

Romans Series

Lesson #103

June 6, 2013

Dean Bible Ministries

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The Epistle to the ROMANS

ISRAEL: Replacement Theology, Christian Palestinianism

Romans 9:1–6 (Introduction)



Two Horrible Errors Have Plagued Christianity:

1. Replacement Theology

2. Anti-Semitism

What they both have in common is a non-literal, allegorizing, spiritualizing method of interpreting the Scripture.

Rom. 9:4, “who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;

Rom. 9:5, “of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

Gen. 12:1, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.

Gen. 12:2, “ ‘I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

Gen. 12:3, “ ‘I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ ”

THE GOLDEN RULE OF INTERPRETATION

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, make no other sense, therefore take every word at its ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicates clearly otherwise.”

~D. L. Cooper

What is Replacement Theology?

Replacement Theology is the view that the church is the “new” or “true” Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God and therefore national Israel will not experience a restoration to the Land of Israel or to a position of favor with God.

Supersessionism

is another word for “replacement theology” and derives from two Latin words:

super (“on” or “upon”) and ***sedere*** (“to sit”), as when one person sits on the chair of another, displacing the latter.

and the



“Replacement theology declared that the Church, Abraham’s spiritual seed, had replaced national Israel in that it had transcended and fulfilled the terms of the covenant given to Israel, which covenant Israel had lost because of disobedience.”

~Walter Kaiser

“Replacement theology is the view that the Church completely and permanently replaced ethnic Israel in the working out of God’s plan and as recipient of Old Testament promises to Israel.”

~Ronald Diprose

Types of Supercessionism

Political supercessionism is the replacement of the Jewish people, their worship and their land by a political power that claims superior religious status (e.g., Rome, Islam).

Punitive supersessionism, represented by figures such as Hippolytus, Origen, and Luther, is the view that Jews who reject Jesus as the Jewish Messiah are consequently condemned by God, and have forfeited the promises otherwise due to them under the covenants.

Types of Supersessionism

Economic supersessionism, in the technical theological sense of function, is the view that the practical purpose of the nation of Israel in God's plans is replaced by the role of the church. It is represented by writers such as Justin Martyr and Augustine.

Structural supersessionism is Soulen's term for the *de facto* marginalization of the Old Testament as normative for Christian thought. The Hebrew Scriptures are considered to be largely indecisive for shaping Christian convictions.

These four views are neither mutually exclusive, nor logically dependent, and it is possible to hold all of them or any one with or without the others.

Core Beliefs of Replacement Theology

- National Israel has somehow completed or forfeited its status as the people of God and will *never again* possess a unique role or function apart from the church.

Core Beliefs of Replacement Theology

- The church is now the true Israel that has *permanently* replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God.

Core Beliefs of Replacement Theology

- The **result** is that the church has become the sole inheritor of God's covenant blessings originally promised to national Israel in the Old Testament. **This rules out any future restoration of national Israel.**

“For **replacement theology** to qualify as a biblical option, passages which allow such an interpretation are not enough. There needs to be, positively, passages which clearly teach it and, negatively, no passages which actually exclude it.”

~**Ronald Diprose**

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

The Church (the new Spiritual Israel)

REPLACES

Jewish people (the old fleshly National Israel)

Israel was an object lesson in sin and judgment.

Church (the Elect) existed in the Old Testament.

Jews who believe today are no longer Jewish.

Covenant with Jews (National Israel) is nullified.

Observations About Replacement Theology

Observation 1:

The view that the church replaces or supersedes the nation Israel as the people of God goes back to the middle of the 2nd century A.D.

“But He [Jesus] was manifested, in order that they [Israelites] might be perfected in their iniquities, and that we, being the constituted heirs through Him, might receive the testament of the Lord Jesus.”

Epistle of Barnabas, 14.5

“Therefore He hath circumcised our ears, that we might hear His word and believe, for the circumcision in which they trusted is abolished. For He declared that circumcision was not of the flesh, but they transgressed because an evil angel deluded them.”

Epistle of Barnabas, 14.5

Many Early Church Theologians Promoted Replacement Theology

The latter half of the Patristic Era in particular found a growing acceptance of the replacement view. Factors such as the church's perception of the two destructions of Jerusalem (A.D. 70 and 135), the growing Gentile composition of the church, and the trend toward allegorical interpretation in the church were also factors in the growth of Replacement Theology.

Justin Martyr (c. 150) was the first person to explicitly identify the church as "Israel."

Irenaeus (130–200): "For inasmuch as the former [the Jews] have rejected the Son of God, and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him, God has justly rejected them, and given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation."

Many Early Church Theologians Promoted Replacement Theology

Melito of Sardis (d. ca. 180): “Israel was precious before the church arose, and the law was marvelous before the gospel was elucidated. But when the church arose and the gospel took precedence the model was made void, conceding its power to the reality ... Israel was made void when the church arose.”

Clement of Alexandria (c. 195): Israel “denied the Lord” and thus “forfeited the place of the true Israel.”

Tertullian (c. 197): “Israel has been divorced.”

Cyprian (c. 250): “I have endeavored to show that the Jews, according to what had before been foretold, had departed from God, and had lost God’s favor, which had been given them in past time, and had been promised them for the future; while the Christians had succeeded to their place, deserving well of the Lord by faith, and coming out of all nations and from the whole world.”



The Roman Catholic Church developed from the Emperor Constantine's decrees that promoted the western (Roman) church. Roman political rule, which always had a [pagan] spiritual dimension, now assumed a Christian character. Rome had defeated the Jews who had killed Christ.



Catholicism therefore saw the New Covenant in Christ as a replacement for the old Mosaic Covenant, which represented Judaism and the Jewish People as a whole.



Historically, statements on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church have claimed her ecclesiastical structures to be a fulfillment and replacement of Jewish ecclesiastical structures (e.g., Jerusalem was taken allegorically as the Church). As recently as 1965 Vatican Council II affirmed: “the Church is *the new people of God.*”



Observation 2:

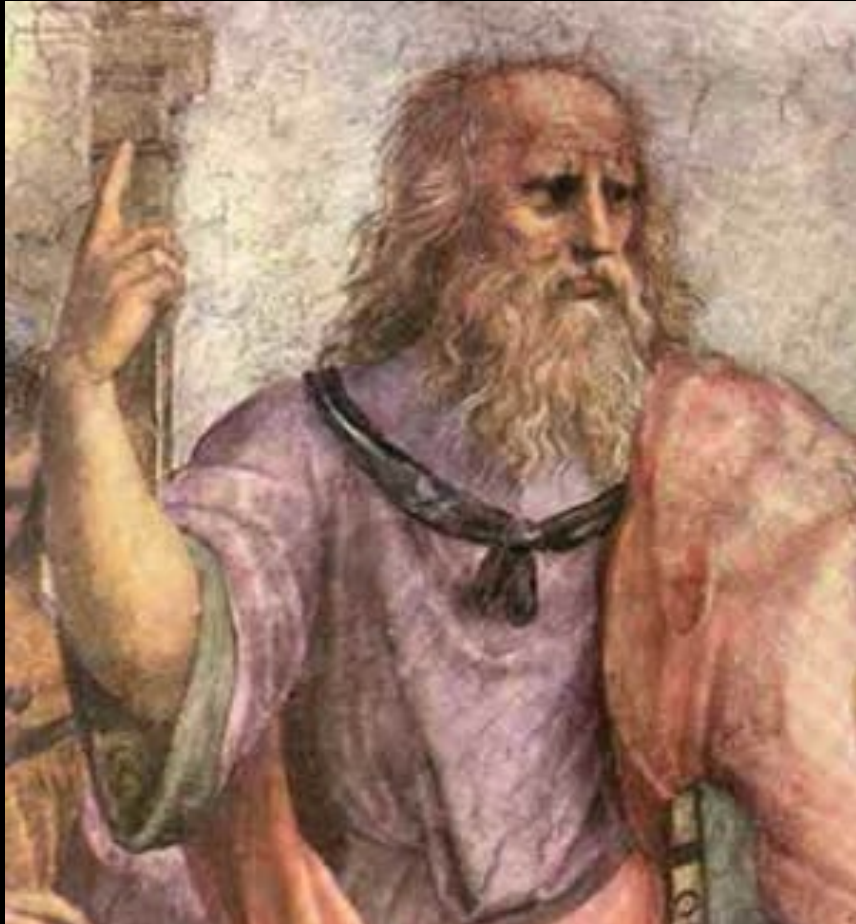
Replacement Theology has been the dominant view of the church from the third century until the middle of the nineteenth century.

While the church of the Patristic Era mixed statements of Replacement Theology with hope for national Israel in the future, the end of the Patristic Era ended with Augustine's amillennialism and the belief that the church was the replacement of Israel. James Carroll points out that Augustine's attitude toward the Jews was rooted in "assumptions of supersessionism."

According to Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Augustine (354–430) introduced a “negative element into judgment on the Jews.” He did so by advancing the “ ‘theory of substitution’ whereby the New Israel of the church became a substitute of ancient Israel.” The Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages was supersessionist.

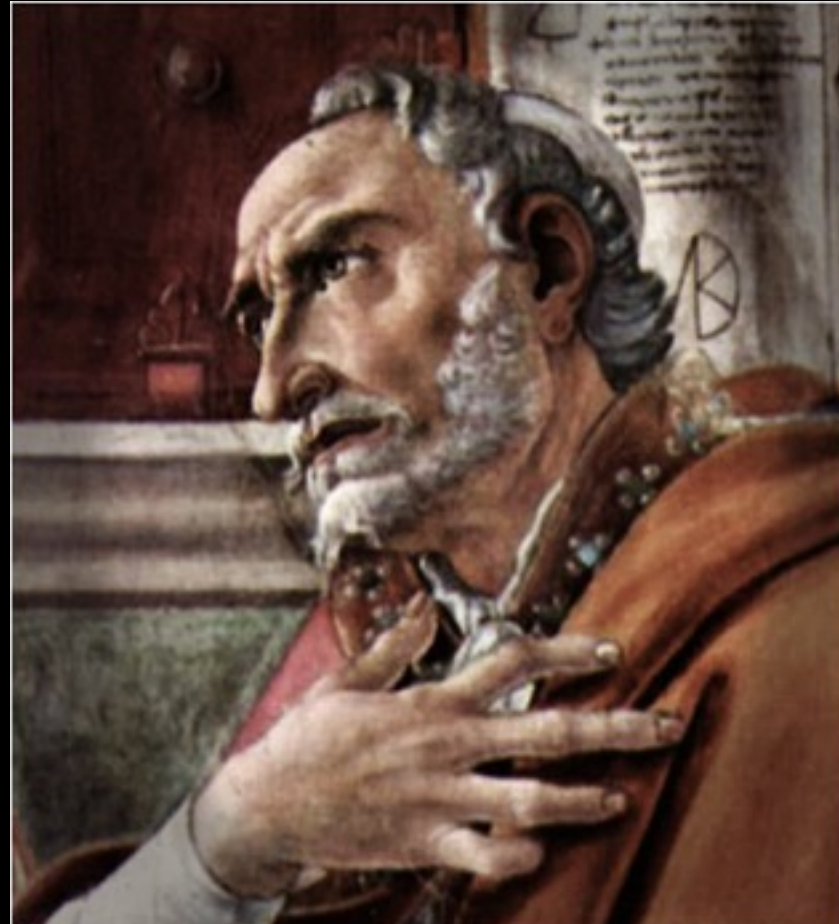
While varying on certain points, the first-generation Reformers, including Martin Luther and John Calvin, also were supersessionists.

The second generation of Reformers and the Puritans were more open to future blessings for Jews and the nation Israel but the replacement view remained strong into the nineteenth century.



Plato

**Higher meaning
Matter irrelevant
Salvation of soul**



Augustine

**Church = Kingdom
Jews = Witness People
Amillennialism**



Calvin

**Augustinian
Covenantal
Supersessionist**

DOCTRINE	COVENANTALISM
Israel's National Promises	Spiritualized in the Church
Israel and the Church	One People of God
Eretz Israel	Fulfilled and Annulled
Jerusalem	No Longer Significant
Temple	Redundant
Eschatology	Amill, Postmill, Preterist
Armageddon	Figurative
Return of Jesus	One Visible Event
Millennium	Figurative

Stephen Sizer, Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?, pp. 262–263



**Ecclesia and Synagoga (Church and Synagogue)
Column figures from the South Transept Portal
Strasbourg Cathedral (ca. 1230)**



Supercessionist Symbolism in the Synagoga Sculpture

Ecclesia is standing tall and erect and wearing crown (dominant position), Synagoga is blinded and slumped, symbolic of spiritual blindness and rejected status

Ecclesia has a scepter, indicating rule, while Synagoga has a dead stick, indicating her despised and “cast off” wandering status



Supercessionist Symbolism in the Synagoga Sculpture

Since the Law has been abrogated, Israel, too, has been rejected. As symbolized by the Tablets of the Law (10 Commandments) turned upside down.

Medieval Caricature and Identification of Jews

“Everyone inquires why the Jews wear yellow rings? In the first place, because they’re the Devil’s. That’s why one finds such symbols among them.

“While they scrounge and scrape they must have such identifications (markings).

“Thus, these identifications show us that the Jews are nothing [of value] to Christians.”

Translation from the Latin



Observation 3:

Since the mid-nineteenth century Replacement Theology has received serious criticism and widespread rejection.

The last 150 years has seen a significant backlash to Replacement Theology. Perspectives concerning Replacement Theology have been seriously affected by two twentieth-century developments: **(1) The Holocaust** and **(2) the Establishment of the Modern State of Israel**. These events pushed questions and issues concerning Israel and the church to the forefront of Christian theology.

More than any other event, the Holocaust has been the most significant factor in the church's reevaluation of supersessionism. According to Irvin J. Borowsky, "Within Christendom since the time of Hitler, there has existed a widespread reaction of shock and soul searching concerning the Holocaust." Ochs asserts that Christian reflections on the Jews and Judaism after the Holocaust "have generated theological questions of fundamental significance." These questions include: (1) "What are Christians to make of the persistence of the Jewish people?"; (2) "Is the Church the new Israel?"; (3) "What of Israel's sins?"; and (4) "What of Israel's land and state?" The answers to these questions in recent years indicate a reaction against supersessionism. Williamson states, "Post-Shoah [Destruction] theology" among contemporary theologians "criticizes the church's supersessionist ideology toward Jews and Judaism."

“The existence of Israel once again becomes a bone of contention, this time in a theoretical and theological sense. Do the misery and suffering of Israel in the past and in the present prove that God’s doom has rested and will rest upon her, as has been alleged time and again in so-called Christian theology? Or, is Israel’s lasting existence and, in a way, her invincibility, God’s finger in history, that Israel is the object of His special providence (*providential specialissima*) and the proof of her glorious future, the future that has been beheld and foretold by Israel’s own seers and prophets?”

~Herman Ridderbos

The Shift from Supercessionism

“The traditional view that the Christian Church has superseded Jewish Israel, which no longer has a role in God’s plan of redemption, is no longer dominant. Even though no consensus has developed on how to evaluate the present position and future role of Jewish Israel, the negative tones prominent in the Church’s traditional view have been greatly muted.”

David E. Holwerda, *Jesus & Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 11.

“Christian Palestinianism”

“Christian *Palestinianism*”

- **United Church of Christ**
- **Presbyterian Church (USA)**
- **Church of England**
- **United Methodist Church**
- **The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA**
- **Church of Scotland**
- **Reformed Church of America**
- **Methodist Church of England**
- **Roman Catholic Church**
- **Bethlehem Bible College**
- **World Vision**
- **World Council of Churches**

“Christian *Palestinianism*”

“We categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice, and reconciliation... With urgency we warn that Christian Zionism and its alliances are justifying colonization, apartheid, and empire-building” (‘The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism’, 22 August, 2006).

“Christian Palestinianism”

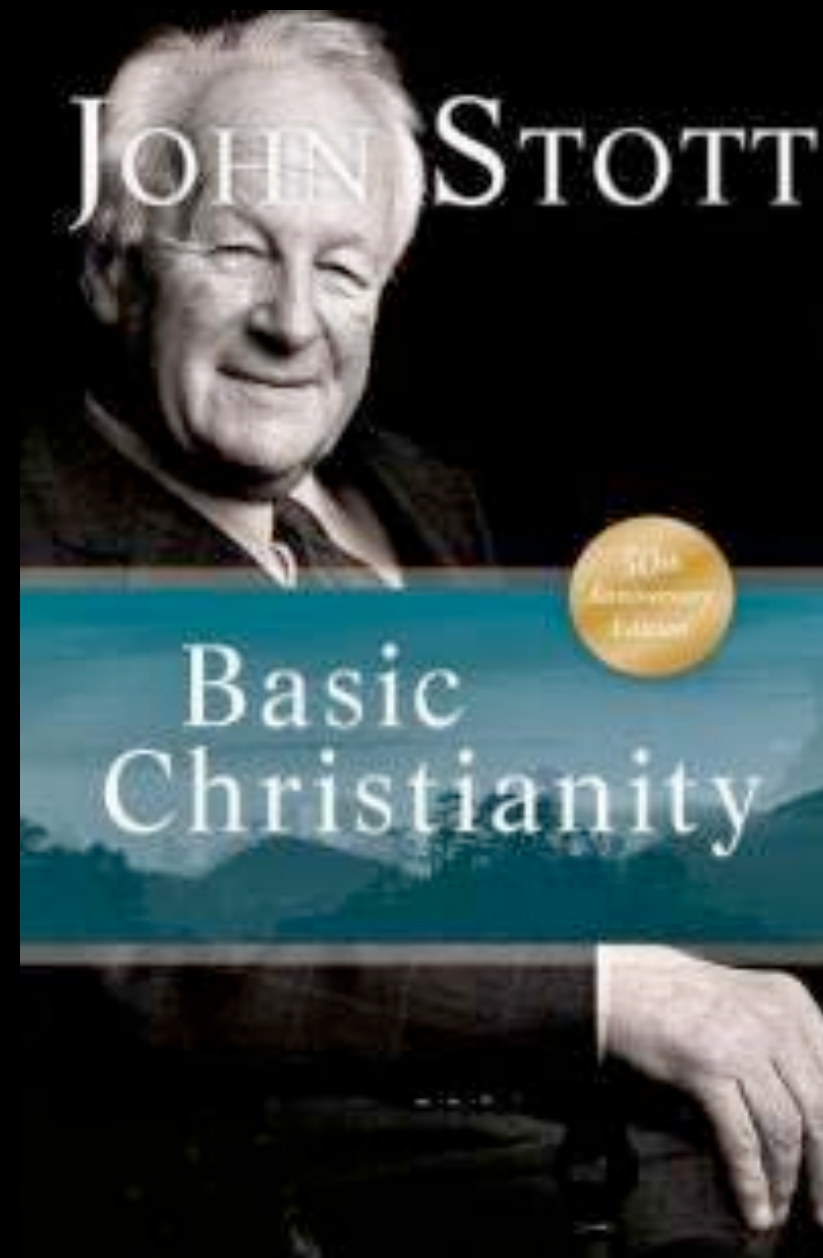
“Christian Zionism... seeks openly to use the Jewish Zionist cause in order to achieve its own theological and political reality, with dire consequences. The Christian Zionist worldview has cataclysmic consequences for a religiously integrated and lasting peace in Palestine/Israel... Christian Zionism portrays an unjust God, with an unjust people... [and] ... seeks to exclude and expel and arguably, eliminate whatever is perceived to be alien to its cause” (General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 2007).

“we warn that the theology of Christian Zionism is leading to the moral justification of empire, colonization, apartheid, and oppression”

~The Fifth International Sabeel Conference in Jerusalem, 2004

“I, myself believe that Zionism, both political and Christian, is incompatible with biblical faith.”

~John R Stott, British evangelical scholar



“Christian Zionist beliefs and behaviors are the antithesis of biblical Christianity.”

~Hank Hanegraaf, “The Bible Answer Man”



“According to the NT God’s people is [sic] to be identified on the basis of grace, not of race.”

~Gilbert Bilezikian, founding leader of Willow Creek Community Church

“The most serious threats to the well-being of the Palestinians in general, and to the Christian Palestinians in particular, come not from the Jews, but from Christian Zionists here in the United States.”

~Tony Campolo, popular Christian speaker, professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University and former faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania

Christian Palestinian Beliefs

- **Strong rejection of literal interpretation in favor of a spiritual hermeneutic**
- **Strong rejection of dispensationalism**
- **Affirmation of . . . liberation theology**
- **Modern Israel has no biblical connection with or justification for, owning the Promised Land**
- **Modern Israel is an apartheid state**
- **Amillennialism**
- **Replacement theology**

“So when Arab Christians reinterpreted Scripture in order to delegitimize the Jews’ claim to the land of Israel, this kick-started replacement theology, which roared back into the imaginations, sermons and thinking of the Anglican Church.

“This revisionism held that Palestinian Arabs were the original possessors of the land of Israel. The Anglican bishop of Jerusalem, Riah Abu el-Assal, claimed of Palestinian Christians: ‘We are the true Israel. . . .’ ”

**~Melanie Philips,
*Londonistan***



Elias Chacour

The Godfather of Christian Palestinianism



“We have been taught for centuries that the Jews are the Chosen People. We do not believe anymore that they are the Chosen People of God, since now we have a new understanding of that Choseness.”

A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation



Naim Stifan Ateek

Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu

**“Strangers shall stand
and tend your flocks ...
you shall eat the wealth of
the nations” (Isa. 61:5, 6).**

**“This exclusivist text
is unacceptable today
... It must be
de-Zionized”**

**Samson was “the
first suicide bomber”**

A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation



Naim Stifan Ateek

Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu

**Christian Zionists thrive
on war and conflict.**

**Christian Zionists harbor
an obsession with the
battle of Armageddon.**

NAIM STIFAN ATEEK

JUSTICE

AND ONLY

JUSTICE

A Palestinian Theology of Liberation

Foreword by

Rosemary Radford Ruether

“When confronted with a difficult passage in the Bible ... one needs to ask such simple questions as: Is the way I am hearing this the way I have come to know God in Christ? Does this **fit the picture I have** of God that Jesus has revealed to me? ... If it does, then that passage is valid and authoritative. If not, then **I cannot accept** its validity or authority.”



WHOSE PROMISED LAND?

THE CONTINUING
CRISIS OVER
ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

COLIN CHAPMAN

The New Testament writers “ceased to look forward to a literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies of a return to the land and a restored Jewish state. The one and only fulfillment of all the promises and prophecies was already there before their eyes in the person of Jesus.”



Stephen Sizer

As a young Christian at Sussex University in the mid-1970s I was strongly influenced by Dispensational and Christian Zionist leaders such as David Pawson, Tim LaHaye, and Hal Lindsey. Devouring Hal Lindsey's best selling book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Lindsey, 1970), and hearing in person his lectures on eschatology and the Book of Revelation (Lindsey, 1983), it seemed as if the Bible was literally coming true in this generation... My "conversion" came in two parts...



Acts 1:6–8

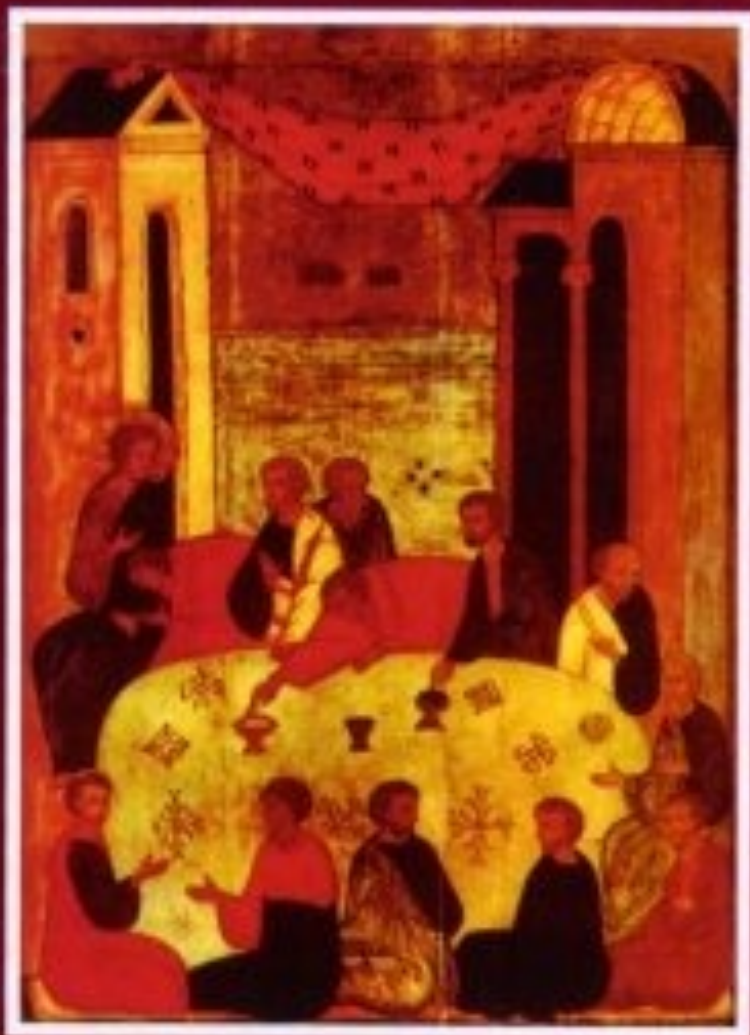
“Jesus does not envision a restoration of Israel *per se* but instead sees himself as embracing the drama of Jerusalem within his own life ... In some manner, the initial restoration of Israel has already begun inasmuch as Christ, the new Temple, the New Israel, has been resurrected.”



Galatians 6:16

“This is perhaps the apostle’s most stark example of universalizing the new identity of the people of God. The apostle is redrawing the definitions for self-identity ... And with this redefinition comes a realignment of the privileges that come with all identities.”

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD



N.T. WRIGHT

- “Israel’s story has been embodied in one man” (p.402)
- “the whole story of Israel ... reached its intended climax with his death [exile] and resurrection [restoration]” (p.366)
- “the church ... seems to have taken the place occupied ... by (Jewish) ethnic identity” (p.367)

JESUS

AND THE VICTORY OF GOD



N.T. WRIGHT

The Lord Jesus was:

- “reconstituting Israel around himself” (p.131)
- “reinterpreting” Israel’s eschatological hope (p.241)
- “reusing Israel’s prophetic heritage, and retelling its story” (p.349)
- “redefining what the kingdom meant” (p.471)

JESUS

AND THE VICTORY OF GOD



N.T. WRIGHT

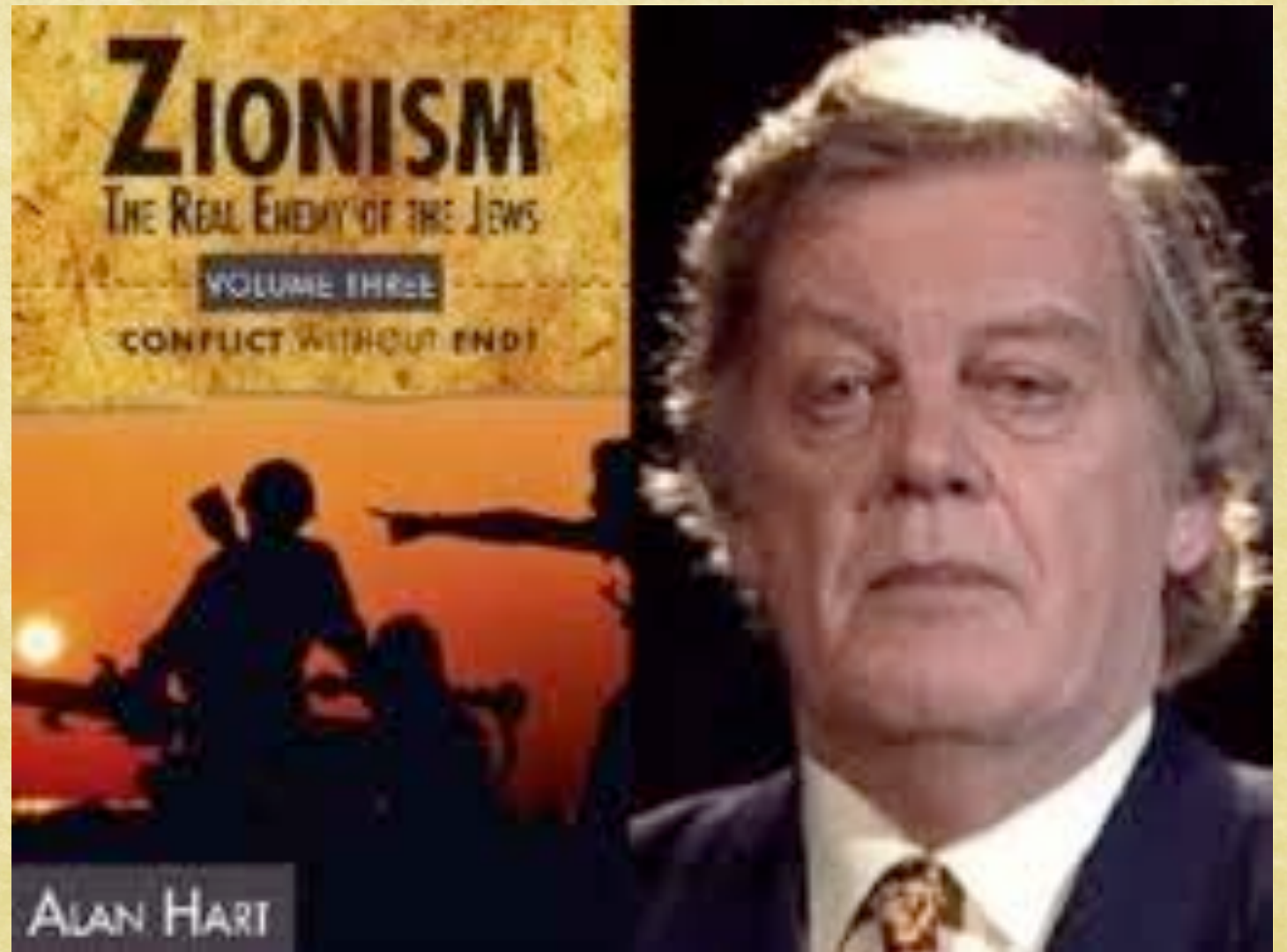
“The promises to Jerusalem, to Zion, are now transferred to Jesus and his people.”



“The American obsession with the second coming of Jesus—especially with distorted interpretations of it—continues unabated. Seen from my side of the Atlantic, the phenomenal success of the *Left Behind* books appears puzzling, even bizarre.”

“It’s time to give Israel’s hardcore Zionists their real name. They are the New Nazis... If Europeans and Americans don’t stop the New Nazis, it’s likely their endgame will be the extermination of millions of Palestinians.”

**~Alan Hart,
British Journalist**



Observation 4:

**Those who hold a replacement/
supersessionist view have often
used “replacement” terminology.**

**It is hollow for some to argue against the use
of the title “Replacement Theology” when
replacement terminology has been employed
throughout Church history by those who
believe the church is the new or true Israel.**

Marten Woudstra (OT, Calvin Seminary): “The question whether it is more proper to speak of a *replacement* of the Jews by the Christian church or of an extension (continuation) of the OT people of God into that of the NT church is variously answered ... there are various ways that the relationship between Israel and the church has been viewed, and one of these ways is replacement.”

Herman Ridderbos: “the church springs from, is born out of Israel; on the other hand, the church *takes the place of Israel* as the historical people of God.”

Bruce K. Waltke: “[The NT] teaches the hard fact that national Israel and its law have been permanently *replaced* by the church and the New Covenant ... The Jewish *nation* no longer has a place as the special people of God; that place *has been taken by the Christian community* which fulfills God’s purpose for Israel.”

Hans K. LaRondelle (Andrews Seminary, SDA): “Israel would no longer be the people of God and would be *replaced* by a people that would accept the Messiah and His message of the kingdom of God ... this ‘people’ is the church who replaces the ‘Christ-rejecting nation.’ ”

Matthew 21:43

Matt. 21:43, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.”

Lorraine Boettner: “It may seem harsh to say that ‘God is done with the Jews.’ But the fact of the matter is that He is through with them as a unified national group having anything more to do with the evangelization of the world. That mission has been *taken from them* and given to the Christian Church (Matt. 21:43).”

R. T. France: Matt. 21:43 is “the most explicit statement in Matthew of the view that there is to be a new people of God *in place of* Old Testament Israel.”

Observation 5:

Those who argue for “fulfillment,” “enlargement,” “expansion,” and/or “transference” language do not use different arguments than those who argue for “replacement.”

Those who those call themselves “fulfillment theologians” use the “replacement” terminology, arguments, and texts (Matt. 21:43; Acts 15:13–18; Rom. 2:28–29; 9:6; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:11–22; 1 Pet. 2:9–10) as those who classically have called themselves Replacement theologians.

Observation 6:

Replacement Theology is a legitimate title for the view that the church replaces, fulfills, or supersedes Israel.

The term “Replacement Theology” is appropriate because this view takes away or transferring of what was promised to national Israel. “Fulfillment” terminology argues that the church fulfills Israel, but the result is the same—something that was promised to the nation Israel is no longer the possession of national Israel, but now belongs to another group.

Observation 7:

Nations and promises to nations are not unspiritual nor are they things that need to be transcended.

Replacement Theology talks about Israel being redefined and physical and land promises being transcended by greater spiritual realities, but where does the Bible ever indicate that nations are unspiritual or lesser types that must give way to greater spiritual realities? Where does the Bible indicate that physical and land promises are lesser realities that give way to better spiritual truths?

The New Testament reaffirms the future relevance of the nation Israel (Matthew 19:28; Acts 1:6; Romans 11:26).

It reaffirms the future significance of Jerusalem (Luke 21:24).

It reaffirms the future significance of a Temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 11:1–2).

The NT reaffirms the future of nations and kings of nations (Revelation 21:24, 26).

The nation Israel is not an entity that God ever intended to be transcended. God does not transcend eternal and unconditional promises.

What Has Been Superseded?

“Reformed theologians are not at all convinced that the promises to Abraham much less Moses are still theologically significant today. The work of Christ is definitive. There is one covenant. And it is with Christ.” (Gary Burge)

The New Testament is clear that the old (Mosaic) covenant has been abrogated and superseded by the New Covenant (Luke 22:19–20; Heb. 8:7–13, but nowhere does the NT state that the Abrahamic covenant has similarly been done away with. On the contrary, it is integral to the establishment of the New Covenant (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:23–34; Rom. 4:1–3, 9–25; 11:28; Gal. 3:16–18, 29). The details of the covenant that Abraham was given and believed (Rom. 4; Gal. 3) is necessary to determine exactly what was promised to him. This covenant is God’s blessing upon a new nation, a land for that nation, and universal blessing for the nations of the world (Gen. 12:1–3). If we exclude the Abrahamic Covenant then we exclude the promise to the Gentiles.

Conclusion

The New Testament reaffirms the Old Testament expectations concerning a restoration of Israel. When this is coupled with the fact that there are no clear texts that identify the church as Israel or teach the permanent rejection of Israel, the case for supersessionism appears unconvincing and the case for Israel's restoration is validated.