2:28-29): "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

Rebuttal: This argument does not support the notion that the Church replaced Israel. Rather, it simply reinforces what had been said throughout the Hebrew Scriptures [the Old Testament], and it certainly qualifies the spiritual qualifications for Jews or anyone who professes to be a follower of the God of Israel.

5. Paul shows that the Church is really the same "olive tree" as was Israel, and the Church is now the tree. Therefore, to distinguish between Israel and the Church is, strictly speaking, false. Indeed, people of Jewish origin need to be grafted back into the Church (Rom 11:17-23).

Rebuttal: This claim is the most outrageous because this passage clearly shows that we Gentiles are the "wild olive branches," who get our life from being grafted into the olive tree. The tree represents the covenants, promises and hopes of Israel (Eph. 2:12), rooted in the Messiah and fed by the sap, which represents the Holy Spirit, giving life to the Jews (the "natural branches") and Gentile alike. We Gentiles are told to remember that the olive tree holds us up and NOT to be arrogant or boast against the "natural branches" because they can be grafted in again. The olive tree is NOT the Church. We are simply grafted into God's plan that preceded us for over 2,000 years.

6. All the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament, unless they were historically fulfilled before the coming of Jesus Christ, are now the property of the Christian Church. These promises should not be interpreted literally or carnally, but spiritually and symbolically, so that references to Israel, Jerusalem, Zion and the Temple, when they are prophetic, really refer to the Church (II Cor. 1:20). "For all the promises of God in Him (Jesus) are Yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Therefore, they teach that the New Testament needs to be taught figuratively, not literally.

Rebuttal: Later, in this Teaching Letter, we will look at the fact that the New Testament references to Israel clearly pertain to Israel, not the Church. Therefore, no promise to Israel and the Jewish people in the Bible is figurative, nor can they be relegated to the Church alone. The promises and covenants are literal, many of them are everlasting, and we Christians can participate in them as part of our rebirth, not in that we took them over to the exclusion of Israel. The New Testament speaks of the Church's relationship to Israel and her covenants as being "grafted in" (Rom. 11:17), "brought near" (Eph. 2:13), "Abraham's offspring (by faith)" (Rom. 4:16), and "partakers" (Rom. 15:27), NOT as usurpers of the covenant and a replacer of physical Israel. We Gentile Christians joined into what God had been doing in Israel, and God did not break His covenant promises with Israel (Rom. 11:29).

How Did The Position Of The Early Church Fathers Affect The Church?

Let us look at a brief history of the first four centuries of Christianity, which established a "legacy of hatred" towards the Jewish people, which was against the clear teaching of the New Testament.

In the first century AD, the church was well-connected to its Jewish roots, and Yahushua did not intend for it to be any other way. After all, Yahushua (Jesus) is Jewish and the basis of His teaching is consistent with the Hebrew Scriptures. In Matthew 5:17-18 He states: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Before the First Jewish Revolt in AD 66, Christianity was basically a sect of Judaism, as were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes.

Separation between Judaism and Christianity began as a result of religious and social differences. According to David Rausch in his book, *A Legacy of Hatred*, there were several contributing factors: 1) the Roman intrusion into Judea, and the widespread acceptance of Christianity by the Gentiles, complicated the history of Jewish Christianity; 2) the Roman wars against the Jews not only destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem, but also resulted in Jerusalem's relinquishing her position as a center of Christian faith in the Roman world; and, 3) the rapid acceptance of Christianity among the Gentiles led to an early conflict between the Church and Synagogue. Paul's missionary journeys brought the Christian faith to the Gentile world, and as their numbers grew, so did their influence, which ultimately disconnected Christianity from its Jewish roots.

Many Gentile Christians interpreted the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem as a sign that God had abandoned Judaism, and that He had provided the Gentiles freedom to develop their own Christian theology in a setting free from Jerusalem's influence. Could it be He was showing us that Temple worship was no longer necessary as His Holy Spirit now resides in us (I Cor. 6:19), not in the Holy of Holies? After the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 133-135) put down by the Roman Emperor Hadrian, theological and political power moved from Jewish

Christian leaders to centers of Gentile Christian leadership such as Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch. It is important to understand this change, because it influenced the early Church Fathers to make anti-Jewish statements as Christianity began to disconnect itself from its Jewish roots.

As the Church spread far and wide within the Roman Empire, and its membership grew increasingly non-Jewish, Greek and Roman thought began to creep in and completely change the orientation of Biblical interpretation through a Greek mindset, rather than a Jewish or Hebraic mindset. This would later result in many heresies, some of which the Church is still practicing today.

Once Christianity and Judaism began to take separate paths, the chasm became wider and wider. Judaism was considered a legal religion under Roman law, while Christianity, a new religion, was illegal. As Christianity grew, the Romans tried to suppress it. In an attempt to alleviate this persecution, Christian apologists tried in vain to convince Rome that Christianity was an extension of Judaism. However, Rome was not convinced. The resulting persecutions and frustration of the Christians bred an animosity towards the Jewish community, which was free to worship without persecution. Later, when the Church became the religion of the state, it would pass laws against the Jews in retribution.

The antagonism of the early Christians towards the Jews was reflected in the writings of the early Church Fathers. For example, Justin Martyr (c. AD 160) in speaking to a Jew said: "The Scriptures are not yours, but ours." Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (c. AD 177) declared: "Jews are disinherited from the grace of God." Tertullian (AD 160-230), in his treatise, "Against the Jews," announced that God had rejected the Jews in favor of the Christians.

In the early 4th century, Eusebius wrote that the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures were for Christians and not the Jews, and the curses were for the Jews. He argued that the Church was the continuation of the Old Testament and thus superseded Judaism. The young Church declared itself to be the true Israel, or "Israel according to the Spirit," heir to the divine promises. They found it essential to discredit the "Israel according to the flesh" to prove that God had cast away His people and transferred His love to the Christians.

At the beginning of the 4th century, a monumental event occurred for the Church, which placed "the Church Triumphant" over "Vanquished Israel." In AD 306, Constantine became the first Christian Roman Emperor. At first, he had a rather pluralistic view and accorded Jews the same religious rights as Christians. However, in AD 321, he made Christianity the official religion of the Empire to the exclusion of all other religions. This signaled the end of the persecution of Christians, but the beginning of discrimination and persecution of the Jewish people.

Already at the Church Council in Elvira (Spain) in AD 305, declarations were made to keep Jews and Christians apart, including ordering Christians not to share meals with Jews, not to marry Jews, not to use Jews to bless their fields, and not to observe the Jewish Sabbath.

Imperial Rome, in AD 313, issued the Edict of Milan, which granted favor to Christianity, while outlawing synagogues. Then, in AD 315, another edict allowed the burning of Jews if they were convicted of breaking the laws. As Christianity was becoming the religion of the state, further laws were passed against the Jews:

- The ancient privileges granted to the Jews were withdrawn.
- Rabbinical jurisdiction was abolished or severely curtailed.
- Proselytism to Judaism was prohibited and made punishable by death.
- Jews were excluded from holding high office or a military career.

These and other restrictions were confirmed over and over again by various Church Councils for the next 1,000 years.

In AD 321, Constantine decreed all business should cease on "the honored day of the sun." By substituting Sunday for Saturday as the day for Christian worship/rest, he further advanced the split. This Jewish Shabbat/Christian Sunday controversy also came up at the first real ecumenical Council of Nicea (AD 325), which concluded Sunday to be the Christian day of rest, although it was debated for long after that. Overnight, Christianity was given the power of the Imperial State, and the emperors began to translate the concepts and claims of the Christian theologians against the Jews and Judaism into practice. Instead

of the Church taking this opportunity to spread its Gospel message in love, it truly became the Church Triumphant, ready to vanquish its foes.

After 321, the writings of the Church Fathers changed in character. No longer was it on the defensive and apologetic, but aggressive, directing its venom at everyone "outside of the flock," in particular the Jewish people who could be found in almost every community and nation. During this period, we find more examples of anti-Jewish bias in Church literature written by church leaders:

- Hilary of Poitiers (AD 291-371) wrote: "Jews are a perverse people accursed by God forever."
- Gregory of Nyssa (died AD 394), Bishop of Cappadocia: "the Jews are a brood of vipers, haters of goodness..."
- St. Jerome (AD 347-407) describes the Jews as "... serpents, wearing the image of Judas, their psalms and prayers are the braying of donkeys."

At the end of the 4th century, the Bishop of Antioch, John Chrysostom (Golden Tongued), the great orator, wrote a series of eight sermons against the Jews. He had seen Christians talking with Jewish people, taking oaths in front of the Ark, and some were keeping the Jewish feasts. He wanted this to stop. In an effort to bring his people back to what he called, "the true faith," the Jews became the whipping boy for his sermon series. To quote him, "the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. No Jew adores God... Jews are inveterate murderers, possessed by the devil, their debauchery and drunkenness gives them the manners of the pig. They kill and maim one another..." One can easily see that a Judeo-Christian who wanted to hold on to his heritage, or a Gentile Christian who wanted to learn more about the parent faith of Christianity, would have found it extremely difficult under this pressure. Chrysostom further sought to separate Christianity totally from Judaism. He wrote in his 4th Discourse, "I have said enough against those who say they are on our side, but are eager to follow the Jewish rites... it is against the Jews that I wish to draw up my battle... Jews are abandoned by God and for the crime of deicide, there is no expiation possible."

Chrysostom was known for his fiery preaching against what he saw as threats to his flock, including wealth, entertainment, privilege and outward adornment.

However, his preaching against the Jewish community, which he believed had a negative influence on Christians, is inexcusable and blatantly anti-Semitic in its content. Another unfortunate contribution Chrysostom made to Christian anti-Semitism was to hold the whole Jewish people culpable for the killing of Christ.

In the fifth century, the burning question was: If the Jews and Judaism were cursed by God, then how can you explain their existence?

Augustine tackled this issue in his "Sermon Against the Jews." He asserted that even though the Jews deserved the most severe punishment for having put Jesus to death, they have been kept alive by Divine Providence to serve, together with their Scriptures, as witnesses to the truth of Christianity. Their existence was further justified by the service they rendered to the Christian truth, in attesting through their humiliation, the triumph of the Church over the Synagogue. They were to be a "Witness people" - slaves and servants who should be humbled.

The monarchs of the Holy Roman Empire thus regarded the Jews as serfs of the chamber (*servi camerae*), and utilized them as slave librarians to maintain Hebrew writings. They also utilized the services of Jews in another enterprise - usury, or money-lending. The loaning of money was necessary to a growing economy. However, usury was considered to endanger the eternal salvation of the Christian, and was thus forbidden. So, the church endorsed the practice of lending by Jews, for according to their reasoning, their Jewish souls were lost in any case. Much later, the Jewish people were utilized by the Western countries as trade agents in commerce, and thus we see how the Jewish people found their way into the fields of banking and commerce.

So, by the Middle Ages, the ideological arsenal of Christian anti-Semitism was completely established. This was further manifested in a variety of precedent-setting events within the Church, such as Patriarch Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, expelling the Jews and giving their property to a Christian mob. From a social standpoint, the deterioration of the Jewish position in society was only beginning its decline. During this early period, the virulent judeo-phobia was primarily limited to the clergy who were always trying to keep their flocks away

from the Jews. However, later, the rank and file, growing middle class would be the main source of anti-Semitic activity.

The result of these anti-Jewish teachings continued onwards throughout Church history, manifesting itself in such events and actions as the Crusades, the accusation of communion host desecration and blood libel by the Jews, the forced wearing of distinguishing marks to ostracize them, the Inquisition, the displacement of whole Jewish communities by exile or separate ghettos, the destruction of synagogues and Jewish books, physical persecution and execution, the Pogroms. Ultimately, the seeds of destruction grew to epic proportions, culminating in the Holocaust, which occurred in "Christian" Europe.

Had the Church understood the clear message of being grafted into the Olive Tree from the beginning, then the sad legacy of anti-Semitic hatred from the Church may have been avoided. The error of Replacement Theology is like a cancer in the Church that has not only caused it to violate God's Word concerning the Jewish people and Israel, but it made us into instruments of hate, not love in God's Name.

Is the New Testament anti-Semitic? Was it Intended That the Church Treat the Jewish People with Contempt?

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

While the New Testament has been used by Gentile anti-Semites, even within the Church, the writers of the New Testament were Jewish, and therefore their arguments, even critical ones, were from the vantage point of being an intra-communal debate, not inter-communal accusation. Even where the criticism is harsh, it is directed towards a particular group or sect of Jews because of their practices, which needed correcting. For example, even though Yahushua spoke harshly to the Pharisees, He nevertheless said of them, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach" (Matt: 23:2-3). He was distressed that they were "missing the mark" in their self-righteousness, which is something all of us need to be careful of doing.

The clear teaching of the New Testament is that the Church was and is to love and honour the Jewish people. In Ephesians 2:11-18, we are told that "by the blood of Messiah," we Gentiles are "made near" to the commonwealth of Israel, the covenants, promises and hopes given to Israel. In Romans 11:11-12, 25, we are told that "blindness in part" has come to the Jews so that the message would be forced out into the nations. Nevertheless, we are told that a time would come when "all Israel would be saved" (v. 26), because the gifts and callings of God towards Israel and the Jewish people were given without repentance (v. 29). God's relationship with Israel and the Jewish people is everlasting.

We Gentile Christians are told that the Jews are "beloved for the sake of the Patriarchs" (Rom. 11:28). They are a chosen people who fulfilled their calling and brought the Gospel to the world. They were chosen to:

1. Be obedient to God's Word and demonstrate to the world as "a light to the nations."
2. Hear God's Word and record it - the Bible.
3. Be the human channel for the Messiah.

The Jewish people have fulfilled their role. The promise to the world through Abraham was that, "in you will all the nations on the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). They were to be a light unto the nations and, while they made mistakes as we all do, they did demonstrate the power of God on earth, they did hear God's Word and record it so that we have the Bible, and they were the human channel for the Messiah, who was born, ministered, died, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven and will return to Jerusalem, Israel, in a day yet to come.

God made an everlasting covenant between the land of Israel and the Jewish people that must be fulfilled and completed or His Word, the Bible, will be proven a lie, which it is not. God will never forget or annul His ancient people. If God will not fulfill His promises to Israel, what guarantee do we have that He will fulfill His promises to the Church? (See Jeremiah 31:35-37).

Are Jews, Jews, and is Israel, Israel in the New Testament? Do They Still Have a Covenant with God?

ABSOLUTELY. THE BIBLE IS CLEAR ON THIS.

1. The Jews are Israelites, not Gentiles (Rom. 9:4).
2. To Israel still belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises (Rom. 9:4).
3. The gifts and calling of God for Israel are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).
4. There are 77 references to Israel in the NT and none of them refer to the Church. Try replacing the words, "the Church," where Israel is mentioned and the passage is rendered unreadable and silly, e.g., Rom. 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." If you put "the Church" where Israel is mentioned, then it is redundant. The Church is the body of saved believers, so how could Paul's prayer be for the Church to be saved?
5. Psalm 105 has a seven-fold affirmation of God's promises of Canaan to Abraham. This is an everlasting promise, as was Genesis 12:1-3.
6. Jeremiah 31:35-37 speaks of the everlasting nature of God's promises to and for Israel, the Jewish people, which is as sure as the sun that shines by day and the moon and stars that glow in the night.
7. The end-time prophecies, which speak of the return of the House of Jacob to their land (Israel), have overwhelmingly been fulfilled in Israel and the Jewish people in the past 120 years. (See, Isa. 11:11-12; Eze. 37:1-14; Eze. 36; Eze. 35:1, Isa. 43:5,6; Jer. 16:14-16; Isa. 60:9-11; Isa. 49:22-23, etc.).
8. The Gospel and Yahushua (Jesus) came "to the Jews first, then the Greek" (Rom. 2:9,10; Matt:10:5-7;15:24). There is a distinction in roles between the two. Galatians 3:28 says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This is speaking of everyone's standing before God as equals, because we are all sinners saved by God's grace and the atoning work on the Cross. Nevertheless, our roles here on earth are definitely distinct; e.g., men and women, mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, etc. all have distinct roles to play. Likewise, Jews and Gentiles have distinct roles to play.

What is the Role of the Church?

1. "On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell will not overcome it" (Matt. 16:18). The Church is built on the testimony and understanding of Peter, who is Jewish. Ephesians 2:11-14 indicates that Israel and the Jews were chosen, but Gentiles were also included.

2. The Church is related to Israel and partakers of the covenants, promises, and hopes, but we have not been called to usurp them. Our relationship is as "grafted in" (Rom. 11:17); "brought near" (Eph 2:13); "Abraham's offspring" (by faith) (Rom. 4:16); "heirs" to Abraham's promise as adopted sons (Gal. 3:29) and "partakers" (Rom 15:27).
3. To the world, the Church is called to preach the Gospel to all nations and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20); to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mk. 12:30-31).
4. To the Jewish people, we are called to show God's love "for the sake of the Patriarchs" (Rom. 11:28), for without them we would not have had God's Word or our Saviour who was a Jew from Israel. We are to show God's mercy (Rom. 11:31). We are to give our material gifts to help them (Rom. 15:27). We are to pray for them and for Israel (Ps. 122:6). We are to be watchman on the walls to protect them (Isa. 62:6,7). We are to help with the aliyah (immigration) to Israel and the building up of Zion (Isa. 60:9-11; Jer. 16:14-16; Isa. 49:22-23).
5. According to Romans 11, we are two distinct groups, both grafted into the same tree, which are the covenants and promises given to Israel; grounded in the same root, the Messiah; drinking of the same sap, God's Holy Spirit.
6. We do not hold up the tree, but the tree us, and we are forbidden from boasting against or being arrogant to God's covenant people the Jews (Rom. 11:17-18).

What Happens When the Church Replaces Israel?

1. The Church becomes arrogant and self-centered.
2. It boasts against the Jews and Israel.
3. It devalues the role of Israel or has no role for Israel at all.
4. These attitudes result in anti-Semitism in word and deed.
5. Without a place for Israel and the Jewish people today, you cannot explain the Bible prophecies, especially the very specific ones being fulfilled in Israel today.
6. Many New Testament passages do not make sense when the Jewish people are replaced by the Church.
7. You can lose the significance of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, for today. Many Christians boast of being a New Testament (NT) Christian or a NT Church as in the Book of Acts. However, the Bible of

the early Church was not the New Testament, which did not get codified until the 4th century, but rather the Hebrew Scriptures.

8. You can lose the Hebraic/Judaic contextualization of the New Testament, which teaches us more about Yahushua and how to become better disciples.
9. The Church loses out on the opportunity to participate in God's plan and prophecy for the Church, Israel and the world today.

What Happens When the Church Relates to Israel?

1. The Church takes its proper role in God's redemptive plan for the world, appreciating God's ongoing covenant relationship and love for Israel and the Jewish people.
2. We can see the consistency of God's redemptive plan from Genesis to Revelation as an ongoing complementary process, not as disconnected snapshots.
3. We show love and honour for God's covenant people, not contempt.
4. We value the Old and New Testaments as equally inspired and significant for the Church today.
5. Bible prophecy makes sense for today and offers opportunities for involvement in God's plan for Israel.
6. We become better disciples of Yahushua (Jesus) as we are able to appreciate the Hebraic principles that fill in the definitions, concepts, words and events in the New Testament that are otherwise obscured. Why? Many were not explained by the Jewish writers of the New Testament, because they did not feel the need to fill in all the details that were already explained in the Old Testament.

Had the Church understood this very clear message from the beginning, then the sad legacy of anti-Semitic hatred from the Church may have been avoided. The error of Replacement Theology is like a cancer in the Church that has not only caused it to violate God's Word concerning the Jewish people and Israel, but it made us into instruments of hate, not love in God's Name. Yet, it is not too late to change our ways and rightly relate to the Jewish people and Israel today. Through Bridges for Peace you can read, study and learn more, and also give to demonstrate God's exhortation to us to bless His Covenant People, whom He still loves. Not only do we need to learn and do for ourselves, but we need to teach others so as to counteract the historical error that has been fostered in the Church for nearly 2,000 years.

Thank God, He is a God of mercy, redemption and second chances.