

Studies in The Greek Way ~~To~~ From God

*Doctrinal Pitfalls of Hellenism
and the Failure to View the Bible
through Hebraic Eyes*

Study 3: Replacement Theology

by
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Each study in this series tackles a 'Christian' doctrine that has arisen after the great chasm of the late first century which saw the Hellenistic church separate from its Hebraic brethren and began to introduce a Hellenistic perspective on the text of the New Testament.

I believe that most of these 'introduced' doctrines can be traced back to a failure to recognize some Hebraism that is embodied in the words spoken by Yeshua and/or his disciples.

In the case of the anti-Semitic Christian doctrine of Replacement Theology there are a number of very clear failures in understanding some significant phrases, and Hebraic understandings, that principally developed from the study of the Tanakh.

Two core examples are the misapplication of the terms 'Israel of God' and 'Israel of the flesh', along with a misappropriation of terminology addressed at pagans, to instead address it at Israel.

Replacement Theology – an insidious, dangerous, unholy and blinding doctrine:

Replacement Theology is the Christian belief that the church has replaced Israel.

There appear to be three main consequences to this 'Christian' doctrine that the Church has replaced Israel.

Firstly, this doctrine argues that 'Israel' now no longer exists, other than as the Church¹, and that any other 'Israel' such as the State of Israel is an imposter, and therefore an enemy of God because this other entity, this other 'Israel', has set itself up as a counter to the Israel that is the Church².

The second main consequence of this doctrine is that all the promises to Israel (both given in the New Testament and the Tanakh), are now seen as promises to the Christian Church, and not to any physical Israel, or any physical descendants of Israel who might have otherwise thought they were part of Israel and privy to these promises. Of course, in this Church developed doctrine, the judgements for disobedience called upon 'Israel' are conveniently ignored (the 'Church' in its arrogance can not imagine it might now potentially find itself the recipient of not just all of the blessings, but the curses as well!).

The third and perhaps saddest of these consequences is well summed up by Frank Selch in his book '*Replacement Theology: An Anti-Semitic Phenomenon or a Spiritual Conspiracy of Cosmic Proportions?*'³, where he writes:

*"What is clear from the beginning of Christianity is that the Gentile elements managed to eliminate the Jewish believers from any **meaningful fellowship** with them. There can be no question that over the centuries Biblical teachings were replaced with philosophical musings steeped in Greek thinking— especially our understanding of the meaning and significance of Torah."*

This separation is so bad, in part, because the Church and its members have no idea how much they are missing out on. This division has meant the much of Christianity is not even aware of the incredible depth and breadth of Jewish understanding of the Almighty and how to have a full and meaningful relationship with Him⁴. Where Christianity could have learned so much from its 'elder brother'; from the 'cultivated root' of the natural Olive Tree planted by the Almighty, Christianity has instead being very dismissive of the 'cultivated root' and its deep and long-standing wisdom.

Further this rejection of the real Israel has also exacerbated many of the evils of anti-Semitism, as well as, in many ways, robbing the Jewish people of the God-given mandate to be a '*light unto the Gentiles*'. That is, all peoples have suffered from this erroneous Replacement Theology, not just the real Israelites but also the Gentile church and the whole Gentile world, whose ignorance of God has only been compounded by this most unhelpful 'replacement' and consequential separation.

¹ Or, as some confused Christians will argue, Israel is now Jesus, or 'Jesus is Israel'!

² This naturally leads to the anti-Zionist position, which I will discuss in another of these studies.

³ For a much more in-depth treatment of Replacement Theology, I strongly recommend this book. It also gives a much more detailed coverage of the historical development of this doctrine since the days of the first disciples.

⁴ For some evidence for this lack of wisdom, consider a quote from Frank Selch's book: "*Vast sectors of the Christian world think nothing of whitewashing or downplaying Biblical injunctions, e.g. hatred, murder and gross sexual immorality by leaders and laity alike, yet will point with glee at the disobedience of the Jews, and their rejection of Jesus— as justification for their exile (cf. Jer.50:7). How was it that slavery flourished particularly in Protestant nations until a little over 100 years ago and Evangelicals fought the hardest to let go of their unpaid servants? Why is it that Apartheid was strongest in a nation characterized by Calvinist Christianity? How was it that in the early days of settlement in Australia, some Church-goers would gather to worship God on a Sunday morning and afterwards relax by shooting Aborigines for sport. And the list goes on and on...."*

It is perhaps not at all surprising that such a 'replacement' doctrine needed to be developed by the Hellenistic church after it had severed its roots with the family of Israel that it has been grafted onto, and through which it had developed a relationship with the very special son of Israel, Yeshua.

The Gentile Church needed to develop this doctrine in an attempt to reduce the many internal conflicts in its belief system, which otherwise stood to, if not condemn it, at least bring its foundational beliefs into serious question.

For example, one of these foundational texts of Hellenistic Christianity is the New/Renewed Covenant of Jeremiah 31. This text most emphatically states that this 'new covenant' will be with the House of Israel *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ..."* [Jeremiah 31:31](#)

Unless the church can usurp the place of Israel and/or Judah here, it would appear it cannot lay claim to this prophecy.

Investigating Replacement Theology:

In order to determine the validity of Replacement Theology as a Biblical doctrine, there are two main approaches we can take.

First, we can try to ascertain if this doctrine developed historically AFTER the early first century (late Second Temple Period), and if the development was only embryonic until some decades or more after the life of the first disciples of Yeshua, then only developing into its fully fledged form some centuries later. While some historical evidence may not be clear-cut and unequivocal, it can perhaps improve our appreciation with the respect to the second approach.

The second approach is to go back to the New Testament and evaluate all the scriptures that are used today to argue for this doctrine. Are they clear; are they unambiguous; are they direct and explicit, or is there other ways in which these same 'scriptural proof-texts' can be interpreted that are most consistent with the Tanakh, the foundational text of the New Testament?

Historically:

A number of books provide detailed evidence of the historical development of this doctrine, one of the most clear and succinct being Frank Selch's which I have already alluded to and referenced.

Some have argued that it's origins can be traced back to Emperor Constantine's time (306-337 CE). For example, Walter C. Kaiser (*Distinguished Professor of Old Testament and Director for the Foundation of Biblical Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological School, Massachusetts*) writes: *"Replacement Theology⁵ is not a new arrival in the theological arena, for it probably has its origins in an early political-ecclesiastical alliance forged between Eusebius Pamphilius and the Emperor Constantine"*⁶

I believe though that the evidence and beginnings of this doctrine go back much further in history. The seeds were surely sown with the arrival of Alexander the Great in Israel around 332 BCE. From this moment Hellenism began to impact and significantly influence many of the Jewish people, not only in the Diaspora but also in the Land of Israel. By the time of Yeshua, the 'Hellenists' (Jewish people who followed Greek customs⁷) were common. In fact, this section of the Jewish community is mentioned in Acts (see both Chapters 2 & 6) where we find that the Apostle Stephen is put in charge of caring for those Hellenists who had accepted the Messiahship of Yeshua and joined the community of believers. The evidence is that the cultural background of this Hellenists meant that they have a much lower affinity and loyalty to the Land of Israel in any Biblical sense. For them, any argument that they need not be fully compliant with the Temple customs and other rites of the religion of Israel, was likely to have a more sympathetic hearing.

We can easily imagine that this group of believers, especially those not living in Israel (where some of them were seen as second-class citizens according to Luke in Acts), could more readily have been willing to shake off the authority of the Jewish leaders and the Temple/Sanhedrin/Synagogue-focused hierarchy and instead try to break free from such Jerusalem centred authority. It appears such was already occurring in Rome when the Apostle Paul wrote to them.

⁵ Also known as 'supersessionism'.

⁶ See 'Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation' By Michael J. Vlach p28

⁷ Zondervan's Pictorial Biblical Dictionary defines Hellenists as, "Non-Greeks who spoke Greek...Jews who made Greek their tongue, and with it often adopted Greek ideas and practices" The Hellenistic Jews (also) differed from the Hebrews in that their native language was not Aramaic or Hebrew, but Greek. - <http://expositorswiki.wikispaces.com/The+Hellenists+in+Acts>

We see some hint of this in his exhorting the 'stronger' Gentile believers to bear with their 'weaker' Jewish community members.

The Jewish theologian, Professor Mark Nanos has helped clarify this situation in Rome that the Apostle Paul was responding to. To help set the scene, consider this excerpt from Pamela Eisenbaum's review on 'Mystery of Romans'⁸ *"Both Jews and gentiles have their unique role to play in God's plan for world history—what biblical scholars commonly call salvation history. Paul's understanding of "salvation history" appears in Romans 9—11, chapters so variously interpreted that Nanos' attempt to gain clarity is most welcome. He identifies a two step plan, the first step achieves salvation for gentiles, the second redeems Israel, i.e., the Jewish community.*

Step One:

Because many Jews did not accept the gospel Paul preached, Paul proclaimed Christ to the gentiles. Nanos correctly points out that Paul believed the advent of Christ had signaled the end of the age. And, according to the prophets, the end of the age meant the ingathering of the nations, i.e., when the peoples of the world would finally recognize and worship the one, true God. It was Israel's job "to be a light to the nations" (Isaiah 49:5-6), so Paul took it upon himself to preach the good news to the gentiles. Paul's mission then, in proclaiming to the nations the message of Christ having died and been raised, was to inaugurate this eschatological moment. The fact that many of Paul's Jewish peers did not believe in Jesus and did not believe in the validity of Paul's mission was not a problem for the Apostle; on the contrary, Jewish resistance was part of the plan. Since part of Israel rejected Paul's message, there was greater opportunity to reach out to the other peoples of the world.

Step Two:

*The ingathering of the nations provokes Israel's jealousy, and, as a result, leads to repentance and restoration. Thus, in Paul's words, "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26). In the typical reading of Romans, Israel's jealousy derives from the other nations currying favor with God. For Nanos, Israel is jealous of Paul's missionary success. Once Paul persuades the known world to embrace monotheism in the form of the worship of Israel's God, then the other Jews will recognize this as the ingathering of the nations, embrace Paul's mission and message, and together Jew and Gentile will be saved. Of course, salvation here does not mean personal salvation, but the inauguration of a new era of peace, tranquility, and justice. By interpreting Romans 9—11 this way, Nanos bolsters his contention that **Paul's dispute with other Jews is not focused on the validity of Judaism or the practice of Jewish law.** It is rather a dispute about God's timetable. Paul believes the end of the age is imminent; it is time for the ingathering of the nations. His opponents just think they are at a different point in history."⁹ - Pamela Eisenbaum (Associate Professor of Biblical Studies and Christian Origins at the Iliff School of Theology, Denver, Colorado)*

Paul's great discussion of the 'weak' and the 'strong'¹⁰ is shown by Nanos to mean something very, very different from what it is normally taken to mean. Nanos demonstrates that the word translated 'weak' is really a word chosen by Paul to mean 'stumbling'. Paul sees the Diaspora Jews in Rome who have not accepted that Yeshua is the Messiah as 'stumbling' over this truth. If they accept this truth, Paul believes it will greatly strengthen them (in part, in that they will be filled with joyous expectation that the Coming Age, the great time when the 'lion' will lay down with the 'lamb' is about to dawn).

So in contrast to these 'stumbling' non-Messiah-Yeshua-believing Jews, the 'strong' Gentile believers, who have been given the great grace and joy to learn about the Almighty and His Son, are in danger through a poor and perhaps even arrogant attitude, of not helping the 'stumbling', but rather by their actions actually further 'pushing' them so that they don't just 'stumble' but may fall and be 'destroyed'.

The 'strong' are pictured as walking alongside and on the same path (to God), with their 'stumbling' brothers. It may not take much of a 'push' to allow the 'stumbling' to fall rather than the 'strong' showing humility and gratitude and offering a helping hand, so that those 'stumbling' may be helped to properly 'stand' and also then be strengthened in recognizing that the Messianic Age has dawned.

Such a picture of 'stumbling' and the implied options available to those who are walking beside the stumbling ones is painted in Lev 19:14 *"You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD."*

⁸ See my article 'The Mystery of Romans: A Torah and Shema Centric View' which summaries the great work of Prof. Nanos - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/The%20Mystery%20of%20Romans%20a%20torah%20and%20shema%20centric%20view.pdf>

⁹ "The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter" Reviewed by Pamela Eisenbaum – at www.marknanos.com

¹⁰ For more on this aspect of the 'strong' and 'weak' (or stumbling) see my article 'Romans 15 and Gentile Inclusion' - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/Romans%2015%20and%20Gentile%20inclusion.pdf>

Nanos then goes on to emphatically demonstrate that Paul is speaking to these 'strong' Gentile believers about their non-Messiah believing Jewish brothers when he tells him: *"Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother."* - Romans 14:13

There is historical evidence here then that around 45-60 CE the early Messianic believers in Rome were attending the synagogues and thus mixing with both Yeshua believing Jews and those who rejected the argument that he was the end-times Messiah. There is also evidence, from the epistle to the Romans, that the Gentile members of the community of believers had a degree of arrogance, perhaps in part as a result of their ignorance of the full prophecies of the Tanakh that the Apostle Paul was trying to share with them. In their ignorance and arrogance then, they were in a sense beginning to marginalize the Jewish people in their communities who didn't share their faith in who Yeshua was.

I contend that this was much more likely the real beginnings of Replacement Theology.

Now consider how the fall of Jerusalem in 66-70 CE, and the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt around 133-135 CE would most probably have been viewed by these 'arrogant' Gentile believers, not just in Rome, but throughout the known world. They would most likely have viewed these events as confirmation that they were correct in their 'stronger' and Hellenistic approach and that the Almighty really was rejecting Judaism, and therefore in turn, natural Israel¹¹. Because the Apostle Paul had not asked these Gentile believers to convert to Judaism and become full 'Torah Observant Jews' as he was, this may well have contributed to their miss-informed understanding¹².

The division that was recorded in Luke's Acts of the Apostles (a division already in place even before Gentiles joined the community of believers from around 45 CE onwards¹³), between the Hebraic Jews on one side, and the Hellenistic Jews now with the Gentile believers on the other side, now become a chasm.

To further aggravate this growing chasm, at least in the Roman world, where Judaism was considered a legal religion (which in part involved the payment of a 'Temple tax' so that the Diaspora Jews did not have to worship the Roman 'deities'/idols), the Hellenistic/Gentile 'church' had no such privileged status and increasingly was unable to argue, because of its growing separation, that it was still part of Judaism¹⁴. That such a situation would have led to some animosity amongst the Hellenistic church members is clear from the future reality that when 'Christianity' became the official religion of Rome, these Hellenistic Christians would pass retributive laws against the Jews in their communities.

The antagonism of these early 'Christians' towards Israel and the Jews is clearly reflected in the writings of the early Church Fathers. Quoting a 'Bridges for Peace' article from 2002:

"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 favour 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.

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.

¹¹ While it's much easier for us with hindsight, to see that these events were the beginning of yet another exile, as had been prophesied, those living through these times, especially Gentiles, would not have seen this fulfillment of prophecy so easily.

See my '[Israel: Return in Belief or Unbelief](#)' for more on this aspect -

<http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/Israels%20Return%20in%20belief%20or%20unbelief.pdf>

¹² For more on the Apostle Paul's Torah observant status please see my book '[Defending the Apostle Paul: Weighing the Evidence](#)' -

<http://www.amazon.com/Defending-The-Apostle-Paul-ebook/dp/B009TLLK0U/>

¹³ From the time of the Cornelius' House event - the common consensus is that this occurred around 45 CE.

¹⁴ The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, after travelling through Israel in 50-60 AD saw Israel as composed of 4 groups, namely the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots. He did not mention the 'Christians' or 'Nazarenes' as a separate group. Thus any division between the Hebraists and Hellenists was at this time still an internal point of contention and had not yet 'split' the church.

Imperial Rome, in AD 313, issued the Edict of Milan, which granted favour 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. ... 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 Chrysostoms, 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..."¹⁵

This should be sufficient at this stage to suffice as an historical overview of how the doctrine 'Replacement Theology' developed.

We are now ready to investigate the writings of the New Testament to try to definitively establish how much scriptural validity this doctrine can muster. Again, we are seeking to establish if its 'proof-texts' are clear, direct, explicit, unambiguous and most importantly, consistent with the Tanakh, foundational text of the NT. In doing so, I will also introduce some other Hebraisms, the ignorance of which have helped promulgate this doctrine.

Scripturally:

Before we consider the NT scriptures that speak to the issue of Israel and the Jewish peoples' eternal relationship with the Almighty, let us consider what the Hebrew Bible states clearly and emphatically on this issue. We in fact read in the Tanakh, that the Land of Israel is promised as an everlasting possession for the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Genesis 17:8 *"I will give to you and to your **descendants** after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting possession**; and I will be their God."*

Gen 17:19 *"But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an **everlasting covenant** for his **descendants after him.**"*

Gen 48:4 *"and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your **descendants** after you for an **everlasting possession.**"*

As the Almighty promised the Land of Israel to the Jewish people, it should not come as a surprise that He states *"The eyes of the Lord... are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year"* (Deuteronomy 11:12) and that it is a *"Very, very good land"* (Numbers 14:7); and *"a blessed land"* (Deut. 33:13); and *"the beauty of all lands"* (Ezekiel 20:6).

Further the Tanakh declares that *"For the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden..."* (Isaiah 51:3) and that all are called to *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for the welfare of all its inhabitants. They shall prosper that love thee."* (Psalm 122:6)

¹⁵ From http://www.therefinersfire.org/replacement_theology.htm quoting a 09/05/2002 "Bridges for Peace" article.

These statements, promises and prophecies were given to Abraham and his descendants through the prophets of Israel. These men understood these statements in a very real, literal and permanent manner. There was a Land of Israel; it was/is a very blessed piece of the Earth's real estate and Israel would possess it and forever (though not without times of exile as punishment for her transgressions).

The Land of Israel is God's Land, which He gave to the Jewish people; and together they are the '*apple of His eye*'¹⁶ (Zechariah 2:8).

There are a great many scriptures that declare that The Land of Israel is God's Land and remains so. For example, even in a yet to be fulfilled end times prophecy, it is still described as God's Land: "*For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My land.* (Joel 3:1-2)

It was an absolute miracle that the State of Israel was re-formed in 1948. This miracle was a unique event in the history of the world – see <http://www.aish.com/jl/h/cc/48960356.html> and the fulfillment of prophecy – see Deut 30:35 "*The Lord will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. And the Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it.*" and Ezekiel 34:13- 16 "*And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."* and Ezek 36:23 "*For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.*"

Not only is the Land of Israel a special and eternal possession, but the people of Israel, set apart through a number of special rites and practices, are also promised a permanent and eternal relationship with the Almighty.

Gen 17:13 "*The slave born in your house and the person bought with your money must be circumcised; thus my covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant.*"

Many seem to imagine that all these eternal promises were made null and void somehow. Part of this false understanding may be where we read in Isaiah 50 a comment that may appear to state that God has 'divorced' His people. This is a rhetorical statement. The Tanakh tells over and over that the Almighty will send His People into exile for a season, but that He will eventually return and restore them.

In Deuteronomy 30 we read that God will not only return the Jews to their land, but that he will 'circumcise their hearts' so that they will be 'saved':

"4 If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of the heavens, from there will Yahweh your God gather you, and from there he will bring you back:

5 and Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and he will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers.

6 Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live." – Deut 30:4-6

This is just one of many passages in the Tanakh that demonstrate that God has not finished with the Jews and Israel and that the church has not replaced Israel. Another good example is Jeremiah 16:14-15: "*However, the days are coming,*" declares the LORD, "*when men will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers"*

Consider also passages like Jeremiah 33:

1. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time,...

4 For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that

¹⁶ '*... Jerusalem will be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. For I,' says Yahweh, 'will be to her a wall of fire around it, and I will be the glory in the midst of her. Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north,' says Yahweh; 'for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the sky,' says Yahweh. 'Come, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.' For thus says Yahweh of Armies: 'For honor he has sent me to the nations which plundered you; for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye.'* – Zec 2:4-8

were torn down ...

6 Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.

7 I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first.

8 I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.

9 And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it. **For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord. ...**

12 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: In this place that is waste, without man or beast, and in all of its cities, there shall again be habitations of shepherds resting their flocks.

13 In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the Lord.

20 "Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time,

21 then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, ...

24 "Have you not observed that these people are saying, 'The Lord has rejected the two clans that he chose'? Thus they have despised my people so that they are no longer a nation in their sight.

25 Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, 26 then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his offspring to rule over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them."

Or consider 2 Samuel 23: 1-7:

"1 Here are David's last words: "This is the speech of David the son of Jesse, the speech of the man who has been raised up, the one anointed by the God of Ya'akov, the sweet singer of Isra'el.

2 "The Spirit of Adonai spoke through me, his word was on my tongue.

3 The **God of Israel** spoke; the Rock of Israel said to me, 'A ruler over people must be upright, ruling in the fear of God; 4 like the morning light at sunrise on a cloudless day that makes the grass on the earth sparkle after a rain.'

5 **"For my house stands firm with God — he made an everlasting covenant with me.** It is in order, fully assured, that he will bring to full growth all my salvation and every desire.

6 "But the ungodly are like thorn bushes to be pushed aside, every one of them. They cannot be taken in one's hand;

7 To touch them one uses pitchfork or spear-shaft, and then only to burn them where they lie."

And from Isaiah 45:14-17,25:

" 14 Here is what YHVH says: "The earnings of Egypt, the commerce of Ethiopia, and men of stature from S'va will come over to you and become yours; they will come in chains and follow you. They will prostrate themselves before you; they will pray to you: 'Surely God is with you; there is no other, other gods are nothing.'"

15 Truly, you are a God who hides himself, God of Israel, Savior!

16 The idol-makers will be ashamed, disgraced, all of them; they will go dishonoured together.

17 But Israel, saved by YHVH with an everlasting salvation, you will never, ever, be ashamed or disgraced. ...

25 but all the descendants of Israel will find justice and glory in YHVH.

The most central and important portion of Israel is the 'mountains of Israel' (essentially the area today known as Judea and Samaria). Ezekiel prophecies in Ezek 36:

"1 "And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, '**O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord.**

2 Thus says the Lord God, "Because the enemy has spoken against you, 'Aha!' and, 'The everlasting heights have become our possession,'

3 therefore prophesy and say, "Thus says the Lord God, "For good reason they have made you desolate and crushed you from every side, that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations and you have been taken up in the talk and the whispering of the people.'"

4 Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God. Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the forsaken cities which have become a prey and a derision to the rest of the nations which are round about,

5 therefore thus says the Lord God, "Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul, to drive it out for a prey."

6 Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, "Thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and in My wrath because you have endured the insults of the nations.'

7 Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'I have sworn that surely the nations which are around you will themselves endure their insults.

8 **But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come.**

9 **For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown.**

10 **I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places will be rebuilt.**

11 **I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.**

12 **Yes, I will cause men—My people Israel—to walk on you and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.'...**

19 Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them ...

22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, **Thus says the Lord God, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.**

23 **I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.**

24 **For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.**

25 **Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.**

26 **Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

27 **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

28 **You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God."**

There are many prophecies in the Tanakh that declare the exile(s) of the children of Israel, but also, their ultimate return to the Land, to a physical place, not a spiritual entity.

Hosea 3: 45 *"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. **Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.***

Jeremiah 3:14-17

14 *"Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; **"for I am married to you.** I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.*

15 *And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.*

16 *"Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit it, nor shall it be made anymore.*

17 *"At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts."*

Jeremiah 23: 3-4

3 *"But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.*

4 *I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD."*

This is a far from exhaustive list of scriptures from the Tanakh. It should be abundantly clear that Israel will always be a special Place and People in the 'heart' of the Almighty!

In the quotes in the section on the historical development of Replacement Theology, we read how Eusebius wrote that the Church was "... *the true Israel, or "Israel according to the Spirit".* Today, it appears that most Christians have taken Eusebius' argument on board and also believe that the church is the 'true Israel', or 'spiritual Israel', or the 'Israel of God'.

The 'Israel of God': "And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. " - Gal 6:16 (ESV).

This term is unique in the Bible. Thus warning bells should immediately go off when someone tries to base doctrine on it. Dr Peter Richardson¹⁷ did a very comprehensive historical study of this term and the associated 'replacement' doctrines and states that the adoption by Christianity of Jewish prerogatives and attributes, and in particular with its assumption of the name 'Israel' took place over a long period. In fact, Richardson argues that the equating of the Church as the 'true Israel' does not occur, until the mid-second century in the works of Justin Martyr.

Clearly then, in the Apostle Paul's time no-one (including Paul who used this term) saw this term as meaning that Christianity was the 'Israel of God'.

Further though, look at the context. If Paul was referring to these Gentile converts he was addressing in Galatians as Israel, it would undermine his effort to persuade them to remain non-Israelites by resisting the offer of proselyte conversion to resolve their identity problems¹⁸.

Paul emphasizes that God has included them by way of the Messiah into Abraham's family, but he does not declare them to be members of the family of Israel. Rather, it is likely that Paul is reflecting a sentiment not unlike that expressed in Romans 11 toward his fellow 'natural' Israelites, looking for a day when there will be peace among them, rather than division.

While the whole Galatians epistle focuses on the circumcision/proselyte issue, at this point in Gal 6, Paul is not seeking to represent the fate of some of Israel, but to warn the wild olive tree (the gentiles) of the fate it/they will meet, if it/they are unfaithful.

An allegory intended to condemn Gentile arrogance can't suddenly become a source for descriptions of Jewish exclusion and replacement.

Rather, in the context that the Apostle Paul sees the coming restoration of all, through the Messiah's appearance and the prophetic inclusion of Gentiles into the Kingdom, it may well be that Paul is in some ways reflecting on Psalm 126 which foresees a time when all Israel will be properly and truly called the 'Israel of God'.

Ps 126:1-2

*"When YHWH restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations,
YHWH has done great things for them."*

Surely we can apply this Psalm to Israel today, to the miracle of 1948 and 1967, etc. In Paul's day the Land of Israel was the 'Israel of God' because the Messiah had come. Today, as Israel again awaits the Messiah, the State of Israel is truly once again 'The Israel of God'.

1 Corinthians 10:18 - Israel of/after or according to the flesh (for example, see KJV & WEB versions):

In the Eusebius quote, you will also note a reference to 'Israel according to the flesh'.

'Israel of the flesh' is a much used and maligned term. Many, in falsely applying this term, also argue that it implies there is a contra 'Israel of the Spirit'.

The term 'Israel of the Spirit' or 'spiritual Israel' is not in either the Tanakh or the NT. Ezekiel does prophesy that Israel will be given a new Spirit in Ezekiel 11, but this prophecy refers to the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel (which is of course being fulfilled before our very eyes!¹⁹).

Thus, the use of the term 'Israel of the spirit' by Christian theologians or preachers is an inference, not a reference to any explicit use of this term.

¹⁷ 'Israel in the Apostolic Church' by Dr Peter Richardson (2005)

¹⁸ Vital to understanding the context here is the appreciation of the reality that the term 'works of the law' was a term used by the Apostle Paul to refer to the rites of proselytization to Judaism. I discuss this in my book on Paul, but have also included a detailed analysis of this term on my website - see <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Works%20of%20the%20Law.pdf>

¹⁹ See '*Israel: Return in belief or unbelief*' - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/Israels%20Return%20in%20belief%20or%20unbelief.pdf>

Replacement Theology argues that the use of this term, 'Israel of the flesh' is referring to the Jewish people who have rejected the belief that Yeshua is the Messiah and have therefore (according to this argument of Hellenistic Christianity) lost their salvation and are condemned.

The term 'Israel of the flesh' does not occur in the Tanakh (OT). It is found in 1 Cor 10:18 with various translations, many of which are also interpretations.

For example:

"Consider the people of Israel: ..." (NIV)
"Consider the people of Israel: ..." (ESV)
"Look at the nation Israel; ..." (NASB)
"Behold Israel after the flesh: ..." (KJV)
"See Israel according to flesh: ..." Darby
"Consider Israel according to the flesh. ..." (WEB)

Many Christian scholars argue that the term Israel 'of', or 'according to the flesh' here implies that there is an 'opposite' of 'Israel of the Spirit'. This approach leads to a rejection of (natural) Israel, but that is not the context of 1 Cor 10:18 at all. In fact, if you look at verses 19 & 20 you should see that 'Israel of the flesh' is being spoken of in a positive way in contrast to the Gentiles. The Gentiles sacrifice to idols which does them no good, and Paul contrasts this with Israel who are involved in beneficial sacrifices to the Almighty.

1 Corinthians 10:

*"18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?
19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?
20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons."*

The Apostle Paul here is most clearly arguing against pagan sacrifices, not Jewish ones! He is not arguing that Israel, or the people of Israel, or 'Israel according to the flesh' is in any way wrong or redundant or 'replaced'. He is arguing that when they sacrifice, they do so to God and that this is good²⁰ (in contrast to the pagans being participants with demons, which is bad).

The almost identical term to 1 Cor 10:18 is used by Paul in Romans 9:3 *"my kinsmen according to the flesh"* where he again speaks positively of Israel, and does not suggest they are replaced by an 'Israel of the spirit'.

Paul does speak of 'stumbling' but he does not mean a loss of salvation here (as after all, Paul goes on to make central to his message the affirmation that *"all Israel will be restored"* in Romans 11:26).

The 'Olive Tree' allegory:

Before we look at a number of other passages that are taken to mean that the church is now Israel or that somehow the Almighty as rejected Israel, it is important to investigate if there are any very clear, explicit and positive passages in the New Testament that indicate how the church has joined or attached itself to Israel, rather than 'replaced' Israel.

One of the clearest portions of the NT in this regard in Romans 9-11. This portion is summed up best in Romans 11:13-24.

***"13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them.
15 For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?
16 If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.
17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,
18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you."
19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."
20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;***

²⁰ In the correct context and with a 'circumcised heart', the Almighty does desire sacrifices: *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar. – Psalms 51:17-19*

21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?"

In fact in Romans 9-11 Paul articulates a 2 step plan for redemption. The first step (his preaching on the Kingdom and the Messiah) brings salvation to the Gentiles and then the (projected or anticipated) jealousy engendered in Israel by the nations relationship with God brings restoration and redemption to Israel.

I also think it important to appreciate that Paul does not speak predominately of personal salvation in all of this but that, as he saw the Coming Age as imminent, he was focused on this new era of peace and justice and how he could help inaugurate it through the in-gathering of the nations (who must remain distinctly non-Israel for prophecy to find fulfilment).

Appreciating that the Apostle Paul always spoke from within the mindset of a Hebraist and within the Judaism of his day (called proto-Judaism by Prof David Flusser), is vital when trying to come to terms with the many seemingly contradictory and, at times, even anti-Torah sentiments that many scholars have argued he made. I have already written in some depth on this in my articles '*The Apostle Paul: Disciple or Fraud*' and '*Circumcision: A Step of Obedience*'²¹

I believe that it is from within the Judaism of his day that the Apostle Paul argues for a new approach to how Gentiles can enter into the family of God, which until his day had essentially only contained Israelites, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Family of God:

Paul, in coming to believe that Yeshua was indeed the Messiah, has recognized that the great Day of the Lord is about to dawn when '*all Israel will be restored*' (Ezekiel 38,39).

We can see his appreciation that the Messianic Age was dawning, and that the Coming Age is imminent, by his comments in Romans 8:18-25:

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Paul has seen, thanks in part to learning of the resurrection of Yeshua and the move of the Spirit, that the 'resurrection' (redemption of our bodies) and new creation were close at hand. Note also here his use of the terms 'sons of God' and 'children of God' and that he is applying these terms to his readers in Rome (mostly Gentile followers of Yeshua, but living/sharing with Jewish communities and attending Jewish synagogues each Sabbath to hear the words of Moses, etc.). He also uses terms like 'brothers' or 'my brothers' to accentuate this family aspect (when referring to his fellow Israelites he usually adds a qualifier to make this further distinction clear).

Paul, who is already a member of Abraham's family, also understands that from Isaiah 49²² and other prophecies that people from many nations (Gentiles) need to come into Abraham's family if the Coming Age (the Kingdom of God and the New Creation) is to fully dawn, as God had told Abraham that he would be a father of many nations (Gen 17:4).

Despite the fact that Abraham had had many other children, along with Isaac, and was thus already the father of many nations, in the Second Temple Period; in Paul's day, Abraham was considered that patriarch of the 'Jews'²³ only.

So Paul saw the crucifixion and resurrection as somehow²⁴ opening up the door so that Gentiles could enter into

²¹ Both available from www.circumcisedheart.info

²² See '*Isaiah 49: A Commentary*' - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Isaiah%2049%20-%20a%20commentary.pdf>

²³ The term 'Jews' from Judeans is generally used to apply not just to the tribe of Judah but to all the 12 sons and tribes of Jacob.

²⁴ I discuss this in a number of articles such as my '*Tripartite Salvation Paradigm*' article.

Abraham's family through Yeshua the Messiah. At the same time, he saw that they needed to remain people from many nations and not become Jewish and therefore not fully part of Israel, for the prophecies to be fulfilled.

So how could these Gentiles come into the family of God; into the family of Abraham and yet not become Jewish?

Part of the answer is 'grafting'. A graft of an orange onto a lemon tree means that orange can be supported and grow to maturity through the nutrients from the root of the tree, but it remains an orange! It does not become a lemon or replace any existing lemons (and I am not suggesting that Jews are lemons!).

Paul therefore saw that **Israel remains Israel**, and he believed that 'all Israel' would be saved (Romans 11:26 & Isaiah 59), and that many gentiles would also enter the Kingdom.

The 'olive tree graft' analogy²⁵ that Paul uses can help us see his understanding of how Gentiles are accepted into the family of God. In Romans 11 Paul states that Gentile believers (wild olive shoots or branches) are grafted into Israel (the cultivated olive tree), so that they are now part of the family of Abraham and are truly 'children of God'. So when Paul states that *'there is now neither Jew nor Gentile, ... male nor female ...'* (Gal 3:28-29), Paul is speaking of a unity in the family and purposes of God.

Men still retain their gender, the grafted 'orange' tree branch still remains an 'orange', and the Gentiles still remain Gentile. Israel still remains Israel and Gentiles who don't convert, still remain Gentiles.

The Apostle Paul does not see Gentile believers as becoming part of Israel when 'grafted' into the 'cultivated olive tree' but rather he sees them as becoming part of the 'family of Abraham' (which previously was a designation that only applied to the Jewish people) and therefore 'children of God'. In coming to believe in Yeshua as the Messiah, the Gentiles are no longer 'alienated' from the 'commonwealth of Israel' (Eph 2:12), but become part of this community under father Abraham.

Clearly, if this assessment and paradigm is correct, then the church is not Israel, and cannot ever replace Israel. The 'church' (believers in Yeshua as Messiah) is/are part of the family of God but not the whole family. As Paul states in Romans 3:29, God is not just the God of the Jews but the Gentiles as well.

To be explicit, the 'family of Abraham', are the children of Abraham through the 'promise' (through the Spirit), but this means both the natural sons and daughters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as the Gentiles who enter via the 'libation' (Ps 2:6 – an offering) of Yeshua.

In summary then, the 'olive tree graft' allegory should make it explicitly and emphatically clear that Israel can not be 'replaced' by the church. Perhaps this is why many Christian Bible Seminaries appear to gloss over this section of Romans.

Phil 3:3: 'We are the real circumcision':

The most common interpretation of Philippians 3 is that it is a polemic against either 'the circumcision' (the Jewish people) or, even more commonly, against 'Judaizers' (a term used to define Gentile converts who are arguing that gentile 'Messiah-followers' need to take on all the markers of Jewishness, that is, that they need to undertake *'the works of the law'* and be circumcised, etc.).

Given the very common Hellenistic mindset, with which most Christians and Christian scholars uncritically approach this text with, it is not at all surprisingly how it is then understood in this way. In fact, I suspect it would be very difficult for any Gentile believer attending a typical (Hellenistic) church in today's world to see this text in any other way.

The traditional view though is both anti-Semitic and supportive of Replacement Theology.

In case this is not clear consider two quotes by Gerald F. Hawthorne, in the Word Biblical Commentary (1983) on Philippians 3:2. His comments are typical of Christian commentaries on this passage.

Hawthorne states: *"The Jews were in the habit of referring contemptuously to Gentiles as dogs—unclean animals with whom they would not associate if such association could be avoided.... Paul now hurls this term of contempt back "on the heads of its authors." and "to Paul the Jews were the real pariahs that defile the holy community, the Christian church, with their erroneous teaching."*

²⁵ This analogy is much more subtle and complex than it might appear. Prof Mark Nanos presents a brilliant analysis in 'Broken Branches': A Pauline Metaphor Gone Awry? – see <http://www.marknanos.com/BrokenBranches-8-1-08.pdf>

To try to give pause for some serious reflection and reconsideration then, let us assume for a moment that the Apostle Paul is attacking 'Judaizers' here (remembering that these were people who had accepted Jesus/Yeshua as the Christ/Messiah but were arguing for circumcision, etc.). In verses 18-19 Paul goes on to say of these 'Judaizers': *"For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of the Messiah. Their end is destruction ... "*

Is Paul really saying that these 'Messiah-followers' are 'enemies of the cross of the Messiah' and that 'their end is destruction'? Surely not! Surely, there must be something wrong here with this traditional interpretation.

Hopefully, this shocking statement (within this contextual understanding) will give you the impetus to look a little deeper here. Consider the context again. Paul's letter was sent to a Romanized city, populated by many Romans and peoples from many other lands; with very strong social stratification. They were very much an agricultural and thus highly inter-dependent city where many cults were practiced and many gods, including Egyptian gods, were worshiped.

Into this pagan mix, consider that the Apostle Paul, a Torah observant Jew (as I argue in a number of other articles in some depth), had arrived to establish and support groups practicing Judaism with a belief that Yeshua was the Messiah (though the Gentiles within these groups were encouraged by Paul and the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 to remain Gentiles and not become proselytized Jews). Here though, Paul is communicating with these groups by letter.

In this context then, Paul is declaring opposition to, and revulsion toward the idolatrous cults that abounded here. He is also trying to encourage the Gentile believers to no longer have their worldview and behaviour shaped by the Roman social world in which they have grown up; but that, this now marginalized group, acquire the worldview and behaviour of those who follow the 'divine instructions' (Torah) of the One God, that is the Jews within their midst.

With this perspective let us look at a few of the terms used by Paul. For example, consider v2 *"Look out for the **dogs**, look out for the **evildoers**, look out for those who **mutilate the flesh**."*

For a start there is no literary evidence from the Second Temple Period or afterwards that in expressing ethnic prejudice, Jews called non-Jews 'dogs'. Thus the common argument that Paul is reversing this expression cannot be valid. Rather, there was in Philippi a cult or philosophical group, called in English the 'Cynics', which is based on the Greek word for dogs. As a means to demonstrate what they saw as the errors of the society of their day they tried to outdo all others in offensive animal type behavior. That is in the type of behaviour by dogs that we generally find repulsive, or at least distasteful. There is much in a dog's behaviour that we can and should emulate such as their friendship and loyalty.

Consider also the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. These prophets were clearly 'evil doers' and also mutilators of the flesh (see 1 Kings 18). Isn't it more likely then that Paul was comparing the local pagans and cults as similar to the prophets of Baal? In fact, Paul does compare himself with Elijah and invoke these very images of 'evil workers' and 'mutilators' in Romans 11:1-5. Remember also that the Torah makes it clear that mutilation of the flesh is not to be practiced by the Jews. See for example Lev 19:28 *"You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD."* and therefore, there is no way that Judaism considered circumcision as a form of 'mutilation' of the flesh, but rather, an act that brought a form of healing, as it declared that the male child was now an Israelite and a member of God's family.

Let us look at Philippians 3:18-19 *"For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Messiah. Their end is destruction, **their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.**"* and in particular the terms 'their god is their belly' and 'they glory in their shame', which are used to identify the people, behaviour and cults that Paul is condemning.

Consider the events described by Luke in Acts 16:12,16, 19-21: *"12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. ...*

16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling....

19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

20 And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city.

21 They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."

The slave girl is said to have a spirit of python²⁶ from the cult of Apollo (the special god for Augustus, who won the battle for him at, of all places Philippi). This divination was also called 'belly talking', and could thus be described as a 'god in

²⁶ see 'pneuma pyhona' at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unclean_spirit

their belly. The Cynics doggish behaviour involved behaving in the most animalistic and shameful manner (when practiced by people) to expose what they saw as the hypocrisy of their society. Thus this group of local pagans could be described as *'glorifying in their shame'*.

Now we are ready to look again at verse 3-17. In Phil 3:3 it now appears that Paul is contrasting these local pagan practices and beliefs with the Way (Ps 119) of the Jews (note also in the story from Acts 16 that he was accused of pushing Jewish customs), which involved *'serving God by spirit'* instead of putting their faithfulness in the flesh as these pagan cults do.

It is also important to remember that when Paul speaks favourably of the Abrahamic covenant, that it was the Abrahamic covenant that enshrined male circumcision as an eternal marker of faithfulness.

Now, I think a re-reading of the whole chapter should indicate that, in speaking of his historical high standing within the Judaism of his day, Paul is including his addressees, the Gentile 'Messiah-followers' of Philippi, into the Jewish community, but then even further elevating his, and their status, because they have recognized and embraced the Messiah of Israel and are endeavouring to live with the same faithfulness as Yeshua to the One True God.

Let us turn specifically to verse 3-7:

"3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit²⁷, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ."

So now hopefully it should be clear than when Paul states 'we are the circumcision' (note he does not say 'we are the spiritual circumcision' or 'the true circumcision' or 'the circumcision of the heart'), he is NOT stating that the Church of God is now the circumcision and has replaced the people of Israel as 'the circumcision'.

I believe when he states *'we are the circumcision'* he is speaking to his Gentile audience and identifying himself with his fellow Jewish followers of Yeshua, who could all boast in their heritage but no longer do so because they have seen the Messiah, the King of Israel and instead boast in him.

He is thus encouraging his Gentile audience that they now may also have great confidence that through the Messiah, they have now been grafted into the commonwealth of the 'circumcision', the chosen people of God.

With this understanding of this chapter, it is no longer seen as seriously anti-Semitic. Also, it can no longer be used as an argument for Replacement Theology, which is exactly what is normally promoted through the traditional understanding and perspective²⁸.

The Jewish theologian, Prof. Mark Nanos, addresses the issues of Phil 3:3 extremely well. He argues that the solution lies in seeing Paul's work as the writings of a Torah observant Jew from an inter/intra Jewish position.

This is brilliantly summed up in this quote from one of his articles below:

"Scholars should consider approaching the historical and rhetorical situations for interpreting Paul's texts on thoroughly inter/intra-Jewish instead of inter/intra-Christian models, and they should be careful not to mix them, which can undermine the effort. There is good historical reason to explore these approaches, since Paul and the other early believers in Jesus were Jewish and understood what they were doing to be Jewish.

I think it likely that they thought of themselves in terms of a coalition, a Jewish subgroup or subgroups engaged in a temporary task on behalf of Israel, and not founding a new religion or sect that was in some way less Jewish.

*These approaches (and they) have a better chance of yielding the desired ideological benefit, to the degree that they consistently recognize **the issues at dispute in Paul's letters did not revolve around the question of whether or to what extent Jewish norms such as Torah applied, but to how they applied to the new reality he claimed his groups***

²⁷ or, as some codices have it, 'who serve God the Spirit,' or 'the Spirit of God'

²⁸ For a much more in-depth presentation I recommend "Judaizers"? "Pagan" Cults? Cynics?: Reconceptualizing the Concerns of Paul's Audience from the Polemics in Philippians 3:2, 18-19" by Prof Mark Nanos – see <http://www.marknanos.com/Cynics-In-Phil3-May11.pdf> as well as "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog" also at marknanos.com. I am very indebted to Prof Mark Nanos for much of the argument here on Philippians as well as on Romans 11.

represented; namely, the dawning of the age to come within the present age, so that Israelites and members of the nations worshipped the Creator God of all humankind as one, however, remaining both Israelites and representatives of the nations when doing so.

When the shared term is Jewishness, as it is in intra-Jewish terms, the contrast shifts from discussing whether there is something problematic with Jewishness, to whether or not a person or group believes in Jesus Christ, and the associated claims for what difference that makes. In other words, unlike when the shared term is Christ, the difference between two groups does not fall along a line differentiating levels of respect for Jewish identity and Torah, since Jewishness is likely upheld to be essential by Jewish groups.

Imagining the dispute between and within Jewish group boundaries keeps the focus on the meaning of faith in Jesus for themselves, and others, as Jewish groups. Another benefit of this conceptualization is that difference is respected. The intra-Jewish construction allows the historical participants as well as the interpreter to respect that having a different opinion about the meaning of Jesus Christ or of appeals to him to legitimate social change within Jewish groups need not represent value judgments that one decision or the other is better, just different.

As I understand Paul, he upheld the Jewish notion that, although social (and biological) differences remain in the present age, that is, there remains Jews and non-Jews in Christ, the discrimination usually associated with such differences should not prevail, just as is expected to be the case in the age to come, when even the wolf and the lamb will dwell together.

This seems to me to be a sensible and noble ideal for how to approach each other today in Jewish/Christian relations' terms, whether sharing his belief that this age has dawned in Jesus Christ, or not."²⁹

- from <http://www.marknanos.com/SBL-03-Inter-Christian-Prob.pdf>

Returning briefly to the first phrase in Phil 3:3 'We are the circumcision ...', note here that Paul did not write, "we are the Christians," or "the Christ-followers," or even "the church"!

Prof Mark Nanos points out that the traditional Christian interpretation of Philippians 3 fails to answer a number of questions, including the following:

1. *"Why would he identify himself and his audience as "the circumcision" without qualifying the term if he meant to degrade this specifically Jewish rite as merely "mutilation" in the preceding statement?*
2. *And when Paul does qualify it in the following explanation, why does he do so in positive terms, as representative of marking those who live unto the Lord as the circumcised ones?*
3. *Moreover, in v. 5, why does he choose to include his own circumcision at eight days old in his catalog of honored identity alongside of righteousness according to Torah, perpetuating the historical Jewish perspective on this particular cut as something wholly different than mutilation, but also not as if he has changed its usage to signify something spiritual or broadly applied to all Christ-followers? "*

After 'we are the circumcision' in v3, there are 3 parts; 'serving God in/by spirit'; 'glorying in Messiah' and 'not trusting in, or persuading by flesh'. These are all terms that other Jewish groups could also lay claim to. In fact, not only back then, but also even now in fact, if we appreciate that the term Messiah, or 'Anointed One', can be applied to other men besides Yeshua.

So I believe that the Apostle Paul in stating 'We are the circumcision' is stating a claim that the group to which he belongs is a Jewish group, but (in the context of the whole epistle) one which acknowledges Yeshua as the Messiah. This group is contrasted most strongly with non-Jewish, non-Messiah following based identities and ways of living.

The Apostle Paul applies the 'circumcision' label and rite to his group. Paul's language here reflects the Maccabean approach, as seen in a number of verses in 1 and 2 Maccabees such as 1 Macc 2 "45: Then Mattathias and his friends went round about, and pulled down the altars: 46: And what children soever they found within the coast of Israel uncircumcised, those they circumcised valiantly."

As I argued in my 'Circumcision: A Step of Obedience?' article, Paul, like the Pharisees (in Acts 15) uses circumcision here as a metonym for Judaism. What is new though is that Paul (and the Jerusalem Council) argue that Gentiles are part of this Jewish community, this 'Pauline Judaism' (i.e. Jewish halacha) to use Mark Nanos' term, is an observance of the way (halacha) without needing to be physically circumcised and become Jewish.

²⁹ see also <http://www.marknanos.com/Phil3Dogs-Reverse-6-27-07.pdf>

The Apostle Paul believes they should be accepted into the fellowship of the synagogue as members of equal standing. In the same way that women are included in the 'circumcision group' though not literally circumcised, Paul is also including the non-Jewish and non-circumcised followers of Yeshua in this group.

In verse 4 -14, Paul indicates that he is still a Jew, that he still most faithfully practices Judaism, but that he does not see the social advantage that this would normally give him as of any great value compared with the equal standing that all followers of Yeshua as the Messiah, both 'circumcised' Jews and 'non-circumcised' Gentiles now share.

1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

Another problematic portion of the NT is 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. I recently re-read this passage and it almost literally jumped out at me that:

- 1) in no way did the Apostle Paul write this, and
- 2) that it was written after 70 CE (- the original epistle to the Thessalonians was written circa 51 CE).

Why is this important and what does this mean? Firstly the passage in question (many include v 13 as well):

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

*14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did **from the Jews,***

15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind

16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

These verses are wrong, in that 'the Jews' (i.e. all Jews at the time) did not kill Jesus, though some of the Jewish leaders were clearly complicit in his death. Also the latest evidence indicates that synagogue 'expulsions' ('drove us out') did not occur until well after 70 CE (remember this is supposedly the Apostle Paul speaking here in, or very close to, the year 51 CE. These verses are also very exaggerated and anti-Semitic, for example in labeling all Jewish people as killers. On top of all this, the author appears to glorify in the suffering of the Nation of Israel. It appears that the last part of verse 16 is most probably a reference to the Fall of Jerusalem. If so, this would also indicate the author was not the Apostle Paul, a Pharisee who loved his people and his nation, who was most proud to be part of the 'circumcision'.

No wonder I know plenty of committed God-fearers; as well as Torah observant Jews; and even followers of Yeshua, who reject the Apostle Paul as a fraud and a traitor to the faith of Israel, the proto-Judaism of his time!

So let's look a little more deeply at this passage. After much scholarly research and debate, especially 'form-critical' work 1 Thess 1:10 has been generally accepted as the end of the 'thanksgiving' section and 1 Thess 2:17 as the beginning of the 'apostolic parousia'. Also then, 1 Thess 2:1-12 has emerged as the initial section of the 'body' of this letter, leading quite naturally to 2:17 and leaving 1 Thess 2:13-16 as an intrusion, that is, as not 'fitting in'; as not an original portion of the letter.

Scholars have argued that this is a more plausible explanation than seeing 1 Thess 2:13 as the beginning of a second letter that has been joined to the first letter by a later editor. Some scholars³⁰ have shown that the content of 1 Thess 2:15-16 appears contemporary with the perspective of several post-70 CE Matthean passages.

That is, these scholars have given a good argument that this added portion was written some 20+ years (post 70 CE) after the original epistle.

It has been mainly through modern linguistic techniques that scholars have been able to more conclusively show that 1 Thess 2:13-16 was not part of the original letter and was added by a different author. As I am no linguist, I will not attempt to even explain how this is done. For those who wish to follow-up on this though, I recommend '1 Thess 2:13-16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation' by Daryl Schmidt, Journal of Biblical Literature (June 1 1983).

A dissenting view argues that, given that there are no ancient manuscripts which exclude these verses; that they can be seen in some ways to fit logically and stylistically into the epistle's context; and that as the strong language here is consistent with other statements by Paul against his opponents, the Pauline authorship of this text should be presumed.

It is also possible that 'the Jews' being referred to here was not the whole nation of Israel, but just the Judeans. These

³⁰ Pearson for example – see Birger Pearson: '1 Thessalonians 2:13-16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation' HTR 64 -1971

possibilities, even if correct, would in no way change the shocking historical impact of these strongly anti-Semitic words.

In summary then, some consensus has been established that the content of 1 Thess 2:13-16 does not fit well into 1 Thessalonians, nor into Pauline thought in general, and that formally this section intrudes into the overall structure of the whole letter. Also, the linguistic evidence suggests that it did not come from the same author as the rest of the letter, but is rather built around an amalgamation of Pauline expressions.

Scholars therefore politely call it an interpolation (- added text into a passage). I think it would be fairer and probably more accurate to call it a corruption; a sinister, evil, inexcusable perversion.

Why? Because it is passages like this in the New Testament that have directly led to false understandings and interpretations of scripture; which in turn have been used to justify a great many pogroms and evil perpetrated against the Jewish people over the last 1900+ years.

It is because of corruptions of the NT like 1 Thess 2:14-16 that minimally result in 'Replacement Theology' and anti-Semitic attitudes and behaviour. Believing that the vitriolic and virulent words here are Scripture and hence reflect the mind of God leads some otherwise decent and well-meaning Christians to take a stance that is very un-godly and unhelpful to say the least.

I see Christian scholars, even scholars of considerable standing, who believe that they are not anti-Semitic and don't subscribe to Replacement Theology (for example, that the 'Israel of God' is the church) and yet appear to read this text without flinching!

It is way past the hour! It is time that Christians recognized that many of their doctrines are not only wrong but lead to great evil because they have been developed through a Hellenistic mindset. It is time for Christians to reject Hellenistic Christianity and begin to learn to view the Bible with Hebraic eyes and as a result to more accurately and honestly see the One True God and His eternal purposes and plans.

Ephesians 2:11-18

Specifically, Eph 2:11-12 and Eph 2:19-21

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—

*12 remember that you were at that time separated from Messiah, **alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ...***

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,

20 Messiah Yeshua himself being the cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

While scholars seriously question whether the book of Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul, they question even more the understanding that it was a letter addressing a specific group and a specific issue. Without the opening and closing sections (1:1-2 and 6:21-24) Ephesians reads more like a sermon or exhortation addressed to Christian communities in general.

Note that in verse 12 that Paul tells these Gentiles that prior to learning about the Messiah and coming into the faith, they were separated from the commonwealth of Israel (i.e. they were 'aliens' or 'strangers'). Note here that Paul is not applying the category of 'aliens' to ANY Jewish people. Note also that therefore, by inference, all (the commonwealth) of Israel are part of the covenants (note also the plural in covenants³¹) of promise, and that this in turn implies that the commonwealth of Israel have both hope in this world and a relationship with the Almighty.

Paul goes on to argue that the crucifixion and resurrection of Yeshua (it was a banner, or ensign, a miraculous event – see Isaiah 11:10) that allowed these 'aliens' (Gentiles) to come into the family of God ('the household of God' in v19) and gain both hope and God. Note also that while these Gentile believers are now no longer separated from Israel, the Apostle Paul does not say they are Israel.

Citizens of the household of God, and therefore children of Abraham, but not 'sons of Israel', not Israelites.

³¹ There is no such thing as the 'Old Covenant', but there are many covenants that YHVH made with Israel – see 'Righteousness Before Messiah' for details - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Righteousness%20before%20Messiah.pdf>

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul is speaking to both Jew and Gentile who now 'love God'. In Eph 2:11 though, he changes who he is addressing, to specifically address the Gentile believers who have become 'saints'.

So in verse 15, Paul is speaking directly to Gentile believers when he states: *"For he is our peace; the one making the both one; destroy(ing) the enmity in his flesh and the dividing wall which separates, putting an end (to) the law of commandments in dogmatics; in order to create in himself one out of two into one (brand) new man – making peace. And reconciling both in one body to God through the cross putting to death the enmity."* (translated from the earliest Greek Manuscripts by Frank Selch)

We can see two significant objects here; the 'dividing wall' and 'the law of commandments in dogmatics'. I believe the Apostle Paul is arguing here that Yeshua's crucifixion somehow removed the 'wall' as well as some regulations that separated Jew and Gentile. I believe the wall was the flesh (circumcision vs un-circumcision – the physical difference and barrier) and 'the law of commandments in dogmatics' or the 'traditions of men', NOT any part of the Holy Scriptures, especially NOT the Ten Words.

Matthew Janzen has a good insight on the 'dividing wall': *"... Paul alludes to a "middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile. This was a literal wall that Paul uses in a figurative sense to make his point. The Jews decreed, (they made a dogma), which stated that if a Gentile crossed over the wall separating the Court of the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles surrounding the temple, that they would be immediately killed. This was not a commandment of Yahweh. In fact, Yahweh never even commanded such a wall to exist. That dogma created a hatred between the two peoples which Messiah destroyed creating one new man and so, making peace."*³²

Alternatively, just consider for a moment that here in Ephesians 2 the apostle Paul did mean the 10 Words and all that defines the Jewish people as God's chosen, was done away with to create the new man, why then does Paul go on to say in v19-22 that we (Gentiles) are now no longer strangers but fellow citizens of the household of God, etc. a household built on the apostles and prophets who spoke for and in the covenants of the Tanakh.

Paul is consistent here with Romans in alluding to our being grafted into the cultivated Olive Tree, not in removing their identity.

1 Peter 2:9-10

"9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

10 who in time past were no people, but now are God's people, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy"

Look at Deut 7:6 *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."*

And, even more specifically, Ex 19:5-6:

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

This is very similar language and in making the, seemingly obvious, inference that Peter is speaking to Gentile believers here, it seems clear he is now calling them Israel. Let us delve a little deeper though. The passage in Deuteronomy makes it clear that it was God who separated the Jewish people (made them holy) to Him. It was nothing they did and therefore there was nothing they could do to lose this holiness and special designation.

In the Exodus passage, it may appear that the designation and holiness is now dependent upon Israel's obedience. Moses though spoke these words to Israel and they were fulfilled. Since that day they have been times when the nation as a whole did walk in disobedience and were removed from the Land and from being a nation for a season. The Almighty would always bring them back though. He has once again brought them back (in 1948) and there can be little doubt that this designation is valid to this very day. Thus, Israel remains to this day THE holy nation and kingdom of priests. No other 'nation' can take this mantle.

So when we look again at the 1 Peter passage, we see no reference to the audience that Peter is addressing here as becoming part of this holy nation, and they can't possibly have replaced them in this eternal covenant.

So it seems there are two possibilities. Either Peter is speaking to Jewish believers or using these terms as an allusion or

³² From <http://www.ministersnewcovenant.org/>

allegory in some sense.

Let us consider these choices. Look at the introduction of this epistle in 1 Peter 1 in both 'Young's Literal Translation (YLT) and the Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB):

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the choice sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," (YLT)

"Shimon Kefa a Shliach of Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach Yehoshua to HaBechirim (the Chosen ones [2:4,6 9]), to the Exiled ones of the Golus, Sojourners living as aliens in the Diaspora, scattered in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," (OJB)

The terms 'dispersion' and 'Diaspora' refer to Jewish people scattered amongst the nations. Peter was the Apostle to the Jews and it appears here that he is in fact addressing Jewish believers not Gentile believers.

In fact, 1 Peter 1:10-11 is perhaps one of the clearest indications as to who Peter is primarily addressing in this letter.

1 Peter 1:10 -11 *"Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of the Messiah in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the subsequent glories."*

The prophets of the Tanakh did not prophesy to, or for, the Gentiles but to and for Israel. It was always to Israel that the Messiah, the great Prophet and Redeemer was to come. Yeshua himself stated unequivocally that he had come for the 'lost sheep of the House of Israel'. Not for Gentiles, at least not directly, unless they were to bind themselves to Israel.

If you compare your favourite translation with the Orthodox Jewish Bible version of 1 Peter 2:9-10, you can clearly see many references from the Tanakh that in their original context were most definitely speaking of/to Israel:

But you are an AM NIVCHAR ("a chosen people" YESHAYAH 43:20; SHEMOT 6:7), a MAMLECHET KOHANIM ("a kingdom of priests, royal priests" Ex 19:6), a GOY KADOSH ("a holy nation" Ex 19:6), an AM SEGULLAH ("a people of treasured possession" Ex 19:5; Mal 3:17), for this purpose: that you may declare the wondrous deeds of the One who gave you the kri'ah (calling) and summoned you out of choshech into his marvelous ohr [Isa 43:21; 42:12]. 10You, who once were LO AMI ("not My people" Hos 1:9) but now AMI ATAH ("My people you are" Hos 2:25), the AM Hashem ("the people of G-d"), the ones having not received rachamim, but now having received rachamim (Hos 2:25).

In any serious approach to the Bible, we need to first read Scripture in its original context and determine to whom the writer/prophet was speaking. Only once this is clearly identified and understood, can we then look to see if there may be a further application of this Scripture to another time and place and people. A great many errors have been introduced into the 'Christian' movement through scholars like Augustine taking an allegorical approach to the Tanakh and ignoring the foundational and core message.

This approach is most noticeable amongst those who argue for Replacement Theology. They are very quick to apply some scriptural reference in the Tanakh, that was most definitely given to the people of Israel and instead somehow imagine that the Jewish people have forfeited this Scripture and that it instead was given to the 'church'. The Almighty may have punished his people (Israel) for a season and at various times through history, but He has never forsaken them because it is *'for His Name's sake'* that He remains eternally committed to His promises to them. This is why they are back in their Land, His 'Holy Land', today³³.

1 Peter was apparently written around 63 AD, just before the Roman siege of Jerusalem. If the Apostle Peter was like Yeshua aware of the terror that was to come upon Jerusalem and Israel in 70 CE, his warnings in 1 Peter fit the context of preparing the Jewish believers for the trials to come. Therefore, the conclusion that the Apostle Peter is arguing in 1 Peter 2:9-10 that the 'church' has replaced Israel is not valid.

The Gospel of John:

It is very difficult to address and challenge any doctrine of Christianity because many have a very long heritage and a sizable following. Whether they are in actuality, contradictory and mistaken or not, it is always a difficult challenge for any man and woman to be called to re-assess and re-consider their cherished views. This is perhaps nowhere more evident than with the Gospel of John.

While the Synoptics, the Gospels of Luke, Mark and Matthew can be read as historical narratives, the Gospel of John calls

³³ For more on the Land issue see my article 'Israel: Return in belief of unbelief' at www.circumcisedheart.info

for an evaluation of the events of Yeshua's life, death and resurrection on a different level and in a very different way.

While we may wish to consider all the books of the New Testament as separate from, and not impacted by, the culture, events and personalities of the time and place in which they were written this is, not the reality. Whatever the original versions may have said, the redacted versions that we now have certainly show this influence. This contextual reality is evident in John's Gospel.

While scholars generally agree that starting with the epistles of Paul, all the books of the New Testament were first composed between 49 CE and 68 CE, with the Gospel of John, the epistles of John and the Book of Revelation written possibly written in the late 80's to mid 90's³⁴.

Without doubt, the followers of Yeshua in the early days had all been Jewish with the addition of the Gentiles only beginning, some 12-15 years after the resurrection, at around 45 CE (the Cornelius house event). With the Destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and the killing of some 1 million Jews in Israel, Roman hostility toward Judaism and Jewish religious movements was very high.

Into this Roman culture with a great hostility towards all things Jewish, John writes a Gospel which (in the translations we have) tries to appeal to a Roman audience. Yeshua is presented as the ruler of the world (*'I have overcome the world'*), and the King even before his death and resurrection. He is presented as a strong champion who does not suffer through the trials of his execution (unlike the descriptions in the Synoptic Gospels). More significantly though, is the very strong anti-Semitic emphasis, to the point where John has Yeshua stating that those Jews who delivered him to the Romans, to Pilate to be sentenced to death, had committed a greater sin than those who sentenced him and execute him³⁵!

While the redaction of the New Testament over the last 1900+ years has introduced an anti-Semitic flavour and phraseology to virtually every book, John's Gospel then perhaps stands out as the most blatantly anti-Semitic of all.

To help appreciate this aspect of John's Gospel, it is enlightening to read the words of Jewish theologians who have taken the time to try to have an in-depth relationship with this Gospel. One such Jewish expert is Adele Reinhartz, Full Professor, Department of Classics and Religious Studies, University of Ottawa.

Here is a short summary of some of her thoughts from her book *'Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John'* (2001):

"The Jews are from the outset portrayed as the people who reject Jesus (1.11), persecute him (5.16), seek his death (8.40), expel believers from the synagogue (9.22), plot Jesus' death (9.49-52), and persecute his followers (16.2). Furthermore, both the Gospel narrator and the Johannine Jesus employ dualistic language that contrasts Spirit and flesh, light and darkness, life and death, salvation and eternal damnation, God and Satan, belief and non-belief. Those who believe Jesus to be the Messiah and Son of God are firmly associated with the positive element in each pair, whereas those who reject him — epitomized by — the Jews! — are associated with the negative elements. The most extreme example appears in John 8, in which Jesus declares to his Jewish audience: — You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires (8.44). This accusation has contributed to anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism from ancient times to the present day."

Let us consider her comment on John 8:44. As almost all NT Biblical scholars accept that John 8:1-11 (the story of the woman caught in adultery³⁶) should not be in the Gospel of John, we can start at John 8:12 to try to determine who Yeshua was speaking to in verse 44. We then read that he is speaking to 'the Jews' which includes some Pharisees, and even the Jews that believed in him. Nowhere does the text state that he was addressing the Jewish leadership; the Sadducees and Temple priests. The Pharisees whom he addressed were not the Jewish leadership. In fact many of the Pharisees were his followers.

Thus, as Prof Reinhartz argues John has Yeshua accusing either all Jews, or at least some of the Pharisees, and not just the Jewish leadership of being children of the devil. Many of these same Jews were most likely 'blameless before Torah' like the Apostle Paul and therefore righteous and 'saved'!

There is something clearly problematic here. Let us look though at John's self-declared purpose for writing this Gospel. It was to demonstrate and declare that Yeshua was the Messiah, and that this revelation would bring about salvation for his

³⁴ See *'Chronological and Background Charts of the NT'* by H Wayne House (p 16). There is though also strong scholarly support for the Book of Revelation, to have been written as early as 65-66 CE.

³⁵ John 19:11 *'Jesus answered, "You would have no power at all against me, unless it were given to you from above. Therefore he who delivered me to you has greater sin."'*

³⁶ For details see my article 'The Pericope Adulterae' at <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/The%20Pericope%20Adulterae.pdf>

readers.

John 20:31 “...but these are written so that you may believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

It would appear then that John’s core message was to declare that the Jewish Prophet and Messiah had arrived. This message is, in the first instance, a purely Jewish revelation. It was the Jewish people who had been promised a deliverer, a saviour. It was therefore to the Jewish people that John was first declaring and repeating³⁷ this revelation.

To use John’s Gospel then to argue that the church has replaced Yeshua’s fellow Israelites, is clearly invalidated by this context and purpose, unless the original autograph of this Gospel was not after-all inspired by the Almighty.

Another passage of the Apostle Paul’s epistles that is very often used to promote some degree of ‘Replacement Theology’ is Galatians 4:22-31.

Galatians 4:22-31 – The Hagar/Sarah allegory

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.

23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

27 For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband."

28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

29 But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman."

31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Almost universally Christian commentators and even the Christian ‘man in the street’ will jump to the conclusion that, as ‘Christians are ‘free’ and that the reference to Mt Sinai must refer to the ‘Old Covenant’, those within Judaism must be the slaves who need to be ‘cast out’!

As part of this cursory, but seriously flawed interpretation, they assume that the two covenants contrasted here are the Mosaic covenant and the New Covenant through Messiah Yeshua, and that the Mosaic covenant is being ‘cast out’ by the Apostle Paul! Again, a serious pre-supposition of Replacement Theology.

As I have already mentioned though, the Letter to the Galatians has a central theme of ‘circumcision’ as a metonym for the rites of proselytization (to becoming Jewish). In summary, the Apostle Paul is arguing in this letter that Jews remain Jewish and Gentile believers remain Gentile³⁸.

So, if these Christian arguments mentioned are correct, we are being asked to believe that right in the middle of Paul’s dissertation on Jews remaining Jewish, and Gentile believers remaining Gentiles, he suddenly contradicts himself and sets out to denigrate the cultivated Olive Tree (which he has spoken so positively about in Romans 9-11), and its Mosaic Covenant and instead equate it to Ishmael’s son-ship, where it appears Abraham failed in not trusting God? This seems highly unlikely!

What some scholars instead argue is that this discussion is a comparison between 2 different groups of Gentile believers and two different pathways, or attempts to become son’s of The Most High God.

Contextually, it is important to appreciate that the Apostle Paul in this letter, is primarily addressing Gentiles. Josephus [Antiquities, 16.62] testifies that many Jews resided in Ancyra in Galatia [but that] the majority in the Galatian churches were Gentiles.

A number of passages help establish this historical fact.

³⁷ It is possible that John’s Gospel was written as late as 96 CE, some 60+ years after the resurrection event.

³⁸ For a great book on Galatians, please see ‘The Irony of Galatians’ by Mark Nanos

Gal 1:13-14 "For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers."

Here Paul appears to be informing his Galatian listeners regarding his previous state and in using terms like 'among my people' it seems clear he is speaking to others who are 'not my people', that is to Gentiles.

Gal 4:18-19 "It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Messiah is formed in you!"

Note here also that Paul refers to his readers as 'my little children' – as 'Apostle to the Gentiles', this also indicates that those he is addressing are Gentiles.

Gal 4:8-9 "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?"

Again, the phrase 'formerly, when you did not know God' would also appear to indicate that his listeners were not Jews and had therefore, previously been ignorant regarding YHVH.

To repeat, I recommend that you read the whole of Galatians in one sitting and see that the context both before and after the challenging section of Galatians 4:22-31 is focused on circumcision (a metonym, or shorthand, for becoming Jewish) and, as already indicated, is speaking to Gentiles about the issue of circumcision. Another term that Paul uses for the process of becoming Jewish is 'works of the law'³⁹ (see Gal 3:10 for example). Paul is arguing in Galatians that Gentiles, in accepting the Messiahship of Yeshua and in learning about the One True God, they should NOT become Jewish proselytes.

So in this context, in Galatians 4:22-31, the Apostle Paul makes a commentary on the story of Ishmael and Isaac. What I believe Paul is doing here is comparing Ishmael to the Galatian Gentiles who had accepted the dogma that they must undergo a ritual proselyte conversion, through means of 'circumcision, etc.' in order to be reckoned covenant members with Israel. Like Ishmael, Paul says that they are "born according to the flesh;" (Galatians 4:23) specifically, the circumcision of their flesh. That is, their entry into the Kingdom is via a ritual, via a work rather than via faith in the saving power and redemptive act of the Messiah. This had been the way most God-fearers had joined the 'family of God', which was represented by Israel. This is in no way denigrating the acceptability of this choice, only that it does not satisfy the eschatological requirements of the dawning of the Coming Age that the Apostle Paul is so passionate about.

According to the rabbinic dogma, a proselyte through ritual conversion is called a "son of Abraham." Ishmael was indeed a son of Abraham, but he was not the 'promised' son of Abraham. Instead, he was a son by nature and by law.

Paul then compares these God-fearing Galatian proselytes, to children birthed from the covenant at Mount Sinai, where the Torah (law) was given. They are sons of Hagar and are "under the law", or more clearly and correctly are 'under the works of the law' because they have predicated or based their salvation upon observing a "work of the law;" that is, circumcision and the other procedures required to become Jewish proselytes. These Galatian proselytes were attending the synagogues in Galatia where the Apostle Paul's letters were being read. They were not necessarily also believers in Yeshua as the Messiah.

In this analogy, the Apostle Paul compares Isaac to the believing Gentiles who predicate or base their salvation and covenant status upon faith. Isaac is the son of the promise and God's chosen heir of Abraham through which he will establish Israel. As such, these believing Gentiles are the sons of Sarah, Abraham's "son by the free woman through the promise" (Galatians 4:23).

They are sons of Sarah in that they have based their salvation upon faith in the promise of God. They are trusting in the Gospel message that the Apostle Paul has shared regarding Yeshua and the Coming Age; they are trusting that Yeshua is the 'shoot of Jesse' of Isaiah 11 and therefore, the 'ensign' that they can trust in.

Therefore, the two covenants being contrasted are not the New Covenant and the Mosaic/Sinai Covenant. They are the Abrahamic covenant and the Sinai covenant, both of which are parts of Torah.

Furthermore, the contrast is not between Jews and Christians, it is between Gentile believers who choose to undergo

³⁹ <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Works%20of%20the%20Law.pdf>

ritual conversion to Judaism and Gentile believers who do not.

Paul says of those who rely on faith and the 'circumcision' of Yeshua (Col 2:11), "And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise." - Galatians 4:28

Note that most of the older manuscripts and even most of the newest translations read 'these women are two covenants', NOT 'these women are THE two covenants'. The difference here is that the addition of the word 'the' implies a contrast is being made between the Mosaic covenant and the New or more accurately Re-newed Covenant through the Messiah.

Note also the reference in the quote "Rejoice, O barren one ..." is to Isaiah 54. This is a psalm about the great restoration of the Jewish people to their God and to their Land.

For Paul to use this reference to the future blessing of Israel and then proceed to denigrate Israel just doesn't make any sense at all (if the traditional understanding is employed).

If rather, Paul is speaking of how Gentiles who are 'children of promise' will share in this great blessing of Israel's, because they have been grafted into the cultivated olive tree, then it makes sense that Paul would quote this uplifting and encouraging passage, particularly to any believers facing persecution as the Philippians were and as the Galatians at this time were also, most likely from Jews of the mind and zeal that was in Paul before his recognition of the Messiah (Gal 1:23).

So I believe that the Apostle Paul appears to be arguing that Gentile believers can come into the 'family of Abraham' just as Ishmael and his descendants were part of the family of Abraham and children of God, without needing to become Israelites.

In fact, a Jewish Midrash argues that after Sarah died, Abraham remarried Hagar and thus Ishmael would indeed have received some part of the physical inheritance of Abraham. Midrash Gen. Rabbah 61:4 argues that Keturah (Gen 25:1) was actually Hagar.

In the same sense then, Gentile followers of Yeshua receive an inheritance in becoming part of the 'family of Abraham' and children of God, even though they need not become Jewish.

So again, this passage, like all the others discussed, is not advocating any form of Replacement Theology.

Counter Arguments:

I believed I have now addressed the historical development of 'Replacement Theology' and looked at the main NT scriptures that have typically been used to argue for this erroneous doctrine.

Now let us look at a few of the typical arguments presented by Hellenistic Christian preachers, theologians, and Bible students to support this doctrine. Many of these arguments show a very clear lack of Hebraic understanding; are often quiet ambiguous, as they have not seen the internal contradictions that often abound in their arguments, but are also quite often, legalistic, rigid and damning of any who would dare to disagree with them.

Counter Argument #1:

Take this short quote from a website article that argues that: *"Modern versions have already broadened the way for multitudes to accept counterfeit scriptures. Fundamentalists have been the last stronghold of orthodoxy, determined to resist the apostasy and persistently holding to the KJV based on the Received Text. However, now there is evidence that Fundamentalists, like many Evangelicals and Charismatics, are coming under the baleful influence of the Hebrew Roots Movement."* (which they argue is 'a stepping stone to the occult')⁴⁰! – from <http://watch.pair.com/peshitta.html>

Quote:

"Until this glorious revelation of Jesus Christ to the remnant of Israel, the proper attitude of the Christian Church toward the Jews during the present dispensation is clearly stated in Scripture, as expounded in William R. Newell's commentary on Romans 11:

"In Acts 28, Paul officially shuts the door to national Israel. 'Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers,'-- quoting this Isaiah Six and declaring: "Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they also will hear."

"Since this awful use of Isaiah 6, the gospel has no Jewish bounds or bonds whatever! And it is presumption and

⁴⁰ A typical argument of Hellenistic Christianity is to view the King James Version as totally without error, even though most scholars today accept that many 'modern versions' are actually closer to the original texts.

*danger, now, to give the Jews any other place than that of common sinners! 'No distinction between Jew and Greek,' says God. Those that preach thus, have God's blessing. Those that would give any special place whatever to Jews, since that day, do so contrary to the gospel; and we fear, for private advantage. Tell Jews the truth! Their Messiah was offered to their nation, and rejected. **And God is not offering a Messiah to Israel now, but has Himself rejected them: all except a 'remnant,' who leave Jewish earthly hopes, break down into sinners only, and receive a sinner's Savior, not a 'Jewish' one!** Then they become 'partakers of a heavenly calling.'*

*"We dare not believe in any of the modern reports of national Jewish 'turning to the Lord.' They will go into yet greater darkness (after the **Rapture of the Church**). There will be the former evil spirit of idolatry "taking with itself seven other spirits more wicked than itself," entering in and dwelling this present evil generation of Israel (Matt. 12.45). Do not be deceived. At our Lord's coming, and not until that beleaguered nation sees 'the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven' (Matt. 24.30),--which will be that 'looking upon Him whom they pierced' of Zechariah 12, will they have faith.*

*"...their fall was made the occasion of salvation to the Gentiles; and this again is to provoke them to jealousy'---that they may be saved. God's manifest blessing to Gentiles causes the careless, self-satisfied Jew to awake,--first to ridicule Gentile testimony; then,--seeing the reality of Divine visitation to the despised Gentile, to arouse to a deep jealousy. "How amazingly different Paul's method of 'provoking the Jews to jealousy,' from that pursued by many Jewish mission workers today. The Jew must have a 'special' place as a Jew. In some quarters they are even organizing 'Jewish assemblies,' and in other quarters advocating 'the literary method of approaching Israel.' All this, we cannot but feel, is **abominable kow-towing to Jewish flesh**, and hinders their salvation. Jews now are common sinners, who have for the present been set aside nationally, and must come to rely, as individual sinners, hopelessly guilty and helpless, upon the shed blood of Christ, an upon Him risen from the dead. It is an awful thing to make present day 'Jewish' claims when God says Jews are, for the present, no different from Gentiles, before God: but are just--sinners!"⁴¹.*

If I have helped you, the reader to at least appreciate a little, the enormous error and seriously unhelpful sense and lack of humility evident in this quote above, then I am most pleased to have moved you at little closer to a more truthful and intimate appreciation for the God of Israel, whose promises to the Jewish people are unchanging and eternal.

You will note the reference to Acts 28, which gives some of the details of Paul's arrest and house imprisonment in Rome. In Acts 28:17 the Apostle Paul states: *"...Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers,..."*. Note here, the Paul declares he is blameless before Israel and even its traditions and that he also calls these Jewish elders in Rome his brothers. He argues with his Jewish brethren about Yeshua, and even manages to convince some. He then ends his argument and speaks strongly (in quoting Isaiah 6) against those of his people who reject the truth that Yeshua is the Messiah and that the Coming Age is dawning. What these Christians fail to appreciate is that such vehement criticism was common between the various factions within Pharisaism, and was considered a normal part of discourse⁴².

To suggest that somehow God, through these few words of the Apostle Paul, had '*shut the door on natural Israel*' and that the gospel now had no Jewish connection or bonds whatsoever, and that the Messiah wasn't even Jewish now (*'a sinner's Savior, not a 'Jewish' one'*) is simply beyond reason! The Apostle Paul, or even 'Jesus in Paul' as some Christian theologians like to argue, have no authority to completely remove the eternal promises that the Almighty repeatedly made to Israel. To suggest that God has rejected the Jewish people, is an argument with absolutely no Scriptural support, and further, an argument not borne out by the history of the Jewish people, whom the Almighty had kept separate to Him, through millennia of suffering and trials to, in these last days, bring them back into His Land⁴³.

Further evidence of how the Hellenistic mindset leads Christians astray is the reference to the totally unbiblical doctrine of the Rapture of the Church⁴⁴.

Counter Argument #2:

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

"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

⁴¹ William R. Newell, Romans, Kregel Classics, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994, p. 415. – quoted at <http://watch.pair.com/peshitta.html>

⁴² I discuss this type of dialogue in various discussions on Yeshua's arguments about 'fulfilling Torah vs destroying Torah' – see 'The Times of Yeshua' for example - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/The%20Times%20of%20Yeshua.pdf> (p4)

⁴³ The most brilliant book on the Jews is 'A History of the Jews' by Paul Johnson. This book is an absolute must read!

⁴⁴ See <http://focusonthe kingdom.org/articles/rapture.htm> for a little detail

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."

In my response, I have given the NT verses quoted (mostly using the *Complete Jewish Bible* as an alternative modern version which, while still far from perfect, is a much better translation than the flawed KJV⁴⁵).

Thus in the section following you will see the relevant verse quoted and then some short comment on its 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'ma⁴⁶ 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.

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 John⁴⁷).

In fact, to demonstrate this reality, Prof David Flusser has stated in his books⁴⁸; 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!

⁴⁵ As already intimated, 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>

⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; & Deuteronomy 11:13-21; & Numbers 15:37-41

⁴⁷ 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*'.

⁴⁸ See for example 'Jesus', 'Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Sages and Literature, vol. 2' and 'The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius'.

Yeshua is giving mid-rashic⁴⁹ 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 Sanhedrin⁵⁰ 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 descendants 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. 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'⁵¹ 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.

Matthew 5:33-35 "Again, you have heard that our fathers were told, 'do not break your oath,' and 'keep your vows to YHVH.' 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 Jerusalem,' 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'⁵². ' 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 Professor 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.

⁴⁹ A Rabbinic interpretation and commentary on a text from the Hebrew Scripture.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ See 'The Faith of Jesus' - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/Christian%20site/The%20Faith%20of%20Jesus.pdf>

⁵² Often such verses as used to argue that the Torah was very legalistic – this is simply a misunderstanding of how this 'measure for measure' is actually understood – see <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/measureformeasure.pdf>

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.'*⁵³

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 priests 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 the 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 each Shabbat as this was where they would have been hearing the words of Moses, etc.). Thus, this question or perspective would have been irrelevant to them.

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/Torah!

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, Eliyahu is coming and will restore all things; on the other hand, I tell

⁵³ 'The Sage from Galilee: Rediscovering Jesus' Genius' D Flusser (p71)

you that Eliyahu has come already, and people did not recognize him but did whatever they pleased 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 (Eliyahu) returning (still observed in the Jewish feast of Passover/Pesach 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 (or Immerser) came in the spirit of Elijah, but he was not Elijah.

Luke 5:21-22 "the Torah-teachers and the Pharisees 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?"

If Yeshua is (the new) God and he replaced the old God, as per Marcion⁵⁴, 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.⁵⁵

Luke 6:1 "One Shabbat(Sabbath), while Yeshua was passing through some wheat fields, his disciples began plucking the heads of grain, rubbing them between their hands and eating the seeds. Some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you violating Shabbat?"

Yeshua was accused of violating Shabbat, but he didn't. If he had he would have sinned⁵⁶.

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 12:1-2⁵⁷ 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 Gospels⁵⁸.

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 say 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.

⁵⁴ 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>

⁵⁵ See my article on The Goal of Messiah' - <http://www.charismacomputers.com.au/The%20Goal%20of%20Messiah.pdf>

⁵⁶ In fact, this text indicates Greek corruption as I detail in my book, 'The NT: The Hebrew Behind the Greek' - <http://www.amazon.com/The-New-Testament-Hebrew-ebook/dp/B009X00NQU/>

⁵⁷ 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."

⁵⁸ See M. Kister, "Plucking on the Sabbath and Christian-Jewish Polemic," Immanuel 24-25 (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 35-51

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 Pharisees 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, Moses 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 MSS places them after Luke. 21:38. ...*".

So to try to use this passage to argue for any form of 'Replacement Theology' is really skating on thin ice!⁵⁹

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, as already stated, 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 Israel, 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 Israel to forget designated times and Sabbats. In the heat of his anger he rejected both king and priest."*

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.

Counter Argument #3:

One of the more fanciful, though in some ways ingenious arguments for Replacement Theology comes from a Pastor David Curtis, who certainly comes across as a genuine and sincere man.

Pastor David Curtis states that the *'Old Covenant produced unrighteousness'*.⁶⁰

There is no 'Old Covenant', but many Covenants! Again I refer you to my 'Righteousness Before Messiah' article for details on this issue.

Also to suggest that these eternal covenants that the Almighty made with Israel produced 'unrighteousness' is totally erroneous. People (Jewish or otherwise) choose to act un-righteously, a Covenant does not produce it, only Christians with poor understanding from a Hellenistic perspective would argue this.

In the linked article, David Curtis also totally misunderstands both the terms '*under the law*' and '*works of the law*' used by the Apostle Paul.

⁵⁹ 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>

⁶⁰ See http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/romans_new/7_1-6.htm

Under the law:

“For many, the difficulty in understanding Paul has been exacerbated by inaccurate translations. For example, the KJV has for Romans 3:19, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” Yet, the Greek manuscripts do not convey this meaning at all. The English phrase translated “under the law” here should read “in the law”, for the Greek text reads en to nomo, not upo nomon (“under law”). This verse addresses the question, to whom does the Torah speak. Contrary to the KJV, the Torah does not speak to those who are “under the law.” The Torah speaks to those who live within its framework, to those who are “in the law.” The English phrase “under the law” should not appear in this verse. Such poor and inconsistent translations mislead the innocent reader and make it very difficult for him to understand Paul’s meaning.

Another example of a poor translation hampering understanding may be found in the NIV at Romans 2:12. The NIV has, “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.”

However, the KJV, in this case more accurately has, “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” The NIV employs the phrase “under the law”, yet the Greek text clearly reads en nomo meaning, “in law”, not upo nomon, meaning “under law.” The problem with man is sin. As stated in the Prophets, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your Elohim, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). Sin is the problem. And sin pertains to everyone, to those “without [knowledge or understanding of] Torah” (anomos, anti-Torah) and to those “in [connection with] the Torah” (en nomo). In one sense, those who have been blessed with the knowledge and wisdom of Torah are no better off than those who have been ignorant of it or than those who have opposed it. When someone sins they fall short of the glory of God.

We find the first legitimate use of the English phrase “under the law”, correctly derived from upo nomon, in Romans 6:14-15. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? Elohim forbid.” In the context of the chapter, Paul is explicitly clear in his denunciation of being “under the law” as an appropriate state for the righteous. He contrasts the condition with being “under grace.” The word “under” carries the meaning of “controlled by” as in Romans 3:9 and 7:14 where Paul writes that all men are naturally “under” or “controlled by” sin. This is the condition in which we find ourselves (when we let our fleshy heart rule).

The word also implies a burden or something to which we are in subjection or slavery. In this context, the phrase “under the law” (upo nomon) could be understood as being subject to the penalties of or punishment for violating Torah or being subject to a system of perverting the Torah into a legalistic system for supposedly earning or meriting one’s own salvation.” -Stephen Allen⁶¹

Obedience to Torah is a response (after seeking forgiveness for sin and repenting) to the saving grace of God. Thus such obedience does not bring salvation, but is an expectation of an individual who is saved.

David Curtis then goes on to argue that keeping the 10 Words is sinning! But then he later does some sleight of hand to suggest that you can keep 9 of them because Yeshua and Paul said you could!

Next Curtis, because of a clear lack of any depth of study into Hebraic thought, totally misunderstands and misapplies the term ‘in the flesh’ (I have already discussed this error).

But worse, Curtis thinks that the Torah died in 70 AD!

He states: *“When did the Mosaic Law die? I know it DIDN’T DIE, but when did it come to an end? First century Jewish believers died to the Law, but in A.D. 70 THE LAW DIED with the destruction of the Jewish temple”.*

He first states that Law/Torah didn’t die, and then that it did! If the end of the Temple meant the end of the Torah, then how come there was no Temple for the first 400+ years of the Mosaic Covenant/Torah; how come the Torah didn’t die after Solomon’s Temple was destroyed (again see an earlier discussion of this issue above)?

Pastor David Curtis seems to me to be a perfect example of the very sincere and studious Christian who seeks to rightly divide the Word of God, yet because he has not sought to view the Bible through Hebraic rather than Hellenistic eyes he has arrived at many false conclusions based on many faulty premises such as the doctrine of ‘original sin’; the miss-understanding of what ‘works of the law’ means, and many other Hebraisms that the Bible is replete with.

⁶¹ From a website that appears to be no longer active.

Counter Argument #4

The long history of Replacement Theology in the church and the almost unthinking acceptance of its veracity has led many to uncritically accept arguments that assume such veracity even if the person presenting the argument might otherwise explicitly reject many of the implications of Replacement Theology. Here is a very good example of this. I had been debating an article published by the Christian scholar, David Maas. As part of the exchange of viewpoints he wrote an email, which included this quote:

“Jesus warned against pouring new wine into old wine-skins. Attempts to domesticate the Christ of scripture by pouring the new wine of the Spirit into the old wine-skins of Second Temple Judaism are doomed to fail. If they do not burst the old skins the sweet wine of the Spirit will be turned into the vinegar of the death-dealing letter of the Law (2 Corinthians 3:6).” – David Maas, (from email correspondence on Oct 15, 2011).

I was of course familiar with the ‘wineskins’ analogy that Yeshua had used, but here for the first time I critically examined the common consensus that I had shared, perhaps only because it had been used to reach a conclusion I rejected. Here is part of my response at the time:

When I read this statement, it struck me very forcefully, how emphatically this ‘wineskins’ statement of Yeshua was been used to support a very strong doctrine of ‘Replacement’. That is, that the church has replaced Israel in God’s affections and plans.

David Maas is very clear here in equating the Jewish religion of Yeshua’s day (what he terms ‘Second Temple Judaism’) that adhered to the Hebrew Scriptures (The Tanakh), with the ‘old wineskin’, and Christianity as the ‘sweet (new) wine of the Spirit’. Here he also very clearly equates this so-called ‘Old Covenant’ (Second Temple Judaism) with the ‘letter of the Law’ and the so-called ‘New Covenant’ of Christianity with the ‘Spirit of the Law’.

This ‘Replacement Theology’ whether intention or not (surely most ‘Christians’ who support it are not intentionally anti-Israel and against the Jewishness of Yeshua), has resulted in a great deal of anti-Semitism which has ultimately led to great persecutions and pogroms against the Jewish people.

In fact, it could be argued that the miss-understanding of this parable has been instrumental in much evil (‘bad fruit’) against the Jewish people and helps explain why when Jewish lovers of the Almighty look at the ‘fruit of the tree’ of Christianity, they do not see ‘good fruit’ but bad, and consequently reject the messenger because of the falsehood of the message. In this vein you may wish to revisit Matthew 7:16-20, Luke 13:6-9 and then John 15:2-16.

In seeking commentary where this parable was first used to argue that the church had replaced Israel and Judaism, I found that it appears to have been first proposed by the seriously anti-Semitic Marcion (85 – 160 CE) in his ultimately successful efforts to separate Christianity from Judaism.

So, thanks to Mr. Maas comment, which I found very disturbing, I was interested in returning to and reconsidering this parable.

Thanks to the incredible work of the late David Flusser (Hebrew University, Jerusalem) and the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, I now understood that the Gospel of Luke was most likely written before the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and these well before John’s gospel.

Therefore it seemed sensible to start in Luke (Luke 5:36-39):

*“He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But the new wine must be out into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desire new wine, but says **‘The old is good’**.” (Some manuscripts, such as the KJV have **‘The old is better’**) – The Jewish Annotated New Testament*

*I had read and listened to this scripture a great many times and even heard preachers speak on it but I had amazingly missed the last sentence where Yeshua said the old wine is better! You may need to do a double take yourself here. Yeshua states that it is the old wine, **not the new wine in new wineskins that is better!***

It is also perhaps worth noting some different ways verse 39 is translated into English:

“ ... And no one who has ever tasted fine aged wine prefers unaged wine.” – The Message

“Of course, nobody who has been drinking old wine will want the new at once. He is sure to say, ‘The old is a good sound wine.’” – JB Philips

“And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’” - NASB

I am not sure though that these translations bring anything new or more helpful to the simple comment that the ‘old wine is better’.

When we turn to the two references to this same parable in Mark (2:22) and in Matthew (9:17) we find this last sentence missing. Without this concluding sentence it is much easier to interpret this parable as Marcion and David Maas have. Perhaps this part of the parable was excluded from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark deliberately by copyists or translators, for this very reason.

It should not take much reflection then, to see that this parable can in no way be suggesting that the ‘sweet (new) wine’ of Christianity is somehow superior to the old wine of Judaism. If these were the two concepts and approaches being compared, it would mean that Yeshua was saying that Judaism was better!

So now, we need I think to ask, is this what the parable is suggesting or is it something a little more subtle?

The late Dr Robert L Lindsey (a Baptist Pastor and student of Prof. Flusser) argues most convincingly in his book ‘Jesus, Rabbi and Lord’ (see Chapter 19) that all throughout the Gospel of Luke the structure of each narrative is three fold: (1) An incident in Yeshua’s life is related; (2) this is followed by a teaching discourse by Yeshua; and (3) which then concludes with 2 parables.

Consider how this ‘wineskins’ parable fits with this approach. We see in Luke 5:27, that the tax collector (Matthew Levi the possible author of the Gospel of Matthew or at least the original Hebrew ‘History of Yeshua’) has prepared a great feast for Yeshua. A number of the Pharisees and scribes question Yeshua about spending time with these ‘sinners’ (the tax collectors had chosen their unrighteous occupation which meant they had chosen to separate themselves from community welfare and fellowship with their ‘healthy’ or righteous brethren).

Yeshua then makes the classic statement, or teaching, that the healthy do not need a doctor. He was saying here, as he had elsewhere, they he had come to call the unrighteous, the ‘lost sheep of Israel’ back to the Covenantal relationship that the family of Israel had with their Father, the Almighty.

It is in this context that he gives the two parables; the parable about sewing a piece of new clothe onto an old garment and the wineskins parable. In this context, I would argue that the ‘old wine is better’ refers to those of Israel who have been, and remain in, communion with the God of Israel. That is the healthy sheep of Israel that are not lost (the mainstream Jewish ‘man in the street’ represented in the religious context by the Pharisees - Yeshua himself being essentially a Pharisee⁶²).

They are ‘better’ or ‘good enough’ because they have a developed intimacy with the Almighty, which the Jewish tax collectors and other sinners, through no longer walking right with God (‘halacha’), have turned their backs on.

In calling these ‘sinners’ back to the Father, Yeshua sees them as like new wine needing a different treatment and approach (new wineskin), which he offers.

The same can surely be said when many years later, Gentiles would be accepted into the Kingdom of God, the movement of Yeshua. They would also need a ‘new’ or different approach, as they would not have grown up with the ‘oracles of God’, with anything like the knowledge of the Tanakh and mitzvot (commandments) that the Jewish people have from birth.

This ‘new wineskin’ essentially encompasses the Ten Commandments plus the four Noahide Laws as detailed in Acts 15. I have dealt in a little detail with the edicts of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) in my article ‘Circumcision – A Step of Obedience?’.

This parable⁶³ has nothing to do with a comparison between living under the ‘letter of Torah (Law)’ or the ‘Spirit of Torah’⁶⁴.

⁶² See ‘Jesus’ by Flusser, or the discussion of this point in my ‘The Times of Yeshua’ article.

⁶³ For a much more in-depth look at the ‘wineskins’ parable I highly recommend ‘The Old is Better: Parables of Patched Garment and Wineskins as Elaboration of a Chreia in Luke 5:33-39 about Feasting with Jesus.’ By Anders Eriksson - <http://www.ars-rhetorica.net/Queen/VolumeSpecialIssue2/Articles/Eriksson.pdf>

⁶⁴ I have dealt with this issue elsewhere. See for example, ‘Siblings of the King: Living in the Will of the Father’. The well-known scholar James DG Dunn also discusses these very commonly misunderstood phrases in ‘The Theology of Paul the Apostle’.

So, the conclusion presented by David Maas, with its strong 'Replacement Theology' pre-suppositions, was based on a faulty reading of this analogy or parable. Once again we see that this doctrine is invalidated on closer inspection of the relevant Scriptures.

While there are most likely many more counter arguments, I trust I have addressed the main ones, and shown that the do not bear the weight of closer scrutiny from an Hebraic perspective.

Conclusion:

In conclusion then, I have tried to give a cursory overview of how I believe this Replacement Theology doctrine developed and in doing so, shown by inference, that it could not possibly have been a belief that Yeshua and the first disciples and Apostles would have supported, but that it was developed by Hellenists through a philosophical and Hellenistic perspective, rather than from a Hebraic and Biblical perspective.

I have also tried to address the main Scriptural 'proof-texts' from the New Testament, to show that when properly understood; when approached from an Hebraic worldview; they are in no way implying any 'replacement' of Israel in the affections of the Almighty.

Given the very significant anti-Semitic implications of this doctrine, I pray that this article has convinced the reader (if not already convinced) of the insidious nature of this great error and therefore of the need for all seekers of Truth to stand against any promotion, whether explicit or unintentional, of this doctrine.

To fight against this doctrine is to fight against the evil of anti-Semitism⁶⁵ that it has helped to promote.

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⁶⁵ Anti-Semitism as a phenomenon (though only given this title in the late 1800's) existed long before the time of Yeshua and possibly as early as 500 BCE, according to Prof. Paul Johnson in his seminal work already referred to. From early days it appears to have been promoted by Greek intellectuals. With Constantine's impact in making Hellenistic Christianity the state religion, it appears that these Greek intellectuals were avoided even greater resources to promote anti-Semitism. Replacement Theology was surely a great fit.