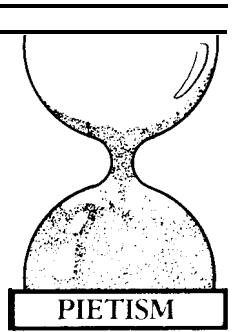


# Dispensationalism in Transition

Challenging Traditional Dispensationalism's "Code of Silence"



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## SUPERSESSIONAL ORTHODOXY; ZIONISTIC SADISM

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We are analyzing the ridiculous charge by Lindsey and Ice that Reconstruction thought is inherently, philosophically anti-Semitic because of its supersessionist viewpoint.

Reconstruction thought does hold to supersession: *We believe that the international Church has superseded for all times national Israel as the institution for the administration of divine blessing to the world.* We believe the Church is: composed of Jew and Gentile merged into one body forever (Eph. 2:12ff); the sole agency of the redemptive purposes of God; and the fruition of Israel, though Jews themselves will one day be converted in mass (Rem. 11:15-25).

Supersessionism is not heresy; neither is it anti-Semitic. In fact, it is orthodox Christianity. The dispensational denial of supersession does border on blasphemy, though. Let us see how this is so.

### "Orthodox Christianity is Anti-Semitic"?

Let us notice that orthodox supersession is deemed anti-Semitic by ecumenical liberalism and modern Judaism. Strange bed-fellows for dispensationalists!

Biblical linguist and liberal scholar James H. Charlesworth, writing in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, provides a case in point. He lashes out at David P. Crews, an orthodox Christian, who states that Jews cannot be saved apart from trusting in Christ. He recognizes that this is the principle of *supersessionism*: "Regarding supersessionism: Crews cannot acknowledge that Jews who don't accept Jesus as the Messiah have not endangered their relationship to God. Thus he enters the world of **anti-Semitism**."<sup>1</sup> Notice carefully: to promote the view that Christ is the only means of entry before God is **supersessionist**. And this is, to the liberal, arrogant anti-Semitism. Ice is so blinded by his dispensational oddities that he does not realize the true nature of supersessionism. I believe he is a member of the Lion's Club and has donated his eyes before he died!

A Christian respondent to Charlesworth complains: "James Charlesworth erroneously states that **supersessionism** 'certainly is not typical of Jesus'. . . . I have visited Israel twice and have many Jewish friends. I am still a strong 'supersessionist.' Does this make me 'anti-Semitic? Hardly. . . . I am not 'against' these people. On the contrary, I am for them — praying daily for their welfare, both temporal and eternal. Am I 'anti-' their belief systems? Absolutely, and so was Christ."<sup>2</sup>

A Jewish writer, Lillian Freudman, engages the supersession view, in an anti-Christian fashion: "The belief that salvation is **only** through Jesus Christ is a denial and a rejection of the Torah, of Judaism and of the covenant that

God made with Israel. . . . Many Christian scholars. . . have long realized that supersessionism. . . denies the legitimacy of the Torah. . . . When Christians insist that theirs is, as he writes, the 'sole true faith' and consider Judaism 'as false, but a good try,' the wise professor [Jacob Neusner] should understand that they are denigrating Judaism. Although some Christians who profess these ideas maintain cordial relations with Jews and may even disavow anti-Semitic behavior, their statements indicate a lack of respect for Judaism and its **believers**."<sup>3</sup>

### Following the Logic

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that ice's "supersessionism= anti-Semitism" logic is **valid**. ice feels that since Jews have been persecuted by some Christians, we should look for a sufficient cause for that persecution. Ice finds a causal factor in the doctrine of supersession. But let us consider an even "better" argument for anti-Semitism and intolerance of Jews that provides us with an even more obvious smoking gun — *employing ice's "logic."*

Tommy's logic goes: (1) Anti-Semitism is evil bigotry that must have some explanatory cause behind it. (2) Some Christians hold that God no **longer** maintains a special place in His plan for the Jews. (3) These Christians have a sufficient cause for anti-Semitic persecution of the Jews.

Consider this argument, which seems even more **plausible**, using ice's **logic**: (1) Anti-Semitism is evil bigotry that **must** have some explanatory cause **behind** it. (2) Christ taught that God's wrath and curse were to **fall** on the Jews and that their Tempie was to be utterly forsaken and destroyed. (3) Therefore, Christ is anti-Semitic and all of His followers have a sufficient cause for anti-Semitic persecution of the Jews.

The supersession-leads-to-anti-Semitism argument is quite general and rather **nebulous**. But here in the very words of the One adored by Christians throughout history, we have very strong **language** that **could** more readily be laid as a foundation for anti-Semitism! Consider these strong statements by Christ:

Matthew 8:11-12: "Many **shall** come from the east and west, and **shall** sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there **shall** be weeping and gnashing of teeth." A modern no-no!

Matthew 23:32-33, 35: "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of **hell**? . . . Upon you [**shall**] come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the **blood**

1. James H. Charlesworth, "Supersession or God's Awareness," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18:1 (January/February, 1992) p. 72.

2. Garry Hanvey, "Did Charlesworth Look at the Context?," *Bib/ice/ Archaeology Review* 18:3 (May/June, 1992) p. 16.

3. Lillian Freudman, "Shanks is Dishonest and Neusner Speaks Double-talk," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 18:5 (September/October, 1992) 25 and continued on p. 78.

of righteous Abel unto the blood of **Zacharias** son of **Bacharias**, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

Of the very heart of Israel, Jesus charges in Matthew **23:38**: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

Luke 23:28-31: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.' Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.' For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

The supersessionism=anti-Semitism argument bases persecution of Jews on the theological position that the Jews are no longer the favored people of God. Absurd! Our hypothetical argument presented from the words of Christ could base anti-Semitic charges on the biblical calling for the wrath of God on the Jews! Jesus affirmed their rejection from the kingdom favor of God to a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, the desolation of their beloved Temple, the pouring out of their blood for the sins of their fathers, and the call to weep for the wrath to come on them.

Could not the words of either Christ or Paul (e.g., 1 **Thess.** 2:14-16) be used as the "philosophical basis for **anti-Semitism**"?<sup>4</sup> A logical anti-Christian could more easily generate an anti-Semitism argument from Christ's words than from the general theological notion of supersessionism. But his argument would be wrong. As is Ice's. As usual. Ice's argument is as ridiculous as these hypothetical ones. But they are more than hypothetical:

A Jewish reader of *Biblical Archaeology Review* is convinced that Christianity *per se* is anti-Semitic: "Anti-Semitism is the basic foundation of Christianity as preached by its clergy and practiced by its faithful."<sup>5</sup> Another Jewish reader discredits salvation-in-Christ-alone advocacy: "I have been reading with dismay, but not surprise, the ongoing discourse in **BAR** concerning supersessionism. I could not help but think that in 'less civilized times' such a discussion would have been a prelude to crusades, inquisitions and pogroms. The there-is-only-one-way protagonists may do well to contemplate the following. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

### Jewish Sadism

**Now** let us turn the anti-Semitic argument on Ice and Company. We teach that God has rejected Israel as *His specially favored nation* and that the Jews must come to God through Christ and His Church to be saved. But we also teach that if they turn to Jesus Christ (and they will **in mass numbers someday**) **they will be saved along with us**. This is anti-Semitic? But what may be said about Ice's position? It is purely *sadistic* and when believed by Messianic Jews is *masochistic*! Consider the following.

**Ice** writes in another newsletter: "I just **returned**<sup>7</sup> from a Christian **Zionist** Conference in San Antonio, Texas at Cornerstone Church. It was great! There were interesting and informative speakers from Israel and many of the leading Christian Zionists including Hal Lindsey. You would

have liked it as well. . . . It should not be surprising to anyone that a **dispensationalist**, such as myself, is a Christian Zionist, if you know our history. Zionism is simply the desire for the Jewish people to occupy the land of **Israel**. Christian Zionists are Christians who advocate **Zionism**."<sup>8</sup>

This is institutional sadism. How so? Because of Ice's dispensational theology. Consider what he is saying: He and dispensationalists are Zionists because they long for the Jewish people to occupy Israel.

But while Ice and friends are supporting and encouraging the return of Jews to Israel, what are they expecting to happen there soon, according to their view of prophecy?

Let me cite a dispensational, Zionist publication, with which Ice would agree. This article is especially interesting in that it is lamely attacking **Reconstructionism**: "Passages such as Joel 3, **Zechariah** 12-14, and Revelation 16 indicate that Israel's worst time will take place immediately before Christ's physical return to earth at His Second Coming. At that time the armies of *all* the nations of the world will gather against Israel and Jerusalem. . . . This future time of trouble for Israel will be so terrible that two-thirds of the Jews will perish (**Zech.13:8-9**)."<sup>9</sup> Walvoord agrees that "two-thirds of Israel in the land will **perish**."<sup>10</sup>

Hal Lindsey speaks of these coming events, when dealing with Revelation 16: "This chapter closes with multiplied millions of soldiers slaughtering each other in and around **Israel**."<sup>11</sup> Pentecost teaches: "The Scriptures teach that the future judgment program will begin with a judgment upon national Israel. . . . It is evident from the passage just cited in Ezekiel, as well as the numerous passages dealing with Israel's restoration, that this judgment will be upon all living Israel, all of whom are to be regathered and judged. Matthew 25:1-30 envisions a judgment on the entire nation."<sup>12</sup> /f one **believes this theology, then to urge Jews to return to Israel is sadistic**.

### Conclusion

In Ice's book *Ready to Rebuild* there is a picture of him, with delight in his eyes, sitting down with Gershon **Salomon**, the Jewish founder and head of the Temple Mount Faithful. Now as a good Christian, I am sure Tommy warned **Salomon** of the soon coming **holocaustal** judgment on Israel. And I am sure as a Christian pastor he presented **Salomon** the Gospel of Jesus Christ, pointing out that He and He alone is "the way, the truth, and the life." Of course, I just recently purchased some ocean front property in Arizona, too.

### Addendum

For a four tapeset, "Postmillennial **Preterism** vs. Dispensationalism," send \$16 to me at: 46 Main St., Conestee, SC 29636. Also available: *Lord of the Saved: Getting to the Heart of the Lordship Debate* (\$7) and *God's Law and the Modern World* (\$6).

8. Thomas Ice, "Christian Zionism and Dispensationalism," *Dispensational Distinctives*, 2:1 (Jan-Feb, 1992) p. 1.

9. Renald E. Showers, "Further Evaluation of Christian Reconstructionism," *Israel My Glory* 49:4 (Aug./Sept., 1991) p. 19.

10. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1866), p. 195.

11. Hal Lindsey, *There 's a New World Coming: A Prophetic Odyssey* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House, 1973), p. 227.

12. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), pp. 413, 414.

4. Thomas Ice, "Hal Lindsey, Dominion Theology, and Anti-Semitism," *Biblical Perspectives*, 5:1 (Jan. -Feb., 1992) p. 2.

5. Rose Z. Smith, '(An Anti-Christian View of Christianity,' *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18:5 (September/October, 1992) p. 78.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Grammatically he should have said: "I have just returned."