

## Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 002

2 Peter 1:19

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Locate 2 Peter 1:19 in your Bibles. In Sunday School last week we started, having finished the Thessalonians letters, a topical study on the issue of Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible. And based on some of the online comments and emails, it seems that there is a big interest in this subject because a lot of people have been affected by it. Just to reorient you, this is a six-part outline that we are trying to follow in this series.

### 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

In our first installment together, we looked at Roman numeral "I". I called it, "Calvinism's Mixed Blessing," because there are a lot of good things in Calvinism.

One of the benefits of Calvinism is that without it, we probably would not have divided power in America—I tried to talk you through that connection—and we would probably be living under tyranny. So if you are curious about that, I would encourage you, if you were not here, to watch or listen to last week's installment.

Roman numeral "II": why are we even getting into this subject of why critique Neo-Calvinism? Well, we covered a couple points.

## 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

Number one: there is general calling to defend the faith (Jude 1:3). Two: there is a calling to admonish fellow believers (2 Thessalonians 3:15). Regarding a lot of the people that we are going to be critiquing, you might say to yourself, "Well, wait a minute, I have their book on my bookshelf. Wait a minute. I just listened to their radio program."

It is as though it is okay to critique someone outside of Christianity, but not to critique someone inside Christianity. And I tried to explain that we have a general duty and a calling to critique anything that we hear outside or inside the church.

Then we move to letter C here, that Calvinism is actually a very serious issue.

### C. Calvinism is a Serious Issue

- 1) Path to salvation becomes difficult (if not impossible)
- 2) The sacrifice of Christ becomes unavailable to whosoever
- 3) The character of God is questioned (double predestination)
- 4) Offers no assurance of Salvation
- 5) Calls into question basic Christian practices (such as the baptism of children)

We left off here with number five: why is Calvinism a serious issue? I gave you four things last time. We left off with number five.

One of the reasons that this issue of Calvinism is so serious is that as it is growing in the Neo-Calvinist movement it is calling into question basic Christian practices, things that the church has done for 2,000 years, such as baptizing children.

Now, we are not talking about baptized infants. We do not baptize infants here unless an infant can walk forward and articulate that they are a Christian. We do not baptize infants, because they cannot talk (though they can yell a lot). Have you noticed that they cannot verbalize that they have actually trusted in Christ?

Baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality. So we have to wait till children are old enough to actually explain to us that they are truly a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. But if they are able to do that, it really does not matter how young they are. They can be five years old, six years old, seven years old—we will baptize children.

Now Neo-Calvinism is coming along and saying, "You can't do that. You can't baptize children." And the reason they are saying that is because of what we will be explaining: the "P," the Perseverance of the Saints in the Calvinistic acronym TULIP. It means that if you are really saved, if you are one of the elect, then there has to be a lifestyle of faithfulness, fruitfulness, commitment, obedience, perseverance.

They have very limited room for being backslidden or being carnal. They have almost no room for being a Christian and then lapsing into unbelief. Basically Calvinists will say, "Well, such and such a person was never saved." So there is this epidemic of people that claim the name of Christ, and they go off to college and into young adulthood and suddenly they have jettisoned their Christianity.

What we would say about people like that is that maybe they never trusted in Christ—that is an option. Or maybe they are just living in a state of being backslidden or carnal. That is an option, too. But the Neo-Calvinist crowd says, "No, the only option is they were never saved."

So therefore, you do not baptize children because we have not had enough time to observe their life to see if they are going to lapse backward or not. So all these children that we baptized a couple weeks ago, Calvinists would say, "That is an illegitimate practice."

So that is a challenge to normal Christianity. Christianity has always baptized anyone whose profession of faith you can hear. There are instructions in the Didache (which is like a very early manual of Christian behavior and instructions for churches) for baptizing children.

After all, remember that it was Jesus who said, "Suffer not the little children to come unto me. For the kingdom of heaven is made of such as these" (paraphrase, Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). And when the Philippian jailer trusted in Christ, you remember what Paul and Silas said:

*"...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31).*

That does not mean that his household was saved because he was saved. It means that since he was the head of the home, presumably he would go home and share the knowledge of the truth with his household, which could have involved little kids, they would come to faith and be baptized accordingly.

So there has never been much of an issue in Christianity in terms of baptizing children, until people became very aggressive with the "P," the Perseverance of the Saints in Calvinism. There is a book by Justin Peters, a Calvinist. You probably have seen some of his stuff online or on YouTube.

The book is entitled "Do Not Hinder Them—A Biblical Examination of Childhood Evangelism." It is just sort of a harangue, if you will. It is not the best researched book I have ever read. In fact, it is pretty poorly researched, to be honest with you. It makes a lot of logical fallacies, exegetical fallacies, and things of that nature.

I am not bringing it up just to try to tear apart the book. I am bringing it up just to show you the mindset of Neo-Calvinism. It is one of those books that has no endorsements in it other than John MacArthur's. John MacArthur and Calvinism think it is a great book.

John MacArthur says in the foreword of the book,

"Jesus said, 'Permit the children to come to Me and do not hinder them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these' (Mark 10:14). Is this a verse in support of baptizing children who make a profession of faith in Christ as most evangelicals have supposed? If it is, why is it that so many of the children we baptize grow up to show little if any fruit of having been genuinely converted?"<sup>1</sup>

So in the Calvinist mindset, if you are one of these kids, and you go to college, and you kind of jettison your faith, the Calvinists only have one option for such people: they were never saved. Whereas our perspective is that never having been saved is one of two possibilities.

It could be that those kids, now young adults, are living in a rebellious state, in a state of carnality, as backslidden Christians. The Calvinists are saying that there is no such thing, because of the Perseverance of the Saints.

When we critique the "P," Perseverance of the Saints, I am going to show you example after example after example in the Bible of people whose salvation is not in doubt at all, but were clearly saved.

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Peters, *Do Not Hinder Them*, FOREWORD by Dr. John MacArthur.

So you notice what John MacArthur says here: that we cannot baptize these kids because we have to observe them. If they fall away, they were never saved to begin with. And you do not baptize an unsaved person. That is what he is saying.

He goes on and he says,

"Why do so many walk away from Christianity once they gain independence from the home?"<sup>2</sup>

Well, there is an answer to that. It has to do with the world system that is aligned against the believer: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16).

You have to be equipped as a Christian regarding how to handle each of those three enemies that you inherit. And if you do not know how to do that, then you are going to be sucked into the world system and become what we would call a backslidden or carnal Christian.

If Christians could not lapse into that, then why in the world does God give Christians instructions about putting on the armor of God (see Romans 13:12; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8) denying the sin nature, and not allowing your mind to be conformed to the image of the world (see Romans 12:2 and other passages)? It seems to me that all of those instructions would be unneeded if a Christian could never be conformed to the world.

"Why do so many walk away from Christianity once they gain independence from the home? In 'Do Not Hinder Them,' the author and evangelist Justin Peters presents a compelling biblical case that both the nature of children and the nature of salvation warrant extreme caution before we baptize children who have made intellectual assent to the basics of the Gospel."<sup>3</sup>

So that is the only option in MacArthur's mind.

"Do Not Hinder Them" encourages parents to teach their children the Gospel but also provides strong biblical and theological reasons to wait until they are older before following through with baptism."<sup>4</sup>

So when Jesus says, "Suffer not the little children to come unto Me" (paraphrase, Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16), take that and rip it right out of your Bible, because that does not fit Calvinistic theology. Take the information in the Didache and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

get rid of that. Get rid of this Christian practice of baptizing children for 2,000 years, because it does not fit the Calvinistic narrative.

So that is another reason that we are looking into this subject of Neo-Calvinism, among other reasons, because it is an aggressive movement and it is actually challenging basic Christian practices such as baptizing children. So that is the part everybody missed last week when the live feed cut off.

## 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**

Another reason that we are critiquing Calvinism is the prophetic implications it has. Here I am talking about the prophetic implications of Neo-Calvinism. In the Neo-Calvinist movement, John Calvin is the gold standard. It is as if he were raised up by God. His theology is venerated.

I am here to tell you that maybe Calvin had a few things right. But there are other areas in which he was a complete and total disaster. And I am noticing that as this Neo-Calvinist movement goes back and tries to resurface Calvin, they are not just recycling the good things the man did—and he did some—they are getting in bed, if I can use that analogy, with a lot of the bad things as well.

And this is why you can go to many, many Neo-Calvinist type churches and congregations, and you will not hear a single word about Bible prophecy. You will not hear about the coming Millennial Kingdom. You will not hear about the Rapture of the church. You will not hear about the coming Antichrist and Tribulation Period.

You will not hear anything about how our world is being set up, as we speak, for the events of the Great Tribulation Period. And I am noticing that as these Neo-Calvinists are trying more to parallel John Calvin, they are saying less and less and less about Bible prophecy, if anything.

## 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

And actually, there is a reason for that. John Calvin had prophecy completely and totally wrong, as I will try to show you here. In Neo-Calvinism there is a de-emphasis on eschatology. I have talked to people that grow up in these kinds of Calvinistic Reformed circles.

In fact, I was actually on an Israel trip with one couple, and they told me that throughout their whole life in that church, they never heard anything from the Book of Revelation. They never heard anything from Romans 11 about the Jews being restored in the last days.

Had they not broken away from that church and gone somewhere else, their children and grandchildren would be in the exact same predicament. They said that they were raised in that church because their parents raised them in that church. They heard nothing about prophecy.

They heard nothing about prophecy, so they decided to break the generational problem and go somewhere else. And my response to them was, "Good for you, because if you are in a church that will not say anything about the Book of Revelation, the Book of Daniel, or the Book of Ezekiel, you are in a church that is not teaching the full council of God's Word."

But what you are finding in these Neo-Calvinistic circles is that there is a great de-emphasis on eschatology, the study of the end. Now, it is no wonder, because the sources that they are drawing from, Calvin, Luther, etc., did not want anything to do with eschatology.

Here is a quote from Martin Luther, who did a lot of good with the Protestant Reformation. But you cannot act as if Luther or Calvin is the sum total of all biblical knowledge. Luther was a great translator of the Bible. But Luther, in his preface to the New Testament, translating from Hebrew and Greek into the language of the German people, said this about the Book of Revelation:

"I miss more than one thing in this book, and this makes me hold it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic..."<sup>5</sup>

So no apostle wrote the Book of Revelation according to Martin Luther.

"I think of it almost as I do the Fourth Book of Esdras,..."<sup>6</sup>

Now that is a non-canonical book. So what Luther is saying is that the Book of Revelation is not inspired by God any more than the Fourth Book of Esdras is inspired by God.

"...and can in no way detect that the Holy Spirit produced it...It is just the same as if we did not have it, and there are many far better books for us to keep."<sup>7</sup>

Gee, I did not know that Luther was in a position to decide whether we are going to keep this book and throw that book out. So what Luther did was he took the Book of Revelation, and he put it basically in the appendix of his German translation.

By the way, Luther did that exact same thing with the Book of James. He hated the Book of James, by his own admission. He called it "an epistle of straw," and he put it in the appendix. And the reason he did not like the Book of James was that in his mind it contradicted salvation by faith alone that you find in the Book of Romans and the Book of Galatians.

As you know from our studies in the Book of James (we have done a verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of James, which is available on our website) the Book of James, the Lord's half-brother, fits Paul's theology perfectly if you understand that Paul and James are answering different questions.

Paul is basically, among other things, trying to answer the question, how do you become justified before God? James is trying to answer the question, how does a person who has been justified before God live for Jesus today? When you understand that the two are dealing with different questions, then the Book of James and the books of Paul fit together perfectly.

But Martin Luther was dead by the time we taught our series, so he did not know any better. So he thought that there was a contradiction. So he did not like the Book of James. He attacked the Book of James a lot. He put the Book of James in the appendix of the Luther German translation.

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<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther, Preface to the New Testament, 1522.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

He did basically the same thing with the Book of Revelation. He says,

"Finally, let everyone think of it [Revelation] as his own spirit gives him to. My spirit cannot fit itself into this book. There is one sufficient reason for me not to think highly of it—Christ is not taught or known in it;..."<sup>8</sup>

Well, hmm. Can't find Jesus in the Book of Revelation. Look at the first verse of the book:

*"The Revelation of Jesus Christ..." (Revelation 1:1).*

Revelation 19:10 says,

*"Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'" (Revelation 19:10).*

Jesus is all over the Book of Revelation. It is just that the book is portraying Him not so much as the Lamb, although He is portrayed as the Lamb, but the book portrays Him as the Lion. He is not portrayed as much as the Savior in the Book of Revelation as He is portrayed as the coming King and the coming Judge.

But just because the contents of the Book of Revelation do not somehow conform to how the Gospels present Jesus does not mean that Jesus is not detected in the book. Yet this is what Martin Luther said.

"My spirit cannot fit itself into this book. There is one sufficient reason for me not to think highly of it—Christ is not taught or known in it; but to teach Christ is the thing which an apostle is bound, above all else, to do, as He says in Acts 1, 'Ye shall be my witnesses.' Therefore I stick to the books which give me Christ, clearly and purely."<sup>9</sup>

And this is in the New Testament in which Luther printed the Book of Revelation with Hebrews, James, and Jude as an appendix to the New Testament. So if you are in a church that wants to hitch its wagon completely and totally to Luther, which is what you are finding in these Neo-Calvinist circles—

They want to hitch the wagon, not to some of the things Luther and Calvin did, but they want to venerate these men almost like idols, and hitch their whole theological wagon to a Martin Luther or John Calvin.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

—you are not going to hear anything in a church like that about the Book of Revelation, because the progenitor of the whole movement did not even think that the Book of Revelation was an inspired book.

So as the Neo-Calvinist movement grows, what you are seeing is a greater de-emphasis on Bible prophecy. Here I am quoting Dr. Roy Zuck, who wrote a wonderful book called "Basic Bible Interpretation." Dr. Zuck says,

"John Calvin (1509-1564) has been called 'one of the greatest interpreters of the Bible.'...Though well known for his theology (spelled out in his two-volume 'Institutes of the Christian Religion'),..."<sup>10</sup>

By the way, Calvin wrote "Institutes of the Christian Religion" at about the ripe old age of twenty-six. So a whole movement has been started following a guy who wrote these "Institutes" at age twenty-six, folks.

I gave my first sermon at the age of twenty-two, and I can thank God for one thing: that the internet was not around at that point, so that there is like no tangible record of it. I actually have a copy of it, but I keep it on a cassette tape.

Some of the young people do not know what a cassette tape is. We will do show and tell someday. "This is a cassette tape." In fact, when my daughter was very little, we were in the Bush International Airport, and they had a payphone in there. And I noticed my daughter—she was so little; maybe five, six, seven—she was just staring at this payphone.

And I was like, "Why is this kid staring at this payphone?" And then it finally occurred to me that she had never seen a payphone. So I was trying to explain to her the concept of a payphone: that we used to put, like, coins into the little slot and dial the operator. And she said to me, "Well, why would you do something like that?" That was her answer.

So, I gave my first sermon when I was about twenty-two. It is on a cassette tape. And if I die and go to be with the Lord, and if people find that cassette tape and they start a movement around me based on what I said when I was twenty-two, in that sermon, I hope that you people will rise up and say, "That is just unacceptable."

And this is why I am really troubled by this Neo-Calvinists movement taking John Calvin's teachings that he wrote at age twenty-six—granted, Calvin was brilliant—and developing a movement around what he said in his "Institutes" is problematic to me.

"John Calvin (1509-1564) has been called 'one of the greatest interpreters of the Bible.'...Though well known for his theology (spelled out in his two-volume 'Institutes of the Christian Religion'), he wrote commentaries on every book of the Bible except 14 Old Testament books and 3 New

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<sup>10</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 1991), 47.

Testament books. Those books are Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, 2 and 3 John and Revelation."<sup>11</sup>

So here is Calvin, a voluminous writer, except for seventeen books. And one of the books that Calvin left out was the Book of Revelation.

So if John Calvin is your gold standard, and we have to get back to Calvinistic teaching, Calvinistic theology, and you are in a church like that, then do not expect to hear much out of those books, including the Book of Revelation, because the leader of the whole movement never wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation, although he wrote careful commentaries on other books of the Bible.

And you will discover that as pastors are hitching their wagon to these Protestant Reformers they, too, are de-emphasizing prophecy.

Here is a quote from Mark Dever. It is a sermon. Mark Dever is a mover and shaker in what is called the Gospel Coalition, a group that revolves around what they call the young, the reformed, and the restless. And notice how he is, like his heroes did, demoting Bible prophecy. He says in this particular sermon,

"I think that millennial views need not be among those doctrines that divide us....I am suggesting that what you believe about the millennium [the thousand years reign of Christ, in other words]—how you interpret these thousand years—is not something that it is necessary for us to agree upon in order to have a congregation together. The Lord Jesus Christ prayed in John 17:21 that we Christians might be one."<sup>12</sup>

Now, John 17:21 has been answered. That prayer has been answered. It has been answered in Acts 2 through the baptizing ministry of the Spirit, whereby the Holy Spirit takes men and women that have trusted in the Messiah—boys and girls—and identifies them with the body of Christ.

People misuse John 17:21 and act as though we need to have an urge to merge: ecumenism. We have to water down certain truths for the sake of unity. That is how people are misusing John 17:21. And by the way, when people quote John 17:21, in which the Lord prays that we should all be one, boy John 17:17 is sure skipped over.

Doesn't verse 17 come before verse 21? Can I get an amen on that? In John 17:17 Jesus says,

*"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).*

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Justin Taylor, "Dever: 'You Are in Sin If You Lead Your Congregation to Have a Statement of Faith that Requires a Particular Millennial View,'" online: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/dever-you-are-in-sin-if-you-lead-your/>, July 14 2009, accessed May 28, 2019.

Then from there Jesus prays that we would be one. So the truth that Jesus was speaking of was not some kind of unity around watered-down truth. So I think that Mark Dever is abusing John 17:21 here. Dever goes on and he says,

"Of course, all true Christians are one in that we have his Spirit, we share his Spirit, we desire to live out that unity. But that unity is supposed to be evident as a testimony to the world around us. Therefore, I conclude that we should end our cooperations together with other Christians...only with the greatest of care, lest we rend the body of Christ for whose unity he's prayed and given himself. Therefore, I conclude that it is a sin to divide the body of Christ—to divide the body that he prayed would be united. Therefore for us to conclude that we must agree upon a certain view of alcohol, or a certain view of schooling, or a certain view of meat sacrificed to idols, or a certain view of the millennium..."<sup>13</sup>

What Dever is doing here is mixing truth and error. Yeah, of course Christians should not be divided on something that the Bible is not clear on. But what about things that the Bible is clear on? Well, they would say, "That is a secondary issue." So let's take our Bibles this morning and open it up to the secondary section. Can we do that?

The doctrine of the Millennium is in the Bible. In fact, I wrote a four-hundred-page book trying to explain the doctrine of the Millennial Kingdom, and I think I just scratched the surface, because of the massive volume of Scripture that is involved in that particular doctrine.

So Dever is taking a very significant section of truth, and he is trying to make it sound as if, well, that is no different from Christians disagreeing with each other around some kind of peripheral matter. He is mixing truth and error here in this statement. He has taken John 17:21 out of context.

He is not explaining that the prophecy of John 17:21 was already fulfilled in Acts 2. It is up to us to come together so that the world sees this kind of unity, and the world will be won to Christ.

Dever goes on and says, concerning the Millennium,

"...in order to have fellowship together is, I think, not only unnecessary for the body of Christ, but it is therefore unwarranted and therefore condemned by scripture."<sup>14</sup>

Now here is the key punchline I want you to see here:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

"So if you're a pastor and you're listening to me, you understand me correctly if you think I'm saying you are in sin if you lead your congregation to have a statement of faith that requires a particular millennial view. I do not understand why that has to be a matter of uniformity in order to have Christian unity in a local congregation."<sup>15</sup>

So Sugar Land Bible Church has a statement of faith. We have the Rapture, we have the Tribulation Period, and we have the subsequent Millennial Kingdom. In our position statements, we all say that this is the angle that our teachers teach from. Dever is saying that it is sin.

"You wrote a four-hundred-page book on the doctrine of the Millennial Kingdom—that is a sin." "You put up in your doctrinal statement an eschatological perspective—that is a sin, because you are unnecessarily dividing the body of Christ."

My point is that as these Neo-Calvinists are hitching their wagons to these great sages of the past who all de-emphasize prophecy, what you are seeing in these Neo-Calvinistic circles is more and more statements like Dever's.

Of course, if you are in one of these types of churches, you would not hear anything about prophecy, because Mark Dever has just said that it is a sin to teach prophecy from a certain angle—pre-Tribulational—pre-Millennial.

I am trying to get at why this critique of Neo-Calvinism is actually very necessary. It is necessary because in their circles, they are de-emphasizing certain Christian practices. They are de-emphasizing the whole subject of Bible prophecy. And it is tragic because twenty-seven percent of Scripture was prophetic at the time it was written.

Second Peter 1:19 says,

*"So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).*

Now would you say that this world is in a dark place? What keeps us sane in a dark place is the prophetic Scriptures. They are a lamp shining in a dark place, that Peter says you would do well to pay attention to. Can you imagine Peter condemning a church website because it has a prophetic perspective in its doctrinal statement?

And yet that is what is happening in these Neo-Calvinist circles. Could you imagine Peter saying of the Book of Revelation, "Just put it in the appendix. It is not inspired yet."? That is what is happening in these Neo-Calvinist circles.

In fact, Peter here says that,

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

*"...we have the prophetic word made more sure..." (2 Peter 1:19).*

More sure than what? Look at the context of it. Sometimes it is more sure than eyewitness testimony, because Peter says, "I saw the transfigured Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. I saw Him" (2 Peter 1:16-18, paraphrase). And then Peter says that prophecy is more sure even than that.

Now, the most powerful evidence that you can introduce in a court of law is eyewitness testimony. And Peter says that prophecy is more sure even than the eyewitness testimony that I myself saw (2 Peter 1:16-19). And we would better pay attention to it, because we are living in a dark world, and we are going to be living in that dark world until the arrival of the Morning Star, Jesus Christ.

### Biblical Prophecy: Importance

- 27% of Scripture was prophetic at the time it was written
- 2 Pet 1:19

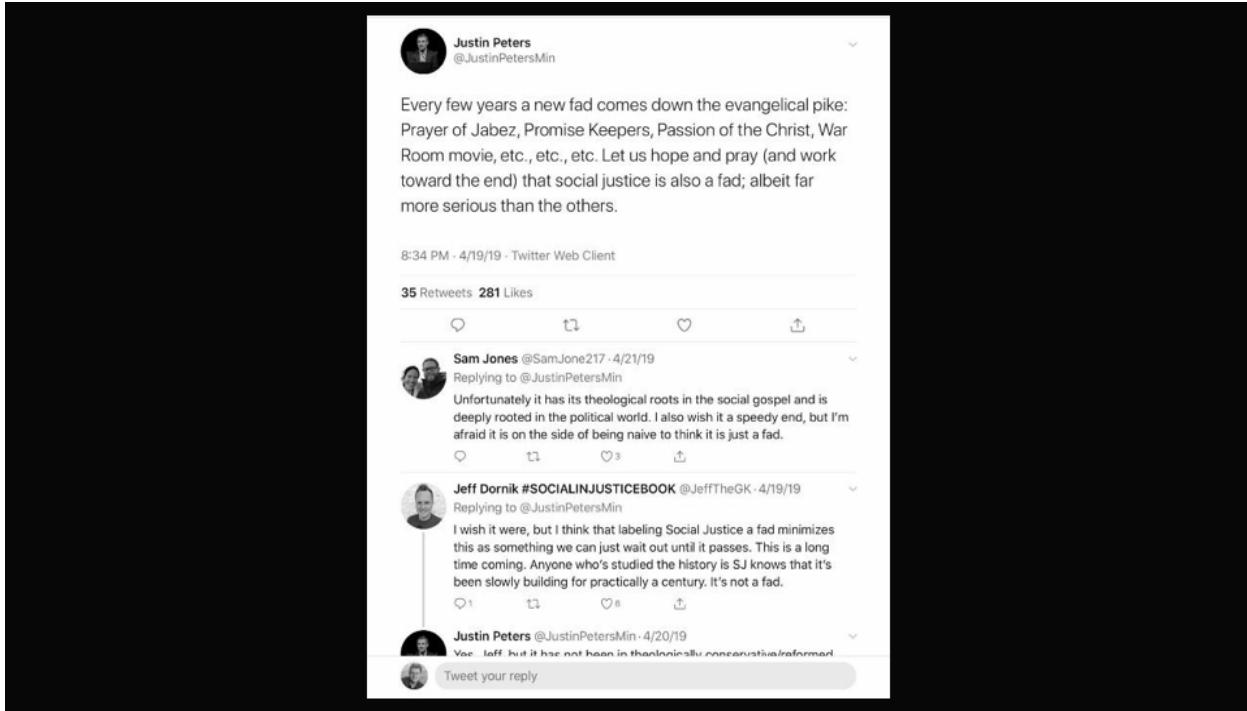
Play down prophecy? I think that it is time to play it up. Just another example of how Neo-Calvinism warps one's view of prophecy—this is another quote from Justin Peters regarding the social justice movement.

Justin Peters, a Neo-Calvinist, says,

"Every few years a new fad comes down the evangelical pike: the Prayer of Jabez, Promise Keepers, Passion of the Christ, War Room movie, etc., etc., etc. Let us hope and pray (and work towards the end) that social justice is also a fad; albeit far more serious than the others."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Justin Peters, Twitter post, April 19, 2019.



And if you start looking at the comments that flowed in after he put up this Tweet, and they are saying, "Excuse me, Justin Peters, you have it completely wrong. The social justice movement is not a fad. You cannot put the social justice movement in the same category as the Prayer of Jabez. That kind of came and went."

And the reason that I believe that the social justice movement is not a fad, but it is here to stay, is because of my knowledge of prophecy. Satan is all about establishing his kingdom on the earth. The social justice movement outside the church and inside the church contributes to that.

In fact, those in the social justice movement, because their understanding of prophecy is wrong and their whole church revolves around building the Kingdom of God here, do not understand that they are actually building the devil's world. Bible prophecy is crystal clear. First, Satan gets his one-world government, and then Jesus gets His.

So if the focus of your church is greenhouse gases and universal health care and all these kinds of social causes; and you think that you are doing God's work by promoting all of that stuff—taking Bible verses out of context, trying to promote all that stuff, thinking you are building God's kingdom—Bible prophecy clearly tells you that you are not building God's kingdom. You are building the devil's kingdom.

So our focus here at Sugar Land Bible Church is not on social justice causes. It is to reach and teach. It is to evangelize and disciple. Because one of these days, Jesus, hopefully sooner than later, is going to rip us right out of here to the Rapture. We are going to be seized, caught up by force.

We will be with the Lord in the Father's house for seven years, and then we will return with Him to the earth to rule and reign. That is when you are going to get your social justice—right then and there. Don't worry. Social justice is coming. It is not coming on man's timetable.

But here Justin Peters is saying of social justice that it is no more than just a little fad that comes and goes. And he puts it into the same category as all these other fads. There is no way I could ever do that, because I understand how Satan is working, building Satan's kingdom through the social justice movement.

So the social justice movement, from now until the coming of Christ, is here to stay. And I think that because I studied the pages of Bible prophecy. Now, someone that wants to play all that down would not come to the same conclusion.

See, I am going into some of these things just to show you why this critique of Neo-Calvinism is so needed.

Other prophetic implications of Neo-Calvinism include Calvin's mishandling of prophetic passages. If Calvin is the gold standard, which is what the Neo-Calvinist movement thinks, then in their movement they are going to have a ton of misunderstanding of prophetic passages, because their progenitor, John Calvin, made these mistakes over and over again.

One example is the seven hills in the Book of Revelation. Revelation 17:3 says,

*"And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns" (Revelation 17:3).*

The woman rides the beast. In other words, the woman, the city of Babylon, dominates the beast that has seven heads and ten horns. Now, who is that beast that the woman is on? Well, essentially the seven horns are seven kings.

Now, how do I know that? The following verses tell me. Revelation 17:9-10 says,

*"Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while" (Revelation 17:9-10).*

Now, in this type of literature, prophecy, kings and kingdoms are used synonymously. You see that from the Book of Daniel.

*"You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom,..." (Daniel 2:37).*

See how king and kingdom are used as synonyms there?

*"...the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold" (Daniel 2:37-38).*

In other words, Nebuchadnezzar, you are a king over a kingdom, Babylon. So who are these seven kings that we think are kingdoms? Revelation 17 is saying that when the Antichrist's empire shows up in its total form, it will have absorbed seven great anti-Semitic kingdoms in global history.

The first kingdom was Egypt, which took the nation of Israel into captivity for four hundred years. The second was Assyria, which scattered the northern tribes of Israel. The third was Babylon, which brought into captivity the southern tribes of Israel. The fourth was Persia, and it was under Persia that Haman developed the plot to exterminate the Jews.

Then the next kingdom was Greece. And remember, under Greece, Antiochus Epiphanes launched a horrific wave of persecution against the Jewish people. And then the next kingdom was Rome, ancient Rome, which pushed the Jews out of their homeland in AD 70.

Then the seventh kingdom will be Rome, phase two. We could call it a kingdom arising out of the cultural inheritance of ancient Rome. But it is going to be a lot bigger than ancient Rome, because it is going to be the kingdom of the Antichrist.

That is a normal exegetical treatment of these seven mountains—these seven kings. Now, how did the Protestant Reformers treat these seven mountains, seven heads, seven kings, seven kingdoms? In an extremely sloppy way. They said, "Seven mountains. Sounds like seven hills. What city is occupied on seven hills? Rome."

(Even though Revelation 17 does not say, "seven hills"; it says, "seven mountains.") The Reformers said, "You know what that sounds like? The Roman Catholic Church. And we do not like the Roman Catholic Church. So you know what we are going to do? We are going to take that passage of Scripture and aim it at the Roman Catholic Church.

"We are not going to do careful exegesis of the passage, which I tried to do a little earlier. We are just going to rip a Scripture out of its context, and apply it against our enemy, the Roman Catholic Church."

And do you know what Luther discovered? The more he did that, the more popular he got, because the population hated the Roman Catholic Church. They knew that the Roman Catholic Church was ripping them off through the sale of indulgences. "When the coin and the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." And you cannot really

counter that if the people do not have a Bible and cannot explain why purgatory is a non-biblical doctrine.

So Luther was like a grassroots movement. He made these sorts of statements taking Revelation 17, not with careful exegesis like he did in Galatians, not with careful exegesis like he did in Romans, but with very sloppy exegesis, because he was trying to get the people on his side.

And when you see him doing this, you see what little value Luther has for Bible prophecy. I would never do something like that because I believe that the Book of Revelation is inspired. Luther did not. So why not just rip a few verses out of context to kind of gin up the masses?

So what Luther, Calvin did—and they all did this—was they said, "Well, this is the seven hills of Rome, and let's just call the Pope the Antichrist." That is a pretty good way to win a theological argument, isn't it? The person that you are against, you just call 'em Babylon and the Antichrist.

And what I am trying to show you is that this is the kind of thing the Protestant Reformers did constantly. It is a very sloppy exegetical treatment of what God is actually saying.

Now, if you are in a church that has hooked its wagon to Martin Luther and hooked its wagon to John Calvin, do not be surprised if your pastor gets into the pulpit and similarly sloppily treats Bible prophecy for some sort of agenda.

Do not expect to go to a church like this and hear careful, detailed explanations of the Book of Revelation, because the progenitors, Luther and Calvin, did not do that—when they could have, because they were very good exegetes elsewhere.

Here is a statement from Martin Luther, how he misused Revelation 13. He says,

"No man can believe what an abomination the papacy is."<sup>17</sup>

Now, I happen to agree with that, by the way. But I think that the Roman Catholic Church is bad enough without ripping something out of context in Revelation 17 and applying it to the Catholic Church.

"A Christian does not have to be of low intelligence, either, to recognize it. God himself must deride him in the hellish fire, and our Lord Jesus Christ, St. Paul says in II Thessalonians 2 [:8] will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his glorious coming." I only deride, with my own weak derision, so that those who now live and those who will come after us should know what I have thought of the pope, the damned antichrist,

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<sup>17</sup> "Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1966), 273-74.

and so that whoever wishes to be a Christian may be warned against such an abomination."<sup>18</sup>

So the Pope is the Antichrist. How do you get the Pope as the Antichrist? Not an antichrist, the Antichrist. You have to sloppily treat Revelation 17 to reach that conclusion. It is an extremely low level of exegesis that Luther never would have done with the Book of Galatians.

And yet the Reformers did this constantly with Bible prophecy. John Calvin writes in Calvin's "Institutes,"

"However, when we categorically deny to the papists the title of the church, we do not for this reason impugn the existence of churches among them. Rather, we are only contending about the true and lawful constitution of the church, required in the communion not only of the sacraments (which are the signs of profession) but also especially doctrine."<sup>19</sup>

Now, I apologize to you for reading these long quotes. But what people will say about people like me is that I am tearing the Protestant Reformers out of their context. And the only defense I have against that is to give you their complete quote in context, so that you yourself can see what they are doing.

"Daniel [Dan. 9:27] and Paul [2 Thess. 2:4] foretold that Antichrist would sit in the Temple of God. With us, it is the Roman pontiff we make the leader and standard bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom. The fact that his seat is placed in the Temple of God signifies that his reign was not to be such as to wipe out either the name of Christ or of the church. From this it therefore is evident that we by no means deny that the churches under his tyranny remain churches. But these he has profaned by his sacrilegious impiety, afflicted by his inhuman domination, corrupted and well-nigh killed by his evil and deadly doctrines, which are like poisoned drinks. In them Christ lies hidden, half buried, the gospel overthrown, piety scattered, the worship of God nearly wiped out. In them, briefly, everything is so confused that there we see the face of Babylon rather than that of the Holy City of God."<sup>20</sup>

So this quote is a condemnation of Roman Catholicism. So far, so good. But notice what Calvin is doing with Babylon. And notice what he is doing with Antichrist. He is taking Babylon and Antichrist, that have an actual exegetical meaning, and sloppily applying them to his opponents: Roman Catholicism.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, ii, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

And this is how Bible prophecy unfortunately was treated. And churches that follow this pattern will treat Bible prophecy the same way. I am just trying to explain to you why Neo-Calvinism itself is demoting the subject of Bible prophecy. That is the central point I am trying to get at.

Let me give you a few examples of how John Calvin mishandled the Old Testament prophets. He is commenting here on Isaiah 35:1, which is a Millennial passage about the Jews and the Millennial Kingdom. Calvin says here in his commentary on Isaiah concerning this passage,

"Isaiah 35:1—'The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad."<sup>21</sup>

What is that talking about—"the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad" (Isaiah 35:1)? It is talking about the earth having the curse lifted from it, and being in a state of full productivity under the authority of the nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

How does Calvin handle that passage?

"This passage [Isaiah 35:1] is explained in various ways. I pass by the dreams of Jews, who apply all passages of this kind to the temporal reign of the Messiah, which they have contrived by their own imagination.... I willingly view this passage as referring to Judea, and afterwards other parts of the world..."<sup>22</sup>

So Calvin is erasing the Jewish emphasis in this particular passage.

"Let us now see when this prophecy was fulfilled, or shall be fulfilled. The Lord began some kind of restoration when he brought his people out of Babylon: but that was only a foretaste, and, therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that this passage, as well as others of a similar kind, must refer to the kingdom of Christ; and in no other light could it be viewed, if we compare it with other prophecies."<sup>23</sup>

He is saying this is about the kingdom of Christ. Most people would read right over that until you understand what he believed about the kingdom of Christ. He believed that he was in the kingdom of Christ. He believed that the kingdom of Christ started at the First Advent. It is a doctrine called Amillennialism. Calvin did not invent Amillennialism.

He carried it over into the Protestant Reformation, and in his commentaries he routinely took passages that should be understood literally of a future kingdom on planet Earth through the Jewish nation, and said, "Oh, that is just a dream interpretation. Let me tell

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<sup>21</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah 35:1, *Isaiah 35:1—“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad.”*

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

you what this passage is really about. It is meant to be understood allegorically as the kingdom of God, here and now." Amillennialism.

Here is how he treated Amos 9:13.

"Amos 9:13—'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed: and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.'"<sup>24</sup>

Now what is all of that speaking of? It is in Amos 9. It is about the restoration of Israel in the last days, where she will be put back into her land, and never taken out again. And by the time God is finished with the nation of Israel, she will be elevated to a place of primacy over the nations.

The whole world will move into a state of prosperity agriculturally, such that when you are planting seed you have to plant really fast, because immediately you reap what you sow, in this case, reaping something good. So you are reaping before you can plant. It is an agricultural miracle.

How did Calvin treat this?

"Here the Prophet describes the felicity which shall be under the reign of Christ: and we know that whenever the Prophets set forth promises of a happy and prosperous state to God's people, they adopt metaphorical expressions, and say, that abundance of all good things shall flow, that there shall be the most fruitful produce, that provisions shall be bountifully supplied; for they accommodated their mode of speaking to the notions of the ancient people;..."<sup>25</sup>

"So God, to a bunch of simple farmers, was trying to communicate the restoration of Israel in the world in the last days. So He spoke to them in language that they could understand. But that is really not what God meant. I, John Calvin, will tell you what God meant. What He really meant is that there is a spiritual kingdom that we are in now that began with the first advent of Christ.

"And if you are looking at Amos 9:13 and you think that it is about the terrestrial reign of Christ for a thousand years over first, the nation of Israel, and second, the world, you are still at the kindergarten level. Because God spoke to the prophets in what they could only understand—literalism. But that is really not what God meant." Calvin does this all the time.

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<sup>24</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on Amos 9:13, *Amos 9:13—“Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed: and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”*

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

"...for they accommodated their mode of speaking to the notions of the ancient people; it is therefore no wonder if they sometimes speak to them as to children."<sup>26</sup>

"Do you think this is literal? You are at the level of a spiritual child. Because we all know that God accommodated, which to me is a fancy way of saying God lied." If God spoke of an earthly terrestrial kingdom through the nation of Israel and the world during a future thousand-year time period, and that is really not what He meant, then God just told a lie.

Calvin does not say "lie." He uses all this fancy terminology. "God accommodated. The biblical authors did not understand how to write a paragraph or a sentence, so he spelled it out in a box. But that is not really what God meant. Everybody knows that."

And you are sitting in a Neo-Calvinist church and you are wondering what is going on with the pastor and Bible prophecy. Why won't the pastor say anything about Bible prophecy? And when he does, it is all his weird stuff. This is why: they have hitched their wagon to somebody like Calvin.

"At the same time, the Spirit under these figurative expressions declares, that the kingdom of Christ shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that the Church of God, which means the same thing, shall be blessed, when Christ shall begin to reign."<sup>27</sup>

"You silly simpleton! You close-minded literalist! Really what this is speaking of is a spiritual kingdom." And obviously, Mr. Calvin, I am not going to go there because I take it literally. Sorry. I am one of those kindergartners that take it literally because I think God means what He says and says what He means.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.