

Replacement Theology – an insidious and woeful error:

A response to an article arguing that Christianity has replaced Israel

The following list of New Testament Bible verses followed by some statements (supposedly inferred from the NT quotes), was posted to the Facebook forum 'Truth Triumphs Tradition'.

This article is a short response to this shocking misunderstanding. (The short article below included the King James Version translations of the listed verses):

"John 12:49; John 14:24; Matthew 5:21-22; Matthew 5:27-28; Matthew 5:33-35; Matthew 5:38-39; Matthew 5:43-44; Matthew 12:5-6; Matthew 17:11-12; Luke 5:21-22; Luke 6:1; Luke 13:14; John 8:3-7

Jesus replaced the Jewish law of Thou shalt not kill with being angry with a brother without cause being a danger of judgment.

Jesus replaced the law of performing an oath unto the Lord with not swearing at all.

Jesus replaced the law of an eye for an eye with forgiveness.

Jesus replaced the law of hating your enemy with loving your enemy.

Jesus replaced the law of the temple with Himself.

Jesus replaced the prophecy of Elias returning (still observed in the Jewish feast of Passover by the empty seat) by saying Elias has already come.

Jesus replaced the law of having to go through a Levitical priest and/or offering a sacrifice for sin by forgiving sins Himself in the name of His Father.

Jesus replaced the law of doing no work on the sabbath day by both healing and having His disciples work on the sabbath day.

Jesus replaced the law of stoning an adulteress with forgiveness.

To say there was no replacement theology would be the equivalent of saying Jesus was not the messiah.

So why was Israel replaced with Christianity? Because the Jews rejected Jesus.

Had they not, His replacement theology would have been through the Jews themselves."

You may note in the capitalization of the words 'himself' and 'his' when referring to Jesus/Yeshua, that the author of this post considers Jesus to be God. Such a seriously false pre-supposition is, of course, most likely to lead to serious errors in attempting to understand and interpret the Bible.

In my response, I have given the NT verses quoted (using the Complete Jewish Bible as an alternative modern version which, while still far from perfect, is a much better translation than the flawed KJV¹).

Thus in the section following you will see the relevant verse quoted and then some short comment on it's relevance to the question of 'Replacement' and the issue of Replacement Theology (RT):

JOHN 12:49 "FOR I HAVE NOT SPOKEN ON MY OWN INITIATIVE, BUT THE FATHER WHO SENT ME HAS GIVEN ME A COMMAND, NAMELY, WHAT TO SAY AND HOW TO SAY IT.

To even list this statement of Yeshua which so emphatically declares that RT is a false doctrine, just shows how little understanding those who argue for this doctrine have, and how easily they are misled.

Yeshua was an observant Jew who made it clear that his brethren were to obey the 10 Words and Sh'ma² when he declared what the two greatest commandments were. He also made it clear that his family, his mother, brothers and sisters, were those who do the will of his Father (Matt 12:50), and all his hearers knew where that 'will of his Father' was recorded and detailed! And that is, in the Tanakh; in the writings of Moses, and the Prophets of Israel.

There is absolutely no hint of any replacement here, rather a call to repent and turn back to the God of Israel, their Father who had declared His covenants and commandments to Israel through the Tanakh.

¹ There is a great deal of evidence to demonstrate many significant errors in the KJV. Surprisingly though, the Old Testament portion is reasonably faithful to the Hebrew text of the Tanakh, and was even used by many Jewish groups for many years as a suitable English translation. Some of the reasons for this are cited on this website - <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=185>

² Deuteronomy 6:4-9; & Deuteronomy 11:13-21; & Numbers 15:37-41

JOHN 14:24 "SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LOVE ME DOESN'T KEEP MY WORDS -- AND THE WORD YOU ARE HEARING IS NOT MY OWN BUT THAT OF THE FATHER WHO SENT ME.

This is more of the same! Firstly, note that Yeshua speaks about 'keeping his words' which are the Father's Words, which is Torah! Thus, he is not saying you must believe IN him, but IN his words, which are the Words of God in the Torah and Tanakh.

Most Jewish scholars have no trouble with the sayings of Yeshua (with a few significant differences where they argue that serious redaction has taken place, and in particular, with the very questionable Gospel of John³).

In fact, to demonstrate this reality, Prof David Flusser has stated in his books⁴; having spent his entire life devoted to studying Yeshua and in particular, his life as described through the Synoptic Gospels; that all the words of Yeshua could have been compiled from Jewish writing before his time (including the Tanakh of course).

MATTHEW 5:21-22 "YOU HAVE HEARD THAT OUR FATHERS WERE TOLD, 'DO NOT MURDER, AND THAT ANYONE WHO COMMITS MURDER WILL BE SUBJECT TO JUDGMENT. BUT I TELL YOU THAT ANYONE WHO NURSES ANGER AGAINST HIS BROTHER WILL BE SUBJECT TO JUDGMENT; THAT WHOEVER CALLS HIS BROTHER, 'YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING!' WILL BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN; THAT WHOEVER SAYS, 'FOOL!' INCURS THE PENALTY OF BURNING IN THE FIRE OF GEI-HINNOM!

Yeshua is giving mid-rashic⁵ commentary on the 10 Words. He is doing exactly what Moses did, expanding on the explicit and original statement of the 10 Words, just as Moses did. He is making it clear that true obedience to the 10 Words can only be achieved from a circumcised heart (again as Moses, Ezekiel and Jeremiah had said before him). There is nothing really new here, just a clarification of the true intent and deeper meaning of the 10 Words.

Those arguing for some replacement here need to therefore set up a new Sanhedrin⁶ as well!

Perhaps some Christians will argue that this part of the quote is allegory, whereas the first part was not!

Christianity in general has no Sanhedrin, so it can't be part of the 'New' way that Yeshua has supposedly set up with this statement.

MATTHEW 5:27-28 "YOU HAVE HEARD THAT OUR FATHERS WERE TOLD, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.' BUT I TELL YOU THAT A MAN WHO EVEN LOOKS AT A WOMAN WITH THE PURPOSE OF LUSTING AFTER HER HAS ALREADY COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH HER IN HIS HEART.

Another of the 10 Words and another explanation of the true reality that a heart-led obedience is needed. Yeshua makes it clear, as Moses in fact had before him, that the real challenge to avoiding the sin of adultery is controlling the fleshly heart, and directing the direction and focus of the 'eye' of the mind. Judaism understands from the Tanakh that man has two hearts, and two inclinations, an inclination to do good and an inclination to do bad.

This Hebraic concept of 'Yetzer HaRa' and 'Yetzer HaTov' (the evil inclination and the good inclination) relates to the choice of the will to be faithful to God rather than follow the natural 'lusts of the flesh'. Thus any natural descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, still need to make the choice to follow the good heart rather than the fleshly heart. All who have 'circumcised hearts' are then aligning their 'fleshly heart' with their 'spiritual heart', and will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul calls the Torah spiritual in a number of places such as 1 Cor 10:3 and Romans 7:14. 'Israel after the flesh' then are those of Israel who continue to follow the Yetzer HaRa. So, for example, when Paul writes in 1 Cor 15:44 "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." he is speaking primarily on an individual basis of this choice that we all have – whether to be 'born from above', that is to follow our good inclination, to circumcise our hearts and have the 'faith of Yeshua' which is the 'faith/faithfulness of Abraham', or to remain alienated from God. This choice applies to every individual once the One True God is revealed to them.

³ The Jewish theologian, Prof Adele Reinhartz has written a great book that tries to find grounds for commonality between Christianity and Judaism within the confines of this gospel. See *'Befriending The Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John'*.

⁴ See for example 'Jesus', 'Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Sages and Literature, vol. 2' and 'The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius'.

⁵ A Rabbinic interpretation and commentary on a text from the Hebrew Scripture.

⁶ The KJV uses the word 'council' here (Sanhedrin literally means 'sitting together'), but is referring to this Jewish court of judges that was set up in every town in Israel. The Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem has some 71 judges/sages.

MATTHEW 5:33-35 "AGAIN, YOU HAVE HEARD THAT OUR FATHERS WERE TOLD, `DO NOT BREAK YOUR OATH,' AND `KEEP YOUR VOWS TO ADONAI.' BUT I TELL YOU NOT TO SWEAR AT ALL -- NOT `BY HEAVEN,' BECAUSE IT IS GOD'S THRONE; NOT `BY THE EARTH,' BECAUSE IT IS HIS FOOTSTOOL AND NOT `BY YERUSHALAYIM,' BECAUSE IT IS THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

Again this is just a more detailed and comprehensive explanation of the passages quoted from Lev 19:12; Numbers 30:2 and Deut 23:21. Moses had said not to take God's Name in vain; not to discredit it in any way. So to swear on the 'Heavens or the Earth' is to swear on God's handiwork and thus to implicitly swear on God. Similarly, to swear on the 'apple of God's eye' Jerusalem, is by implication also to 'swear on God'. This is not a NEW commandment, simply a more complete explanation of the existing one.

MATTHEW 5:38-39 "YOU HAVE HEARD THAT OUR FATHERS WERE TOLD, `EYE FOR EYE AND TOOTH FOR TOOTH.' BUT I TELL YOU NOT TO STAND UP AGAINST SOMEONE WHO DOES YOU WRONG. ON THE CONTRARY, IF SOMEONE HITS YOU ON THE RIGHT CHEEK, LET HIM HIT YOU ON THE LEFT CHEEK TOO!

MATTHEW 5:43-44 "YOU HAVE HEARD THAT OUR FATHERS WERE TOLD, `LOVE YOUR NEIGHBORS -- AND HATE YOUR ENEMY.' BUT I TELL YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES! PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU!

I think it best to let Prof David Flusser answer these ones:

"The Essene discovery that evil can be overcome with good has proved a mighty weapon in the history of the world. As we shall see, this idea was developed further by Jesus, and adopted by Christianity— even independently of Jesus' doctrine of love. The rule, "Do not resist one who is evil" (Matt. 5:39), has also penetrated into modern times. It reached Gandhi, who learned of it through Christianity and grafted it into ancient Indian ideas. This originally Essene idea thus helped to liberate India by passive resistance.

History has shown that an enemy can be overcome by goodness, even if one does not love him, and even if he becomes no better as a result of the good that is done to him. This was what the Essenes wanted; but it is hard to fulfill these two conditions. It is only human nature to begin to love the one for whom we are doing good. More importantly, when we genuinely do good for someone — even though we might only love them a little — as a rule, they become a better human being.

Those groups which occupied the fringe of Essenism outgrew the Essene theology of hate, and eventually began to affirm these same consequences of doing good to one's enemy. In the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, especially in the Testament of Benjamin (100-200 BCE), the loving conquest of the sinner becomes an important moral imperative:

'The good man has not an eye that cannot see; for he shows mercy to all men, sinners though they may be, and though they may plot his ruin. This man, by doing good, overcomes evil, since he is protected by the good

If, then, your minds are predisposed to what is good, children, wicked men will live at peace with you, the profligate will reverence you and turn towards the good, and the money-grubbers will not only turn their backs on the things they have been striving for, but even give what they have got by their money-grubbing to those who are in distress

His good mind will not let him speak with two tongues, one of blessing and one of cursing, one of insult and one of compliment, one of sorrow and one of joy, one of quietness and one of tumult, one of hypocrisy and one of truth, one of poverty and one of wealth; but it has a single disposition only, simple and pure, that says the same thing to everyone.

It has no double sight or hearing; for whenever such a man does, or says, or sees anything, he knows that the Lord is looking into his soul in judgment. And he purifies his mind so that he is not condemned by God and men. But everything that Beliar does is double and has nothing single about it at all.'

Again, this theology was clearly not created by Yeshua, given that it was recorded in Jewish writings before Yeshua was born. He explained and lived it better than anyone before or since, but these words were not the founding words of a new religion. Rather, they were a call to return to the 'old' one, the 'old wine', to return to the true religion of Israel, to the proper worship of God Almighty, YHVH.

MATTHEW 12:5-6 + 7-8 ""OR HAVEN'T YOU READ IN THE TORAH THAT ON SHABBAT THE COHANIM PROFANE SHABBAT AND YET ARE BLAMELESS? I TELL YOU, THERE IS IN THIS PLACE SOMETHING GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE! IF YOU KNEW WHAT `I WANT COMPASSION RATHER THAN ANIMAL-SACRIFICE' MEANT, YOU WOULD NOT CONDEMN THE INNOCENT. FOR THE SON OF MAN IS LORD OF SHABBAT!"

Flusser shows very convincingly that the phrase here 'son of man' refers to human beings, not Yeshua specifically.

To quote him in part: *"On that occasion, Jesus said, among other things, "The Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, man is lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). Literally, "the son of man." Here it means simply "man." This was already recognized in the seventeenth century by the famous Dutch scholar, Hugo Grotius in his commentary on Matt. 12:8."* (Jesus, 2001). So Flusser is saying that all men, not just our Messiah have dominion over the Sabbath – why then would we remove or move it!!

Some scholars have argued that this change is recorded in the NT and have quoted Acts 10 and Gal 2, and possibly Romans 14:5 as evidence. Yet, there is absolutely no explicit mention of the weekly Sabbath in either Acts 10 or Gal 2. Some also argue that for a Gentile convert to keep the Sabbath would be to become partake of something that was a national identity marker rather than being a 'new man in Christ'.

In the times that the Apostle Paul was writing though, the great majority of Gentiles converts were already 'God-fearers' and so would have been observing the Sabbath (to the accepted degree at least of attending the synagogue, etc). Thus, this question or perspective would have been irrelevant to them.

The fact, that this question is even asked today, only proves how far we have moved from a Biblical standpoint, in the same way that a person coming to Messiah today is naturally expected to accept the Trinity, even though this is not an expression of the faith of Yeshua either.

So what was the '**something**' there (not someone) which was greater than the temple? Perhaps it was human love for one another! Certainly this verse in no way indicates a new religion or new law!

What makes this even more definitive is that the weekly Sabbath had always been created for man's benefit; for man to have dominion over it, that is to gain life from it, not to be some form of bondage or legalism!

MATTHEW 17:11-12 "HE ANSWERED, "ON THE ONE HAND, ELIJAHU IS COMING AND WILL RESTORE ALL THINGS; ON THE OTHER HAND, I TELL YOU THAT ELIJAHU HAS COME ALREADY, AND PEOPLE DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM BUT DID WHATEVER THEY PLEASSED TO HIM. IN THE SAME WAY, THE SON OF MAN TOO IS ABOUT TO SUFFER AT THEIR HANDS."

How does this suggest a new religion? Well look back at the original set of statements in the text I am responding to. Note the writer said: *"Jesus replaced the prophecy of Elias returning (still observed in the Jewish feast of Passover by the empty seat) by saying Elias has already come."*

The problem is that Yeshua also said 'on the one hand, Eliyahu (Elias/Elijah) is coming and will restore all things ...'. Have all things been restored? No, so Elijah is still to come after all. Malachi 4 is still to be fulfilled. Again, this is no 'new' law. John the Baptist (Immerser) came in the spirit of Elijah, but he was not Elijah.

LUKE 5:21-22 "THE TORAH-TEACHERS AND THE P'RUSHIM BEGAN THINKING, "WHO IS THIS FELLOW THAT SPEAKS SUCH BLASPHEMIES? WHO CAN FORGIVE SIN EXCEPT GOD?" BUT YESHUA, KNOWING WHAT THEY WERE THINKING, ANSWERED, "WHY ARE YOU TURNING OVER SUCH THOUGHTS IN YOUR HEARTS?"

Now the pre-suppositions of the author are on full display!

If Yeshua is (the new) God and he replaced the old God (as per Marcion⁷), then he may well have replaced Judaism!

In reality though, this verse has nothing to do with any 'replacement of Judaism' and Torah – it was simply that Yeshua understood that God had given him some authority, as the Messiah – see my article on 'The Goal of Messiah' -

<http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/The%20Goal%20of%20Messiah.pdf>

⁷ Marcion believed that the wrathful God of the Hebrew Bible was a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving God of the New Testament - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcionism>

LUKE 6:1 "ONE SHABBAT, WHILE YESHUA WAS PASSING THROUGH SOME WHEAT FIELDS, HIS TALMIDIM BEGAN PLUCKING THE HEADS OF GRAIN, RUBBING THEM BETWEEN THEIR HANDS AND EATING THE SEEDS. SOME OF THE P'RUSHIM SAID, "WHY ARE YOU VIOLATING SHABBAT?"

Yeshua was accused of violating Shabbat, but he didn't. There are some great articles on this – remember, if he had he would have sinned. In fact, this text indicates Greek corruption as I detail in my LXX article at www.circumcisedheart.info

Rather, this is an instance where the Greek translators poor understanding of Hebraic customs and commandments, meant that errors were made.

It was accepted that on the Sabbath it was permissible to pick up fallen heads of grain and rub them between the fingers. According to Rabbi Yehuda, also a Galilean like Yeshua, it was even permissible to rub them in one's hand. Some of the Pharisees though found fault with Yeshua's disciples for most likely behaving in accordance with their Galilean tradition.

That is, it is most probable that these Galileans, picked the fallen heads of grain, rubbed them together and ate them. But what we read in Greek (see Matt 12:1-2⁸ in the footnote) is that they 'plucked' the heads of grain.

It seems fairly clear then, that when the original Hebrew account (written by someone who knew the customs and even the local differences in interpretation) was translated into Greek, the translator, not knowing these customs, and perhaps trying to make the scene more colourful, added the statement about plucking the wheat and thus introduced the one and only act of transgression of the Torah recorded in the synoptic Gospels⁹.

LUKE 13:14 "BUT THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYNAGOGUE, INDIGNANT THAT YESHUA HAD HEALED ON SHABBAT, SPOKE UP AND SAID TO THE CONGREGATION, "THERE ARE SIX DAYS IN THE WEEK FOR WORKING; SO COME DURING THOSE DAYS TO BE HEALED, NOT ON SHABBAT!"

Again, Yeshua did not sin, he did not violate the Sabbath. Rather, he explains how healing the whole man is just as acceptable on the Sabbath as circumcising the 8 day old baby boy.

Yeshua here is both condoning a practice that had developed and expanding it in an intriguing way. The practice had been developed that if a boy's 8th day from birth was the Sabbath, the person (a 'mohel') performing the circumcision was allowed to break the Sabbath by carrying the tools required through the village and performing the ritual. It was considered that when this conflict between the requirements of observing the Sabbath and of circumcising a male child on the 8th day were in conflict the circumcision took precedence. If however the child was ill on his 8th day since birth (which day was the Wednesday) and he was not well until the Saturday, the Sabbath, the ruling was that now, the Sabbath took precedence and so the circumcision would not be performed until a later day.

Yeshua by his comments appears to condone this approach to the potential conflict between these mitzvot (commandments). However, Yeshua also argues that, given this ruling, why should he be condemned for healing the whole man on the Sabbath. The clear understanding being that circumcision was a form of healing (not only a token or marker but a positive commandment), perhaps primarily because it was a mark of entry into the family/tribe of Israel.

Again, this is not a new Torah (instructions from God), but a more complete and rational interpretation.

JOHN 8:3-7 "THE TORAH-TEACHERS AND THE P'RUSHIM BROUGHT IN A WOMAN WHO HAD BEEN CAUGHT COMMITTING ADULTERY AND MADE HER STAND IN THE CENTER OF THE GROUP. THEN THEY SAID TO HIM, "RABBI, THIS WOMAN WAS CAUGHT IN THE VERY ACT OF COMMITTING ADULTERY. NOW IN OUR TORAH, MOSHE COMMANDED THAT SUCH A WOMAN BE STONED TO DEATH. WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT IT?" THEY SAID THIS TO TRAP HIM, SO THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE GROUND FOR BRINGING CHARGES AGAINST HIM; BUT YESHUA BENT DOWN AND BEGAN WRITING IN THE DUST WITH HIS FINGER. WHEN THEY KEPT QUESTIONING HIM, HE STRAIGHTENED UP AND SAID TO THEM, "THE ONE OF YOU WHO IS WITHOUT SIN, LET HIM BE THE FIRST TO THROW A STONE AT HER."

It is almost universally agreed by NT Bible Scholars and translators that this famous story of the adulterous woman brought to Yeshua is not an original part of John's gospel. The NIV Bible Commentary (Editor FF Bruce) writes: "*It is certain that these verses are a later insertion into the original work. They are omitted by the best authorities for the text, though one group of*

⁸ Matthew 12:1-2 "*At that time, Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the grain fields. His disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said to him, "Behold, your disciples do what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."*

⁹ See M. Kister, "Plucking on the Sabbath and Christian-Jewish Polemic," Immanuel 24-25 (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 35-51

MSS places them after Lk. 21:38. ...”.

So to try to use this passage to argue for any form of ‘Replacement Theology’ is really skating on thin ice.

I have written a little more about this passage in an article ‘Cast the First Stone - The Pericope Adulterae’ – see <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/The%20Pericope%20Adulterae.pdf>.

Having now addressed each of the passages in the New Testament that were listed as supporting Replacement Theology, it should be clear that not one of these passages or sayings of Yeshua can in anyway be taken to imply that “Israel (was) replaced with Christianity”!

This argument is totally without foundation. In fact, Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapters 9-11 alone should suffice.

Consider also Lamentations 2, especially verses 5-6 *“Adonai became like an enemy; he swallowed up Isra’el, swallowed up all its palaces, and destroyed all its strongholds. For the daughter of Y’hudah he has multiplied mourning and moaning. He wrecked his tabernacle as easily as a garden, destroyed his place of assembly. ADONAI caused Isra’el to forget designated times and Shabbats. In the heat of his anger he rejected both king and cohen.”*

The prophet (probably Jeremiah) who wrote this had witnessed the destruction of the first Temple on Mt Moriah in Jerusalem. This had occurred some 600 years before Yeshua. If God had removed Israel from his affections, then He did it when he destroyed the first Temple, and exiled the people. Reading this chapter, you could easily be convinced that Israel had no hope at this time.

The fact that Israel was a nation again though, in the times of Yeshua should indicate that he did not discard or replace Israel in 586 BCE. So why should we think the events of any other time, or even of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE would mean any different? After all, the Almighty had shown that his covenants with Israel were eternal.

To suggest that the pagan, Hellenistic religion that is Christianity today could somehow have greater favour with the Almighty, is beyond all sense and reason! Anyone who is serious about properly understanding the shocking history of anti-Semitism and its bed-fellow, Replacement Theology over the last 1900+ years would do well to read Frank Selch’s book ‘Replacement Theology’.

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