

ANTISEMITISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH

What is Replacement Theology?

Replacement theology teaches that when it comes to the promises of God in scripture, the Church has "replaced" Israel. In this doctrine, the church views Israel as the "branch" that was broken off, (Romans 11:20), and the gentile church, now being grafted into the olive tree, has "replaced" the branch of Israel. In replacement theology, the Jewish people have no future in God's plan. Replacement theology falsely teaches that the Church has taken the place of the Israel.

Historical Roots of Replacement theology

Many today are still under the false assumption that the "Church" has replaced Israel in the plan of God. For almost 2,000 years, there had been no Israel. With there being no Israel, the Church has always assumed that they must be the ones to whom all the promises referred to. Then all of a sudden through God's promises to the real Israel they became a nation again! What is the Church to do? There's not room for both of us! This doesn't fit our theology!

This is actually a very old theology. Let's explore how old:

The antagonism of the early Christians towards the Jews was reflected in the writings of the early Church Fathers. Here are some examples:

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 He argued that the Church was the continuation of the Old Testament and thus superseded Judaism.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.

In AD 306, Constantine became the first Christian Roman Emperor. 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.

Nu 9:6-12 And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off; yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it.

2Chr 30:1-3 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the LORD God of Israel. For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the Passover in the second month. For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

Council of Nicea 325 AD/CE: From the letter of the Emperor (Constantine) to all those not present at the council. (Found in Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib III 18-20)

"When the question relative to the sacred festival of *Easter* arose, it was *universally* thought that it would be convenient that all should keep the feast on one day; It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of festivals, to follow the customs (the calculation) of the Jews who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In rejecting their custom we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Easter; We ought not therefore to have anything in common with the Jew, for the Saviour has shown us another way; our worship following a more legitimate and more convenient course (the order of the days of the week: And consequently in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jew. For it is *truly shameful for us to hear them boast* that without their direction we could not keep this feast. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Saviour, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them? They do not possess the truth in this Easter question, for in their blindness and repugnance to all improvements they frequently celebrate two Passovers in the same year. We could not imitate those who are openly in error.

How, then, could we follow *these Jews* who are most certainly blinded by error? For to celebrate a Passover twice in one year, is totally inadmissible. *But even if this were not so it would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communication with such wicked people (the Jews).* You should consider not only that the number of churches in these provinces make a majority, but also that it is right to demand what our reason approves, and that we should have nothing in common with the Jews."

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. 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.

In the 5th century, the burning question was: If the Jews and Judaism were cursed by God, then how can you explain their continued existence? Augustine confronted this problem in his "Sermon Against the Jews." He maintained that even though the Jews deserved the most severe punishment for having "killed our Jesus" but that they have been kept alive by Divine Providence to serve, together with their Scriptures, as witnesses to the truth of Christianity.

1492: synagogues burned.

Martin Luther: The Jews and Their Lies (excerpts) 1483-1546

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing and blasphemy. Thus we cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of divine wrath, of which the prophets speak, nor can we convert the Jews. With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few from the glowing flames. We dare not avenge ourselves. Vengeance a thousand times worse than we could wish them already has them by the throat. I shall give you my sincere advice:

First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians. For whatever we tolerated in the past unknowingly - and I myself was unaware of it - will be pardoned by God.

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies. This will bring home to them that they are not masters in our country, as they boast, but that they are living in exile and in captivity, as they incessantly wail and lament about us before God.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb. For they have justly forfeited the right to such an office by holding the poor Jews captive with the saying of Moses. They wantonly employ the poor people's obedience contrary to the law of the Lord and infuse them with this poison, cursing, and blasphemy.

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like. Let them stay at home.

Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping.

Seventh, I commend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, as was imposed on the children of Adam. For it is not fitting that they should let us accursed Goyim toil in the sweat of our faces while they, the holy people, idle away their time behind the stove, feasting and farting, and on top of all, boasting blasphemously of their lordship over the Christians by means of our sweat. Burn down their synagogues, forbid all that I enumerated earlier, force them to work, and deal harshly with them, as Moses did in the wilderness, slaying three thousand lest the whole people perish. They surely do not know what they are doing; moreover, as people possessed, they do not wish to know it, hear it, or learn it. There it would be wrong to be merciful and confirm them in their conduct. If this does not help we must drive them out like mad dogs, so that we do not become partakers of their abominable blasphemy and all their other vices and thus merit God's wrath and be damned with them. I have done my duty. Now let everyone see to his. I am exonerated."

The Bible declares that there is nothing new under the sun. It was happening back then and it is happening today. We are only building upon the sins of the fathers. There is a saying that the Church started it all with forced conversions declaring: "Jews cannot live among us as Jews!"

Then the nations of the world followed up on what the Church said and declared, "Jews cannot live among us as Jews!"

Hitler simply built on the foundation the Church had laid and simply stated "Jews cannot live among us as Jews!"

Eze 34:6,11,12 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Mt 26:31 for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Ac 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Mt 10:42-44 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

Did you realize replacement theology was even taking place during the time of the Apostle John? After the Jews were scattered and gentile leaders began to take over the congregations, Yeshua said not to be like the Gentiles who "lord over the flock". The problem was that most gentile leaders had little to no foundation in Torah to build on. One Greek pastor would not allow the Apostle John in the church, or other Jews and, he even kicked out any gentile who allowed Jews in! Here it is:

3Jn 1:9,10: "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church."

History is written by the victor:

What's the greek word for church?

Sunagoge / ecclesia they both mean assembly of any kind -sporting event, town hall

The Hebrew word Kahal became ecclesia in the Septuagint

The Hebrew word Edah became sunagoge

Ac 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: (sunagogue)

Jas 2:1,2 For if there come unto your assembly (sunagogue) a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

Re 2:9 but are the synagogue (sunagogue) of Satan.

Ac 7:37,38 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church (ecclesia) in the wilderness

Ac 19:35-41 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly. (ecclesia)

Ge 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Ex 34:6,7 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

Heb 11:31-38 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Was English the first language the bible was written in? If it wasn't English there is no "Church" in the New Testament! Only an Ecclesia which includes all the Jews of who had faith. They are who Gentiles are grafted in to!

What Happens When a 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 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 Brit Chadashah
- 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 we Relate to Israel?

- 1) We take our 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) Bible prophecy makes sense for today and offers opportunities for involvement in God's plan for Israel.
- 6) We are able to appreciate the Hebraic/Judaic roots 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 Tanakh.

Had the "Church" understood this very clear message from the beginning, then the sad legacy of anti-Semitic hatred 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 has 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.