

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 003

Revelation 20:1-10

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Well, let's take our Bibles today and open them to Zechariah 14:4. Over three weeks ago, we completed our teaching on 1 and 2 Thessalonians. So we have now moved into, during the Sunday school hour, a topical study on the whole subject of Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible.

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture
- VI. Conclusion

So in the first lesson together, I talked about how Calvinism has been a blessing in a lot of ways. But then we moved into part II of the outline, which is what we are still in right now: why are we critiquing Neo-Calvinism? And basically, we are giving a series of reasons that we think this movement needs to be critiqued.

II. Why Critique Calvinism?

- A. General calling to defend the faith (Jude 3)
- B. The call to admonish fellow believers (2 Thess. 3:15)
- C. Calvinism is a serious issue
- D. The prophetic implications of Calvinism

Neo-Calvinism is a movement that wants to go back to the teachings of the Protestant Reformers. And the Protestant Reformers, such as Calvin, become the gold standard. These people are going back to the teaching of the Protestant Reformers, not just the good that they did, but everything they did.

And they are bringing this aggressively into evangelical Christianity. You see a lot of this mentality in a group called "Together for the Gospel." You see a lot of this mentality amongst young people, who call themselves, "The young, the reformed, and the restless."

So, very sadly, it has almost become a test of fellowship. If you are not a Calvinist, the way they define it, then you are irrelevant. So that is why we are getting into the subject.

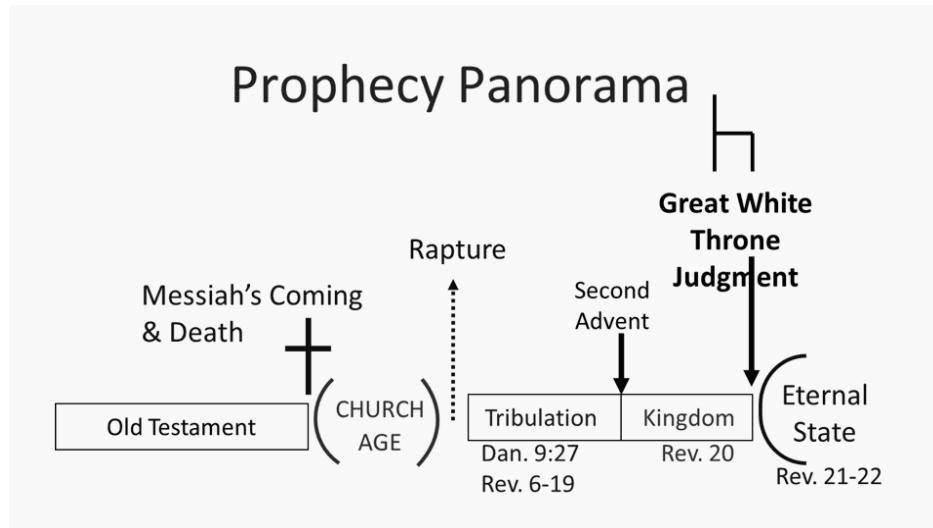
I was in the process of explaining the prophetic implications of what we call Neo-Calvinism. What happens in circles or in churches that will completely hitch their wagon to these Reformers such as John Calvin?

D. The Prophetic Implications of Calvinism

- 1) De-emphasis of Biblical Eschatology
- 2) Calvin's mishandling of prophetic texts
- 3) Anti-Semitism
- 4) Implications of a lack of an Israel–Church distinction
- 5) Neo-Calvinism as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy

Well, one of the things that happens is that there is an automatic de-emphasis of Bible prophecy. You hardly hear anything in their churches about Bible prophecy. And that kind of stands to reason because one of their heroes, Martin Luther, a man who did a lot of good, basically said, (I showed you this last week) that the Book of Revelation is not even an inspired book.

So if that is the mindset, obviously a church following Luther would not say much about the Book of Revelation. And I was showing you how John Calvin, who lived a little after the time of Luther (they lived during the same general time period; they are both considered Protestant Reformers), took passages of Scripture and just completely and totally mishandled them—prophetic sections of Scripture.



I showed you how Calvin did this in Amos 9:13. I showed you how he did this in Isaiah 35. Those were very clear Millennial passages, and he completely obscured their meaning. Let me just pick it up right there and show you how Calvin treated Zechariah 14:4.

You all know Zechariah 14:4, right? It says there,

"And his feet [that is the Messiah's feet] shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and towards the west...." (Zechariah 14:4, KJV)

So a normal reading of that passage is that Jesus is coming back at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period. His feet are going to touch Planet Earth, and then the Mount of Olives is going to be severed from east to west.

It is interesting that there is actually a fault line, I have been told, on the Mount of Olives, waiting to split at any time. It is just waiting for Christ's feet to touch it.

So that is how we would understand a passage like this. But I just want to give you a flavor of how John Calvin treated this passage and others. He writes in his commentary on Zechariah,

"For as we are dull and entangled in earthly thoughts, our minds can hardly rise up to heaven, though the Lord with a clear voice invites us to himself. The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness, adds a vivid representation."¹

Now, what does Calvin mean here when he says, "The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness"? What he is saying is that we cannot really understand what this passage means. So God is communicating it to us at the simplest level. But at the end of the day, what it says is not what God meant.

That is called accommodation. We are all kind of at the kindergarten level, you know. Maybe we have learned to add and subtract, but we have not learned multiplication and division. Maybe we have learned how to write some words down, but we certainly do not know how to write a sentence or a paragraph, let alone a whole book.

And God knows we are at that simple level. And so He just said, "Well, when I am coming back, My feet are going to touch the Mount of Olives and it is going to split." But we all know—wink wink wink—that is not what God meant. That is called accommodation.

It is funny: people put Calvin on a pedestal. He gets a free pass on all these things. It is as if people do not even want to bring to the surface what the man actually said and believed about Bible prophecy, which to me is troubling.

If you have a movement that wants to hitch its wagon completely and totally to John Calvin, it stands to reason that they would bring back all this other junk without realizing it.

Calvin says,

"The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness, adds a vivid representation, as though God stood before their eyes. Stand, he says, shall his feet on the mount of Olives. He does not here promise a miracle, such as even the ignorant might conceive to be literal;..."³

So if you take this prophecy literally, like me, for example, Calvin is calling you ignorant because you do not understand this accommodation mindset that God is allegedly

¹ John Calvin, Commentary on Zechariah 14:4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

using. Which, by the way, in my mind makes God a liar, if God says something and it means something different.

Isn't one of the commandments, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness*" (*Exodus 20:16, Deuteronomy 5:20*)? But this is typical Calvin in prophecy.

"...nor does he do this in what follows, when he says, The mount shall be rent...half...to the east and half to the west."⁴

In other words, you cannot take this as an actual physical separation on the Mount of Olives. Calvin says,

"This has never happened..."⁵

He is right about that. It has never happened. That is because Jesus is going to make it happen.

"This has never happened, that mount has never been rent; but as the Prophet could not, under those grievous trials, which might have overwhelmed the minds of the godly a hundred times, have extolled the power of God...without employing a highly figurative language, he therefore accommodates himself, as I have said, to the capacity of our flesh."⁶

"It does not mean what it says, but God had to explain it that way, because that is the best people could understand." Now, Calvin, as I will show you, did not invent this method of interpretation. He largely got it from a man that lived over a thousand years before him: Augustine.

Calvin carte blanche took a lot of Augustine's stuff—in some cases, it is almost blatant plagiarism—and brought it into the Protestant movement in Christianity. So the churches that started from the Protestant movement, even to this day took these kinds of teachings and fossilized them. They made some good progress against Roman Catholicism.

But because they took the progress and they fossilized it into creeds and confessions like the Westminster Confession, and assumed that there was no further ground to be recaptured from Augustinian Roman Catholic allegorical interpretation, they took some good things, but then they brought a lot of bad things into their churches.

So you can go to some of their (Reformed/Calvinist) churches today and this same mindset prevails. It goes right back to their progenitor. So when people are venerating

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Calvin the way the New Calvinists do, that to me is bothersome. How about the thousand-year kingdom that is coming?

Do you guys believe in a thousand-year kingdom that is coming? We actually did a whole study here on the coming Kingdom. (It took about a thousand years to get through it all.) But it is just a simple reading of the Scripture.

Jesus is coming back as predicted in Revelation 19. What follows will be a Millennial Kingdom, which will be a thousand years. Premillennialism is what we call it. Jesus comes back first, then the Millennial Kingdom comes second, and it will last a thousand years.

That is spoken of in Revelation 20:1-10. You might want to turn there just for a minute. It says,

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; [that is the first of six references to a thousand years] and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he [Satan] must be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and not had not received the mark on their forehead or on their hand; and they came to life ["zao" (ζάω)], and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:1-4).

Are you guys keeping track? That is the third mention of a thousand years.

"The rest of the dead did not come to life ["zao" (ζάω)] until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection ["anastasis" (ἀνάστασις)]. Blessed ["makarios" (μακάριος)] and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection ["anastasis" (ἀνάστασις)]; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever" (Revelation 20:5-10).

Now, you see these references to a thousand years. Why would we take the thousand years at face value? Well, there are four reasons.

Reasons for Understanding 1000 Literally

- John's use of indefinite concepts elsewhere
 - ◆ Revelation 20:8, 20:3
- Exception to the "# of years" examples?
- Other numbers are taken literally
 - ◆ Two witnesses (11:3), 7000 people (11:13), 4 Angels (7:1) 7 Angels (8:6), 144,000 Jews (7:4), 42 months (11:2), 1260 days (11:3)
- Not always a symbolic interpretation
 - ◆ (Rev. 17:18)

John knows how to use indefinite concepts when he wants to. In Revelation 20:8, he describes a rebellion using a simile—the sand of the seashore. In Revelation 20:3, he uses the expression "short time." So if John can say, "short time," how hard is it for him to say, "long time"?

But John does not do that. He gives you a specific number and he repeats it, by my count, six times. And it is not just the letter or noun "years" that is significant. It is the fact that it is attached to a number. We would call this an ordinal numerical modifier.

It is like what you see in Genesis 1: the first day of creation. The second day. The third day. Each of those phrases uses a number attached to the Hebrew noun "yom" (יּוֹם). And when you see that construction, every time it is used in the Bible it is always literal.

Every single time a number plus a year or years is used in Scripture, it is a literal time period. So why would it be non-literal here? Beyond that, if this number one thousand is not literal, then what do you do with every other number in the Book of Revelation? The floodgates are open, and you could make up whatever you want.

But the Book of Revelation is filled with literal numbers. Two witnesses, 7,000 people, 4 angels, 7 angels, 144,000 Jews, 12,000 from each tribe, 42 months, 1,260 days. If a thousand does not mean a thousand in Revelation 20, then you could just do whatever you wanted with every other number as well.

And it is true the Book of Revelation has symbolic content to it. Even here the dragon is defined as the devil. But when the Book of Revelation wants to be understood non-literally, it gives you a little descriptive phrase.

So for example, over in Revelation 17:8, about the harlot riding the beast. Who is this harlot? Is this harlot literal? No, because the angel says at the very end of Revelation 17, in verse 18,

"The woman [the harlot] whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 17:18).

So there is a clue that the harlot is not to be understood literally, but as representing something. Nothing like this happens with the phrase "a thousand years" in Revelation 20(:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). It is just a straightforward expression. John never says, "You know, the thousand years really mean something else."

Robert Thomas, in his commentary on the Book of Revelation (which I think is really good commentary, probably one of the best we have from our camp) observes that "no number in Revelation is verifiably a symbolic number."⁷

So with all that being said, how did John Calvin treat the thousand years? Well, this is from his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," which he wrote at the ripe old age of twenty-six.

If somebody finds something I said or wrote at age twenty-six (and praise God that I said and wrote things at age twenty-six)... But that was pre-internet, okay. No one knows they are out there. But if you ever find a cassette tape (I mean, the young people do not even know what a cassette tape is)...

But if you find one of those devices and you have something on it that I said at age twenty-six, and people start making a religious movement out of it, I hope you will rise up and condemn those people, because that is in essence what people have done with Calvin.

He is writing this at age twenty-six. He is borrowing heavily from Augustine who lived over a millennia earlier. And this is what Calvin says about the thousand years.

"But Satan..."⁸

He uses the "S" word: "Satan." What Calvin is saying is that if you take this literally, you are under Satan's influence. This is John Calvin that everybody's venerating!

"But Satan has not only befuddled men's senses to make them bury with the corpses the memory of resurrection; he has also attempted to corrupt this part of the doctrine with various falsifications...Now their fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation...."⁹

⁷ Robert, Congdon, *Revelation 8 to 22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 408.

⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, xxv, 5.

⁹ Ibid.

Why does he say "childish"? He says "childish" because we all understand that when God was speaking there, he was not intending to be understood literally. He just accommodated the ignorance of the masses. He just wanted to communicate that He is going to be victorious over evil in the end.

So God communicated in a way biblical authors would understand, because they are at the kindergarten level. But that is not really what God said. And if you take this at face value, then you are childish and you are under the influence of Satan.

"And the Apocalypse, from which they undoubtedly drew a pretext for their error, does not support them. For the number 'one thousand' [Rev. 20:4] does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church..."¹⁰

So this has nothing to do with some Kingdom Age that is going to manifest itself on Planet Earth after Jesus comes back.

"...but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth..."¹¹

Now that is the doctrine of Amillennialism, which is the idea that Jesus started the kingdom 2,000 years ago and that we are actually in the Kingdom now. As my friend Thomas says, "If this is the Kingdom, I must be living in the ghetto section of town."

That is what Amillennialism taught. That is what Augustine taught, going all the way back to the fourth century. Calvin did not invent the doctrine. He is carrying it over. So in the Protestant Reformed movement, Calvin corrected certain soteriological problems, but never corrected this error.

The Reformers just dragged it right on into the Protestant movement. And that is why their churches today think and teach this way.

"Those who assign the children of God a thousand years in which to enjoy the inheritance of the life to come do not realize how much reproach they are casting upon Christ and his Kingdom."¹²

So those of you that are literalists, you are actually, in Calvin's mind, casting reproach on Jesus and the true Kingdom, which we all (as Amillennialists say) know is happening in a spiritual sense now.

So according to this view, there will be no restoration of Israel in the last days. That is why it is interesting that a lot of these churches standing in this tradition (I can think of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

two or three of them as I am speaking right now) are actually engaged in formal boycotts against Israel.

They are participating in what is called BDS: Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, trying to get the world to equate the nation of Israel with South Africa. You remember that there was apartheid South Africa. The world logically and naturally rose up against that and boycotted goods there.

So when people pursue this BDS agenda, they want you to believe that, well, Israel is doing just exactly the same thing that South Africa did—that she is an apartheid nation. And if she is an apartheid nation, she is doing a really lousy job of it, by the way, because the Arab population within Israel has grown, not decreased, since 1948.

And you can go to the Knesset and the Supreme Court of Israel, and you can see non-native people, who are not Israelis, who have moved to the highest positions in the land of Israel. Now, there is no apartheid state that would ever do that.

In fact, under the Bush administration, Israel took a bunch of Ethiopian Jews—and these people are as black as black can be. They put them in planes and they airlifted them out of Ethiopia to Israel because they were Jewish. Now, what kind of apartheid state does stuff like that? That does not even make any sense.

Israel is racially diverse and pluralistic. I have a heart for Israel because of what God says about Israel in the last days. But what if I did not have that interpretation of Scripture, and I thought all of God's promises to Israel have been canceled? And what if I thought that this thousand-year kingdom, in which Jerusalem is going to be the head and not the tail, were all allegorical, and were happening right now?

Well, if I thought that way, I would probably be swept into the propaganda that is anti-Israeli today. And I might, God forbid, look at the Israelis as the Christ-killers, when the truth of the matter is that we are all Christ-killers. When you think about it, Christ died for all of us.

And if I held this view about eschatology, I would be involved in some church that is actually currently boycotting the state of Israel, which is increasing with all the things that have happened in our world since October 7, with our campuses aflame with the idea, "From the river to the sea, the land of Palestine shall be free."

If you have a Calvinistic eschatology, you are swept into Satan's propaganda. But if you have a non-Calvinistic eschatology, meaning that you are actually interpreting what God says about the end literally, including the thousand years, then you have some kind of fortification for standing up against an anti-Israel mentality. So this is what you have in these Calvinistic circles.

Here is a quote from a guy named Kenneth Gentry. I spent a lot of time on him, unfortunately. I wrote my master's thesis at Dallas Theological Seminary against

Gentry's interpretation of the beast, whom Gentry thinks is Nero. Gentry does not believe in a future anti-Christ. He is what you call a preterist.

I wrote my doctoral dissertation against Gentry's interpretation of the harlot in Revelation 17, whom he does not interpret as the literal city of Babylon. He thinks that it is the city of Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

Kenneth Gentry is a very interesting guy. He is also the progenitor of a doctrine called Lordship salvation. You guys already know a little something about that. Gentry developed that doctrine before John MacArthur got his hands on Lordship salvation—because John MacArthur did not used to be a Lordship salvationist.

Lordship salvation is the idea that you have to commit or be willing to commit every area of your life to the Lordship of Christ in order to be justified before God, which takes the gospel of Jesus Christ and turns it into a man-made human work. It is no longer trusting in a gift provided by God to us. The focus is on what we do to get our foot in the front door.

John MacArthur probably did more than any other person I could think of to take the doctrine of Lordship salvation and bring it into our circles—Bible church type circles. But long before John MacArthur got his hands on that doctrine, this guy, Kenneth Gentry, was academically developing it.

So Gentry is a key player not only in the area of eschatology, but also in the area of soteriology. Notice how Gentry handles the thousand years. He is what you call a five-point Calvinist. He is hitching his wagon to John Calvin. John Calvin allegorized away the thousand-year kingdom. Is it any shock that Kenneth Gentry would do the same thing?

This particular individual is Presbyterian. I was invited to teach a Bible study once at a Presbyterian church when I lived in Southern California. I was so ignorant of all of these things. I think some people wanted me to teach there because they had heard something I did at another church, and they said, this would be great at our church.

So I had to go in and schedule a meeting with the pastor, and he figured out where I was coming from. And he said, we cannot have any of that heresy taught in our church. And he used the "H" word: "heresy," about dispensationalism. And I was a little bit taken aback by that because I was unfamiliar with all these controversies.

But what I am saying is that when you look at it in retrospect, what Presbyterians are saying is consistent, because neither Calvin himself nor Luther corrected these abuses. They just came out of Roman Catholicism, which they really did not want to come out of to begin with.

Luther and Calvin never wanted to start a Protestant movement. They were trying to work on the inside to reform the church within. A brand-new movement called the

Protestant movement was foreign to them. And so it was not until Luther and Calvin were kicked out of Roman Catholicism that they started the Protestant movement.

And when they started the Protestant movement, they brought into Protestantism some corrections that they had made in the area of salvation related to Roman Catholicism. But they never corrected these Augustinian eschatological abuses.

In fact, when Luther, in Wittenberg, Germany, a little over five hundred years ago, posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the cathedral door in Wittenberg, Germany—I have actually been there and seen the door; it is now metal; it has been 500 years—Luther did it, really, like posting something on social media where you just want to start a conversation.

Luther did not know that he would be called a heretic. He did not know that he would be kicked out. He did not know that they were going to give him the right foot of fellowship. Calvin was actually studying to be a Roman Catholic priest, as was Luther.

So these guys were kicked out and their thinking was changed in a few areas with Roman Catholicism. But their thinking was consistent in a lot of areas with Roman Catholicism. So they started the Protestant movement. And you can go into those churches today and they will be Protestant in some areas, but still Roman Catholic and other areas.

So Kenneth Gentry writes,

"The proper understanding of the thousand-year time frame in Revelation 20 is that it is representative of a long and glorious era..."¹³

Well, why doesn't John say "a long time" then?

"...and is not limited to a literal 365,000 days."¹⁴

I think that number is rather strange there, because it should be 360,000 days, because the Jewish year has 360 days on it. But I digress.

"The figure represents a perfect cube of 10, which is the number of quantitative perfection."¹⁵

All a thousand years means in Gentry's mind is that God wins. Perfect perfection: the number ten times three. That is rather odd because I thought that seven was the number of quantitative perfection. Now all of a sudden, Gentry has made ten the number of quantitative perfection.

¹³ Kenneth Gentry, *He Shall Have Dominion: A Post Millennial Eschatology* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1992), page 335.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

You see the wiggle room that these guys have through their allegorical interpretation, to convince people that the kingdom of God started in the first century. So this is Neo-Calvinism.

Here is another verse that is completely and totally mutilated in Neo-Calvinists circles. Let's go over to Matthew 24:13. Jesus in the Olivet discourse said this,

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved ["sozo" (σώζω)]"
(Matthew 24:13).

"Saved" is the Greek verb "sozo" (σώζω). Now you can imagine what Calvinists do with that verse. They turn it into, "You'd better make it to the end of your life in faith and works in an upward ascent, or else you are not one of the elect." Well, how many good works do I have to have? That is never defined.

What about if I have doubts as a Christian? That is never defined. But to prove you are one of the elect, you had better be making it to the end of your life in belief and good works, or else you can question whether you are one of the elect.

Now, you teach that enough times and people start to second guess whether they are one of the elect, and it takes people and puts them in an emotionally bad place. In fact, there is an article you can find online by Minirth and Meier, two Christian psychologists.

I am not crazy about Minirth and Meier's integration of psychology with the Bible. But they have an article out, published probably in the late 1990s. The title of it is "The Psychological Effects of Lordship Salvation."

And they write that this doctrine that all these people—R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, and all of these people—are teaching all the time, that you better make it to the end of your life and good works to prove you are one of the elect,—this is having a massive emotional and psychological impact on God's people.

You now have a generation that really does not accept their birthright—something that God wants to give them as their birthright—the assurance of salvation. I know one hundred percent I am saved. It is not that I do not have up days and down days, but I understand that my salvation has nothing to do with that.

My salvation has to do with what Jesus did for me, and I received what He did as a gift. Now, if I did not have that kind of theology and I put all the focus on me instead of Jesus, then yeah, one day I would think I am saved. The next day I would think I am not saved. And if you hear this stuff on TV or radio enough times, and there is a verse that they quote, right?

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

And if you are the kind of Christian that has not been taught correctly, then yeah, there is going to be some psychological impact on people who do not understand their birthright, the assurance of salvation.

What is Matthew 24:13 talking about when it says, "*the one who endures...will be saved*"? Well, the three rules of real estate are location, location, location. The three rules of Bible study are. Context. Context. Context. All you have to do is take that verse that your favorite preacher just let slip out of his mouth, and put it back in its context.

And you will see through this very quickly. The word "saved" ("sozo" [σώζω]) in Matthew 24:13 is not talking about going to heaven when you die. Of course, the word "saved" elsewhere does mean that, but not in Matthew 24:13. The word "saved" ("sozo" [σώζω]) is not a technical word—a word that is used the same way every single time it is used. It has nuanced meanings.

And to look at the meaning, you have to insert the verse back in its context. You remember when Jesus and Satan got into a Scripture quoting battle in Luke 4, and Satan told Jesus to throw Himself from the temple, and the angels would catch Him. And then Satan even quoted to Jesus the Bible. He even quoted the Book of Deuteronomy. Wow, that is impressive.

And then Jesus responded with another quotation from the Book of Deuteronomy: 'Thou shalt not put the Lord thy God to the test' (*Deuteronomy 6:16, Matthew 4:7*). Jesus was calling Satan on the carpet for taking a verse, Psalm 91:11-12, and ripping it from its context.

Yes, God does protect us from unknown harm, but that does not give me a right to lay out here on the freeway and test God to see if He is going to come through. To make it sound that way, I have to rip the verse from its context.

And folks, you can take the Bible—everybody loves to quote the Bible because it has authority—but you can take the Bible and make it sound anything you want it to sound, if you do not care about the rules of context. You know, "Judas went out and hung himself. Go thou and do likewise. What you do, do quickly."

So I just took three verses. I threw them together, and I made it sound like we are all supposed to commit suicide. This is the kind of thing that Satan does. And this is what these Neo-Calvinists constantly do with a verse like this.

The truth of the matter is that this word "saved" ("sozo" [σώζω]) does not always refer to dying and going to heaven. Here is the noun, "soteria" (σωτηρία). The verb is "sozo" ("sozo" [σώζω]). "Soter" (σωτήρ) means "savior." "Soteria" (σωτηρία) means "salvation." These words are all coming from the same root.

Notice how Paul uses "soteria" in Philippians 1:19.

"for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance ["soteria" (σωτηρία)] through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ"
(Philippians 1:19).

Now in Philippians 1:19, Paul is using the word "salvation" ("soteria" [σωτηρία]), and it has nothing to do with dying and going to heaven. It has to do with physical protection from prison. So when you use the word "save" ("sozo" [σώζω]), how are you using the word?

"We left our house early today and got to church early, and we were saved from a traffic jam." "When I was sixteen, I heard the gospel and I trusted in Christ, and I was saved from hell." Both are legitimate uses of the word "save" ("sozo" [σώζω]). The question is just which one is in play. And the only way you can figure it out is by putting the words back into their context.

Here is Hebrews 11:7. It says,

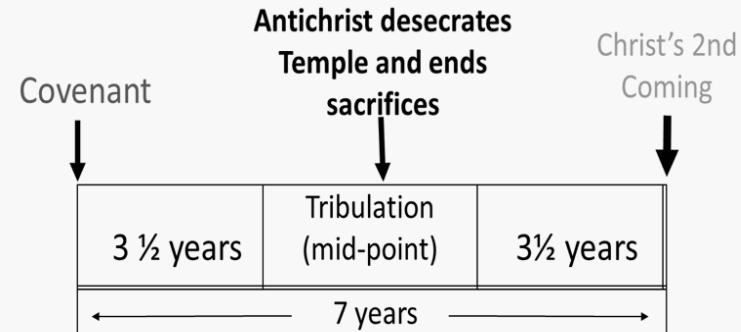
"By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation ["soteria" (σωτηρία)] of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

Now here, Noah was saved from water. He built an ark, and he and his family were physically protected from the Flood. So they were saved. This context has absolutely nothing to do with dying and going to heaven.

And I am saying that Jesus is not using the word "save" ("sozo" [σώζω]) to refer to dying and going to heaven, here in Matthew 24:13. Jesus' target audience is the Jews in the Tribulation Period. And He says to those Jews, who see the temple desecrated, which is described in Matthew 24:15-22, to the Jews physically—you Jews that I am speaking of here—let those living in Judea flee into the mountains (Matthew 24:16, paraphrase).

That is who Jesus is talking to. "Once you see the temple desecrated at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period, if you make it through the next three and a half years, and you make it to the end, then Messiah—Yeshua; we would call Him Jesus—is going to return. His feet are going to touch Planet Earth, and He is going to physically protect you from the beast."

DAN 9:27 OVERVIEW OF TRIBULATION PERIOD



That is the meaning of Matthew 24:13 and its context. So there I am using "save" ("sozo" [σώζω]) as Hebrews 11:7 and Philippians 1:19 are using it: in a context other than justification from sin. So Matthew 24:13 is talking about the events of the Tribulation Period that the Jews living on the earth have to experience.

"Make it to the end, and you will be physically protected from the beast who is trying to kill you, by Jesus Himself. Once you hit the midpoint, make it to the end, and you will be physically protected in spite of all of these other judgments that are going to be taking place during that time period."

The saving is physical protection from death and is described in Matthew 24:31—what Jesus is going to do for the believing Jews at that time. It says,

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET AND THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER [ēpisynago" (ἐπισυνάγω); from which we get the word "synagogue," a Jewish gathering] His elect [Israel, God's elect nation] from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other"
(Matthew 24:31).

This will be the fulfillment of Isaiah 27:13, which says,

"It will come about also in that day a great trumpet will be blown,..." (Isaiah 27:13).

Now that is not the Rapture. God has more than one trumpet, amen?

"It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem" (Isaiah 27:13).

Now this "episynago" (ἐπισυνάγω), this gathering spoken of in Isaiah 27:13 and Matthew 24:31, is something that Jesus wanted to do with the Jewish people when He came the first time. You see that at the end of Matthew 23, which comes right before Matthew 24.

Matthew 23:37-39 says,

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,..." (Matthew 23:37).

Now who is Jesus talking to there? Obviously Jews. He does not say, "Austin, Texas; and Washington, D.C.." He says,

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather ["episynago" (ἐπισυνάγω)] your children together, the way a hen gathers ["episynago" (ἐπισυνάγω)] her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling" (Matthew 23:37).

"The problem was not Me. The problem was you." Jesus said to the Jews, 2,000 years ago. "You would not have Me."

"Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!" (Matthew 23:38).

The house would be the temple. So Jesus is essentially saying here, "It is not My house anymore. You threw Me out of it. It is your house."

"For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until..." (Matthew 23:39).

Oh, there is a future for Israel!

"...until you say, "BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!"" (Matthew 23:39).

That quote is a Messianic psalm: Psalm 118:26. Jesus is essentially saying, "I am not coming back for this nation until you acknowledge Me as your Messiah. Once you do that, then I will gather you. I will physically protect you from the Antichrist. I wanted to physically protect you from Titus of Rome 2,000 years before the Antichrist. But you would not come to Me on My terms."

So when Matthew 24:13 says that he who endures to the end will be saved, that is the meaning of it. It is the physical protection of the Jews in the Tribulation Period. It has nothing to do with, "Boy, I'd better make sure I am on the up and up with abounding fruit and works and faith. Because if I am not, maybe I am not saved. Maybe I am not one of the elect."

You know, in this study, I am going to be showing you some quotes from a doctoral dissertation that was done concerning the Puritans. This man went through all the Puritan writings, and he said that almost to a person, the Puritans—who were wonderful people, by the way; they founded the United States of America, as well as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale (those are all Puritan-founded institutions)—almost to a man, almost to a person, they all went to their grave scared out of their minds.

Why would they be scared on their deathbed? Because they were steeped in this Calvinistic theology, and they did not know whether they were one of the elect. Because they had bad teaching, which indicated that if you are one of the elect, if you are really going to be saved in the end, you have to endure.

And the Puritans did not know if they had endured enough. How could anyone, when you are given a subjective test like that, know whether they have done enough? So on your deathbed, during a time when you really want to be trusting in the promises of God, they were in a state of fear because they did not know if they had individually persevered enough. That is the consequence of this type of warped Calvinistic theology that everybody today is so in love with.

Watch what John MacArthur does with Matthew 24 in his commentary on Matthew. In all honesty, John MacArthur does a really good job with Matthew 24 until he hits verse 13—*"the one who endures to the end will be saved."* It is as if MacArthur becomes a different person. This is what he says, now that you know what Matthew 24:13 is actually teaching.

"But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved..."his endurance will be a Spirit-empowered product and proof of the reality that he is saved. Neither the high cost of discipleship nor the deception of false prophets nor the enticement of sin will cause true believers to renounce Christ, because He Himself will protect them from defection. Endurance is always a mark of salvation...The perseverance of the saints in faith is a very basic element of salvation teaching in the New Testament. It states that people who are genuinely saved do not depart from the faith (see John 8: 31; 1 Cor. 15: 1-2; Col. 1: 21-23; Heb. 2: 1-3; 3: 14; 4: 14; 6: 11-12; 10: 39; 12: 14; James 1: 2-4)..."¹⁶

And here MacArthur quotes all these verses. All of them are outside of Matthew's Gospel, you will notice. But your average person reads that and says, "Wow, this guy really knows his Bible," not understanding that Satan knows the Bible pretty well too. And then MacArthur says at the end,

"Endurance...does give evidence of the spiritual life that resides in the believer..."¹⁷

¹⁶ John MacArthur, Matthew 24–25, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 28.

¹⁷ Ibid.

What did John MacArthur just do right in the middle of his commentary on Matthew? He was doing a pretty good job overall with the Olivet Discourse. What did he just do with Matthew 24:13? He ignored the context and dumped his Calvinistic teaching into it, where the context does not warrant it at all.

I bring this up because these types of people do this constantly—the careful exegesis that they demonstrate in other sections of Scripture, when it comes to prophecy, they just throw it out. Because at the end of the day, they are interested in TULIP, which will be talking through in detail in this series.

The last ingredient of TULIP is the Perseverance of the Saints, meaning if you are one of the elect, you have to endure till the end. In fact, there was a man named James Boice, who has written some really good commentaries. I have his commentary on Genesis—several volumes—on my shelf.

He is hooked in Calvinistic circles with R.C. Sproul, in the Ligonier Conference that they host in Orlando, Florida, where 5,000 people show up to hear this stuff. R.C. Sproul, who is now deceased, gave an announcement that Jim Boice was dying. "So let's all stop right now—5,000 people—and let's pray that Jim dies still believing."

That's basically what Sproul said. "Let's all pray that he dies still believing in Jesus." Now, why would a guy stand up in front of 5,000 people and say something like that? Because R.C. Sproul was completely steeped in this Perseverance of the Saints doctrine. You cannot have a guy lapsing in faith at the end of his life.

This is a little personal for me, having had my father-in-law and my dad die this year. Anybody that deals with someone at the end of life knows that people lapse in and out of consciousness constantly. They lapse out of mental acuity, back and forth constantly.

And if I were going to take R.C. Sproul's belief system and apply it to my situation, I would have to say, "Well, maybe my dad was saved. Maybe my father-in-law was saved. Maybe he was not." This is the impact of this Perseverance of the Saints idea.

This is a theology that is back loaded into Matthew 24. It is in John MacArthur's books. People read it. They think that it is gospel truth because, "Oh my goodness, look at all the verses he quoted." Yeah, he quotes a lot of verses there, but they do not have anything to do with the passage. Ultimately it is confusing and it is deceptive.

Dave Anderson (I think he is a local Houstonian) did some good work on Augustine, from whom Calvin got a lot of his theology. Anderson points out something about Augustine's beliefs about Matthew 24:13—"the one who endures to the end...will be saved."

When Augustine stopped seeing Matthew 24:13 as a Tribulation verse for the Jews in the Tribulation Period, and instead saw it as fruit that you have to maintain towards the

end of your life to prove you are one of the elect—Anderson says that when Augustine switched his view on it, his whole theology changed.

Calvin got a lot of his stuff from Augustine. Augustine had it wrong on Matthew 24:13. And once Augustine got it wrong on Matthew 24:13, he started getting it wrong everywhere. So Dave Anderson writes this. He says,

"...we chose Augustine as a case in point...Specifically, his reinterpretation of Matthew 24:13 ('he who endures to the end will be saved') as a spiritual salvation instead of a physical salvation (to enter and populate the Millennium) caused drastic changes in his soteriology. Perseverance of the saints (faithfulness until the end of one's physical life) became the sine qua non [meaning, "without which there is not"] of his soteriology. One could believe in Christ, have the fruit of the elect, but prove he was not elect if he should not persevere in faithfulness until the end of his physical life."¹⁸

So Augustine, rather than seeing this as a Tribulation Period and Millennial verse—about who is going to make it to the end of the tribulation, which Jews to be physically protected by Jesus; those saved Jews will go into the Millennium and repopulate the earth—Augustine, rather than taking Matthew 24:13 in its ordinary sense, turned it into this monstrosity of the Perseverance of the Saints.

All John Calvin did over a thousand years later at the age of twenty-six, was he said, "Well, this looks swell. I will grab it from Augustine's work, 'The City of God,' and I will bring it into my theology." And sadly, the Protestant movement today is built on that corrupted understanding of Matthew 24:13.

It is Calvin and others, probably his followers after him, who said, "Well, this will be swell in our 'P': for the Perseverance of the Saints." So when you are talking to a Calvinist and they want to defend Perseverance of the Saints, they typically go to Matthew 24:13, when Matthew 24:13 has absolutely nothing to do with what they are making the verse into.

One other thing, (I am trying to explain all the tentacles of this thing so that you will understand why we are going into detail and trying to uproot it). In our understanding of eschatology, we have four judgments. We get this from a literal reading of the Bible because these judgments are all described differently.

¹⁸ David R. Anderson, "The Soteriological Impact of Augustine's Change from Premillennialism to Amillennialism: Part One," *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* Volume 15, no. 28 (2002): 25. and Part Two is in no 29, Autumn, 2002.

Scripture's Four Judgments				
Name	Sheep and Goat	Judgment of the Jews	<u>Bema Seat</u>	Great White Throne
Scripture	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	<u>1 Cor 3:10-15</u>	Rev 20:11-15
Place	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	<u>Heaven</u>	After Earth
Audience	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	<u>Church Age believers</u>	All unsaved
When	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	<u>After rapture</u>	After Millennium
Purpose	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	<u>Reward believers</u>	Degree of punishment in hell
Evaluation	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	<u>Works taken through fire</u>	Not in the book; judged by books

There is the sheep and the goat judgment for surviving people after the Tribulation to determine whether they are saved or unsaved. The unsaved are cast off the earth into Hades. The saved are left behind to enter the Millennial Kingdom. Matthew 25:31-46 describes this judgment.

Then there will be a parallel judgment of the surviving Jews from the Tribulation Period. Ezekiel 20:33-44 describes that survivors that are believers pass under the Shepherd's rod and enter the Millennial Kingdom. Unbelievers are cast off the earth into judgment.

Then, after the thousand years are over there will be something called a Great White Throne Judgment. That is for unbelievers only. As their name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, they are transferred from Hades into the lake of fire. If your name is not in the Book of Life, you are judged by the books. The books are a degree of your evil.

So there will be different degrees of torment for people in the lake of fire throughout the ages based on that judgment. That is only for unsaved people. So there is the sheep and goat judgment for those Gentiles who survive the Tribulation period. There will be a judgment of the Jews who survive the Tribulation.

There will be the Great White Throne judgment of unbelievers of all ages. The Bema Seat judgment is your judgment, and my judgment, where we will, post-Rapture, stand before the Lord. It is not an evaluation to determine whether you are saved or not. That issue is already taken care of.

It is that believers are rewarded differently based on how they invested their lives now—during their earthly sojourn. So we are not put through a fire there. First Corinthians 3:10-15 speaks about this judgment. But our works are put through a fire to test their quality.

We don't just say, "Hey, this is a neat theology. Let's try this on for size." A literal reading of the Bible yields this: four future judgments. Now, one of the things that is interesting about the Neo-Calvinists is they do not have anything like this. They have just one big judgment at the end.

I call it the "ram, jam and cram" method of interpretation. Anything you see about judgment, it has all got to be talking about the same event. So Calvinists do not really have a sheep and goat judgment. They do not really have a judgment of the Jews. They do not really have a Bema Seat judgment.

It is just one big, Great White Throne judgment where you could actually show up there not knowing whether you are going into the lake of fire or not. And Calvinists have that understanding because they do not separate the judgments out.

Robert Congdon has done some great work in this. I like the title of his book, "How Calvinism Serves Satan's Purposes." (Wow. Tell us how you really feel.) Congdon, in this book, is commenting on the Neo-Calvinist movement.

In fact, we have gotten a lot of correspondence. People ask me, "Why do you keep calling them Neo-Calvinists—new Calvinists?" Because that is the nomenclature that Robert Congdon uses. It is talking about a new movement that is hitching its wagon to John Calvin—Neo-Calvinists. They are bringing in everything that Calvin ever said or did, good and bad.

Congdon writes,

"Most new Calvinists do not believe that Christ will return and reign on this earth for one thousand years..."¹⁹

Well, of course they do not believe that, because John Calvin did not believe it.

"...nor do they understand that those of the church age will return to rule with Him following a review time before His judgment seat or bema seat when our roles and responsibilities will be determined. Most Calvinists believe the Great White Throne judgment is for everyone of all ages..."²⁰

¹⁹ Robert R. Congdon, *How Calvinism Serves Satan's Purposes* (Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 29.

²⁰ Ibid.

And I am here to tell you that it is not for everyone of all ages. It is for the unsaved of all ages. But because the Calvinists are not rightfully dividing the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15) in this area. They just say that there is one great big judgment at the end.

It is the same thing people do with the trumpet. People think that God cannot have two trumpets. Apparently He cannot have a trumpet for the church, and a trumpet for Israel at the end of the Tribulation Period. People just see the word trumpet and they merge it together, which is a very sloppy handling of the Word of God.

They would never do something this careless in Galatians or Romans. But when it comes to eschatology, they do this all the time. Most Calvinists believe that the Great White Throne judgment is for everyone of all ages, and that it will determine whether one is truly saved or not.

So you are going to pop up at some at the Great White Throne Judgment, and you do not even know what the ruling is going to be. Maybe you are one of the elect. Maybe you are not. Well, what if I died in unbelief like Jim Boyce perhaps did? "Ah, he's out."

What if I have a lapse like Peter did and I deny the Lord three times? Or what if I have a lapse like David did, and I commit adultery and murder, and then lie about it to cover it up? What if that happens? "You're out."

And what is interesting is that now, one of their own, Steven Lawson, a teaching elder at a big Dallas church (a John MacArthur type church)—well, it has come to the surface that he has had a long affair with a twenty-something-year-old, when he was the dean at John MacArthur Seminary.

See, if something like that happened to someone on TBN, or someone who is outside of the Calvinist theology. They would all condemn him just like that. But now they are tripping over themselves, trying to make excuses for him because he is one of theirs. That is how subjective this whole thing is.

"This guy's in. This guy's not." It gives way too much power to the clergy to make that decision. I do not like the theology for the simple reason that I would never want to be in a position saying, "Well, they are the elect. They are not."

So there is this one big judgment at the end. You really do not know whether you are one of the elect or one of the non-elect. You are going to show up at this Great White Throne Judgment, and you are sitting there nervous out of your mind, with sweaty palms, because you do not know whether you have done enough good works to prove you are one of the elect.

Now, I could think that if I took all of the judgments and merged them together like they are doing. But my hermeneutic, my method of interpretation, will not allow me to do that. You will not show up at the Great White Throne judgment if you are a believer in Jesus. I will tell you that categorically. You should give that no thought whatsoever.

Now, for your unsaved friends and family members, give it some thought, but not for yourself. The judgment in your future is the judgment seat of rewards. So the impetus today is to use our lives wisely so that we can be fully rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

So there are some key eschatological issues in this Neo-Calvinists movement. And that is why I am devoting time to talking about this. This is very serious now. Cheer up, folks. It gets worse. Anti-semitism (the irrational hatred of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). I will trace that through next week.