

Neo Calvinism vs The Bible 005

Romans 11:17-18

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Let us take our Bibles today and open them to Romans 11:17-18. We are continuing our series on "New-Calvinism vs. the Bible," having completed the Roman numeral one, something that I call the mixed blessing of Calvinism. We moved into Roman numeral two, which is the reason why we are getting into this topic.

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

Do you know why? Why critique this aggressive movement in the church to bring back Calvinism? We were right there on letter "D", the prophetic implications of Calvinism.

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

This is a part of it that most people do not see. As someone who has been trained in theology, what you quickly learn is that whatever you are doing in one area of the Bible—like Creation, for example, a lot of evangelicals are watering down the doctrine of Creation, trying to make it more palatable to evolution—as a theologian you know this much about theology, you do not know everything there is to know about theology, but this much you know—whatever you are doing in one area of the Bible is going to impact interpretations in other areas of the Bible.

If you start playing games with the first Adam and saying he was not a historical figure, then you are going to start playing games with the last Adam, Jesus Christ. You will start to say He was not a historical figure either, because the two of them are connected in an unbroken genealogy in Genesis 3. Theology is like a seamless garment.

What I am seeing with this kind of movement back into Calvinism that we are seeing all around us are some negative implications concerning prophecy. One of the things that we are bringing to people's attention is anti-Semitism. I tried to draw the connection for folks last time related to Calvinism and anti-Semitism. I want to show you how this is percolating in our own church world today in the 21st century. In other words, the more people look at Luther and Calvin as the gold standard, the more I am seeing people resurfacing anti-Semitism that Calvin and Luther held to.

Notice Romans 11:17-18. Do you know about Romans 11? It is the olive tree, and basically what is going on in Romans 11 is the natural branches have been cut out of the tree because of unbelief. That would be the Jewish people. It is not that individual Jews cannot get saved today, many do, but for the most part, the nation of Israel is in a state of unbelief.

Those are the natural branches that have been broken off, and in their place have been brought in olive branches, wild branches, branches which really do not belong in the tree because they are not olive branches. He says they are wild branches. Maybe they are apple branches or lemon branches or grape branches, if there are such things.

Who would those wild branches be that have been grafted into this tree? That is us, the Gentile Christian who has accepted by faith the very Messiah that the nation of Israel rejected 2,000 years ago. That is who we are. We are these strange branches that really do not belong in the tree, yet we have been brought in. In Romans 11, Paul tells the wild branches, "Be careful about your attitude as an unnatural branch towards the natural branches that have been broken off." He specifically tells the unnatural branches to not be arrogant towards the natural branches.

What he is basically saying is: Do not develop a haughty, arrogant attitude towards the Jewish people in unbelief. It is like an argument from the lesser to the greater. If God has already done the greater agricultural miracle of bringing in unnatural branches into a tree, how hard do you think it is for God to reach out and one day restore the natural branches? If He has already stuck into the tree apple branches and lemon branches,

that is an agricultural miracle. An olive tree is not any big miracle for God to reach out one day and take the natural branches and bring them back into their own tree.

The wild branches—that would be us—should not be arrogant towards the natural branches—Israel in unbelief. That is exactly what God is going to do in the End Times. He is going to take these branches that have been kicked out of their own tree and bring them right back in. That becomes the right way to look at the nation of Israel. You do not look at them as a bunch of unbelievers, although they are currently in unbelief. You look at them as step one in an End Times miracle that God is going to do.

God has no problem doing this because He has already done the greater miracle of inserting us Gentile Christians into a tree that we do not belong in. It is very, very easy for God to restore the natural branches. This whole idea of Israel, people developing a mindset that God is finished with Israel, usually you get into that and the whole discussion is hermeneutics and interpretation and all of that. Paul says the real issue is arrogance. It is a pride issue.

Notice what he says here in Romans 11:13:

"But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry" (Romans 11:13).

Praise the Lord. The Gentile Christians are connected to this tree. Paul says, "In fact, a big chunk of my ministry is sharing the gospel with Gentiles." Praise the Lord for Gentile salvations, but then he says here in Romans 11:17:

"But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree" (Romans 11:17).

Notice what he says here in Romans 11:18:

"Do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you" (Romans 11:18).

Keep that in mind as you are looking at the Jewish nation in unbelief. Paul is saying, "Everything you have as a Gentile Christian has come through the Jewish nation."

We see it in the Book of Genesis, as God is developing the nation of Israel. God obligated Himself from Genesis 12:3 onward to bless the world through the Jewish nation. Jesus, as I like to say, was not a Presbyterian or a Southern Baptist or a Methodist. He was Jewish. In fact, that is what Jesus told the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman in John 4:22. He said, *"Salvation is from the Jews"* (John 4:22). Jesus came into the world through the Jewish nation.

The Scripture, every book of this big text that we call the Bible, was written by Jewish people. The only one that is even debated anymore is Luke, who wrote Luke and Acts. Some, like Arnold Fruchtenbaum, believe that Luke was Jewish also, but other than Luke, everyone acknowledges that every single writer that you have here—Moses, Haggai, Zechariah, Paul—were all Jewish.

The fact of the matter is, Israel is the gift that keeps on giving because the Kingdom is coming one day. We are supposed to be praying for that, by the way—"Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10). It will not be headquartered in Washington, DC. It is going to be headquartered in the city of Jerusalem. Israel is the gift that keeps on giving.

We have been unnaturally grafted into a Hebraic Jewish program in a sense. When you look at the Jewish people in unbelief, the proper attitude for the Christian is not to look down on them, it is to say, "Thank God for them." If God had not worked through them, we would not have anything as Christians.

What he is dealing with is attitude, the attitude of the predominantly Gentile church towards unbelieving Israel. He does not talk about hermeneutics. He does not talk about theology. He talks about attitude. If a person is looking down on the nation of Israel, they have an attitude problem. Do they have a hermeneutical interpretive problem? Yes, but ultimately their problem is an attitude, arrogant pride. This is what Paul is saying.

He says in Romans 11:19-21:

"You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.' Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either" (Romans 11:19-21).

I think this is more of a hypothetical because he is dealing here with the church as a whole. He is not dealing with individual salvation because the second person pronoun "you" is plural here in these passages.

Basically what he is saying is that if you start looking down on the Jewish people and say they were broken off in unbelief, hypothetically, God could break the whole church off if He wanted to. He will not do it, but his point is to monitor your attitude very carefully as a Gentile Christian as you look at the Jewish people in unbelief. That is his point.

How do you look at the Jewish people today? How do you look at the nation of Israel? There are a lot of people that look at them and say that they were the Christ killers, as if we are not Christ killers ourselves. The last time I checked, Jesus died for the whole world. You want to call someone a Christ killer? I think there is plenty of blame to go around.

There is this attitude within the church that they are the Christ killers; God is finished with them. Paul says, "You have a bad attitude if you think that way." That is his point. He does not give a big hermeneutics discussion. He says that you have an attitude problem.

How do we look at the Jewish people and unbelief? Paul explains it in Romans 11:28-29:

"From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake—"

You travel through the Book of Acts, which we are doing on Wednesday nights, and you will see that almost everywhere Paul went his primary opponents and detractors were unbelieving Jews. In that sense, they were those that were coming against the church and Paul and the true gospel. That is why Paul says:

"From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake; but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of their fathers" (Romans 11:28).

Who are the fathers? The fathers are the individuals we are studying in the Book of Genesis: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God gave, as we have studied in Genesis, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, unconditional promises.

When you look at the Jewish people today, are they Christian? No. Would they come to our churches? Most would not. Do they agree with our theology? No. How do you look at it? Do you get mad at them like Martin Luther did? Do you get angry at them? Paul says, "Do not do that. They are beloved for the sake of the fathers. You have to look at them through the lens of the unconditional promises that God gave to the patriarchs."

In other words, you look at Israel today as a work of God, not yet complete. They are what we would call on our emails: WIP, work in progress. A lot of Christians cannot look at the Jewish people that way. "They do not come to our churches, they do not sing our hymns, they do not accept our Jesus." It is really difficult for people to look at Israel the way God does, but God says that you have to look at them through the lens of the patriarchs, the fathers who have been given unconditional promises. They are a work in progress. God has regathered them from the nations of the earth and recycled them into their own land. They are in unbelief.

What do you have to be before you can become a believer? You have to be an unbeliever. You cannot become a believer unless you are first an unbeliever. Let me ask you something. Was God at work in your life before you got saved? Of course He was. I look back and I can look back and think of things that the Lord was setting up—conversations, relationships, all kinds of things—that would lead me to a saving knowledge of Jesus. He was at work in my life long before I got saved.

Why can't God do that with His elect nation? Why is it that people look at Israel and they demand 100% Christianity when God can be at work in an unbelieving nation before it becomes a believing nation? They would not be recycled from the nations of the earth into their homeland unless God had something very special for them. What is special for them is their ultimate conversion. That is how I look at Israel. "They are a bunch of unsaved people over there." Yes, today they are, but that will not always be the case.

He says here in Romans 11:29:

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

Our lawyers that come to our classes understand what irrevocable is. It is a contract law issue. You have an offer, an acceptance, a consideration, and no defenses. That becomes a legally binding contract. An offer that is irrevocable is an offer that gets put on the table. If certain legal requirements are met, the offer cannot be withdrawn. You cannot take it off the table.

That is what Paul is saying about the promises given to the Jewish nation. Their promises and their calling are irrevocable. They cannot be withdrawn because of the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant and its unconditional nature that we have studied in Genesis 15. How do you look at Israel today? You look at Israel as a WIP, work in progress. That prevents you from developing a haughty, arrogant attitude as a Gentile Christian towards unbelieving Jews. That is the right way to understand Israel.

Obviously, Luther did not have that mindset because he condemned them up one side and down the other, as did John Calvin. In some of the passages from their writings that I showed you last week, this is what is now coming into this Neo-Calvinists movement is this similar, haughty, arrogant attitude towards the Jewish people.

Notice for example, John Piper, who is one of the leaders in Neo-Calvinism. At first you will read this and you will say that sounds okay, but I am going to show you in a minute why this is not okay. It undersells and undervalues the promises of God towards the Jewish nation. John Piper, Neo-Calvinists says:

"[God] has a saving purpose for Israel. All Israel will someday turn to the Lord Christ as a group. This is my deep understanding in belief of Romans 11. The broken off branches will be grafted in one day to the people of God, the Bride of Christ, His church."¹

What he is saying here is that the best hope for the Jewish people is for them to come to the Lord in mass and be incorporated into the church. Your average Christian reads that and says, "John Piper is pro-Israel." But notice this response from Dr. Paul Wilkinson in his excellent two-volume set that he helped put together, called "Israel Betrayed":

¹ John Piper, cited in Paul R. Wilkinson, *Israel Betrayed: Volume 2: The Rise of Christian Palestinianism* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2018), 331-32.

"On the basis of this kind of statement, many in the church are being misled into believing that Piper stands with Israel, but he does not. What Piper said is not what Paul taught. Israel's destiny as a nation is not one of spiritual incorporation into the church, which is the classic Reformed, Calvinistic teaching. The church comprises individual Jews and Gentiles, not 'Israel,' which is a distinct national entity. The appointed destiny for Israel is for her to remain a nation in the sight of God and in the midst of all of the nations, for as long as God's 'fixed order' of creation endures (Jer. 31:36)."²

The hope for the Jewish people is not that one day they are going to become Lutherans or Baptists or Presbyterians. That is what Luther wanted. Luther thought they would all become Lutherans. The longer they did not, the angrier he got at them. Romans 11 is not saying that the Jews one day are going to become part of the church. What it is saying is that Israel is going to exist forever as an individual nation. By the time you get to the Tribulation Period, every single Hebrew on planet Earth will be regenerated after the church has already been removed via the Rapture. That is Israel's future.

John Piper is coming along and saying that Romans 11 says that a whole bunch of Jews are going to get converted one day into the church. That is a dramatic underselling, a dramatic marginalization of what God actually says. Dr. Paul Wilkinson is quoting Jeremiah 31. Here is what God actually says for the Jewish nation:

*"Thus says the Lord,
Who gives the sun for light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,
Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar;
The Lord of hosts is His name:
'If this fixed order departs
From before Me,' declares the Lord,
'Then the offspring of Israel also will cease
From being a nation before Me forever.'
Thus says the Lord,
'If the heavens can be measured
And the foundations of the earth searched out below,
Then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel
For all that they have done,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:35-37).*

There is nothing here about them joining the church. In fact, when this prophecy was given, the church did not even exist. It was a mystery; it had never been revealed. What this is saying is that Israel's destiny is to always be a distinct nation before God. In fact, you have a better chance of getting rid of the sun and the moon and the stars than you do the nation of Israel.

² Paul R. Wilkinson, *Israel Betrayed: Volume 2: The Rise of Christian Palestinianism* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel, 2018), 332.

Even Israel outside of its land for 2,000 years never stopped being a nation. That is why they all were recycled into their homeland beginning in 1948. The Hebrew language was revived at that point. They were practicing their own culture, practicing their own religion. It is a sociological miracle, because the sociologists all tell us that when a nation is outside of its land for a few generations, it loses its cultural distinctiveness.

Here God has recycled the nation of Israel after being outside of its land for 2,000 years. Its culture is intact and its religion is intact. How many Jebusites do you know? The Jebusites are mentioned in the Bible too, right alongside Israel. "So-and-so and So-and-so moved in down the street. What a lovely Jebusite couple. What a lovely Jebusite family."

What happened to the Jebusites? What happened to the Jebusites is what happens to any group that is outside of its own land for a few generations. It assimilates and loses its cultural distinctiveness. Here Israel is outside of its land for 2,000 years, and they never lost their distinctiveness.

When you look at the modern state of Israel, you are seeing an absolute miracle particularly with The Jerusalem Post published in Hebrew. People say, "I wish God would do a miracle today." Are you kidding me? When you look at Israel, you are seeing what I would call, and many have called, the miracle on the Mediterranean. That is what God said would happen. It is just that they are a work in progress. God is not finished with them yet.

The time will come when every single Hebrew on planet Earth when you get to the end of the Tribulation Period will be just as born again and regenerated as you are. That is their future. It is not them becoming Baptists or Methodists or Presbyterians and coming into the church. That is not what Romans 11 is saying. Yet John Piper, Neo-Calvinist, is recycling this teaching, largely borrowed from Calvin and Luther. He is taking the significance of Israel and dramatically underselling what God said would happen.

Our model of ecclesiology, which means the doctrine of the church, is that we are living today in the Church Age. We are a parenthetical break in between God's past dealings with Israel and His future dealings with Israel. Because Israel rejected her own king when her own king showed up, God says, "All right, you want to play that way, I am going to take you. I am going to put you in time out."

Have you ever put your kids in timeout? God put Israel in timeout for 2,000 years. They are over there throwing a tantrum like kids do, but as this is happening, God is pouring out unparalleled grace upon the predominantly Gentile church. In so doing, He is provoking Israel to a state of jealousy.

We have a jealous woman on our hands here. Israel is becoming jealous because the blessings that they once had from God when they were in fellowship with Him, are now being poured out on the "goyim"—that is us, the Gentiles, the nations. Your walk of

grace is actually provoking unbelieving Israel to a state of jealousy, where Israel is desiring her place of preeminence back. That is a seed that is currently being planted in unbelieving Israel, which will be watered to fruition in the events of the Tribulation Period, where Israel will be saved as a nation.

What is God doing in the interim as Israel is in a state of unbelief? It is the age of the church. That is us, the body of Christ, the parenthesis. Lewis Sperry Chafer called us an intercalation. In other words, we look so different from Israel that Chafer says we are not a continuation of Israel at all; we are an abnormal insertion into the outworking of God's purposes. God always knew He would do this, but He had not revealed it yet, but now it has been fully disclosed and fully revealed.

We do not have a tithing system like Israel had. We do not have a calendar system like Israel had. We do not have a priesthood that Israel had because we all are priests. What do you need a priest for? If you are one? We are so foreign and so different that Chafer said we are a disruption, an intercalation. We are not plan B either. A lot of people criticize our theology, saying, "That is plan B theology. God got really nervous when Israel rejected her King, and God, with sweaty palms said, 'What am I going to do? Oh, I know. As an afterthought, I will make the church or create the church.'"

Ephesians 3:11 refutes that, because the church has always been part of the predestined—if you can use that expression—program of God. It had not been unveiled yet in the pages of the Old Testament, but now it has been fully unveiled. God is pouring out all of this grace on another woman, the bride of Christ, and the original wife of God, Israel, is getting jealous.

What is happening is that seeds are being planted in the hearts of the Jewish people. One of these days, this age of time that we are living in, called this parenthesis or this intercalation—started in Acts 2 and goes all the way to the Rapture—the Church Age will be done. We will be in heaven. Are you looking forward to that?

Then what does God do? He puts back into the spotlight Israel, which has rejected Him for 2,000 years, and He starts to take those seeds of jealousy and water them to fruition in the events of the Tribulation Period. By the time you get to the end of the Tribulation Period, you have a whole nation in faith.

That is what Isaiah is saying. He is saying, "Can a nation be born in a day?" Have you ever seen such a thing where a whole country accepts Christ as Savior? We cannot even get that in Sugar Land. We cannot even get that on the Sugar Land City Council. I would be happy with the city council—every member of the city council is regenerated. This is something that is unparalleled when a whole country of people come to Christ. Yet that is Israel's future. It has absolutely nothing to do with them becoming Presbyterians or Methodists or filling out our little form for church membership. This is what we call intercalation theology.

With that being said, notice what R.C. Sproul, Neo-Calvinist, says in his "Table Talk" magazine, 1999. His magazine is called "Table Talk" because that was Luther's deal. Luther called his theological interactions "table talk." Sproul is dialing back to Luther when he calls his thing "Table Talk." R.C. Sproul says:

"We're not dispensationalists here....We believe that the church is essentially Israel. We believe that the answer to, 'What about the Jews?' is, 'Here we are.'"³

All of Israel's blessings have been transferred to the church. He has to go non-literal to get that to work. He says that the church is the new Israel. What happens to the real Israel? It is cut off forever. Their only hope is to join the church through faith, is what he is saying, which is what John Piper was saying. It is a dramatic distortion of what God is saying in His word.

"We're not dispensationalists here....We believe that the church is essentially Israel. We believe that the answer to 'What about the Jews?' is, 'Here we are.' We deny that the church is God's 'plan B.'"⁴

Do you see the straw man argument there? If you believe in this kind of theology, intercalation theology., Then you believe that the church is plan B. Poor God did not know what to do when Israel rejected Jesus, so He said, "I will throw together the church at the last minute."

If you have your Bible and you look at Ephesians 3:11, which is Paul's great explication and exposition and explanation of the church, you will see very clearly here that the church was never plan B. He says of the church in Ephesians 3:11:

"This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:11).

What is he dealing with here? He is dealing with the whole issue of the church, how the church today is predominantly Gentile. Some Jews are part of the church. He is basically saying here that this was the eternal purpose of God. In other words, the church was always God's plan. That is what eternal purpose means, it just had not been revealed yet.

You have no indications of any church that is coming as you read the whole Old Testament. You really do not have a lot of indications that a church is coming in the Gospels. The very first reference to the church that I know of is in Matthew 16:18. There it is becoming very clear that Israel is going to reject Jesus. Jesus says:

³ From *Table Talk* magazine, Spring of 1999, p. 2 (inside cover), by R. C. Sproul Jr., editor.

⁴ Ibid.

*"...I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it"
(Matthew 16:18).*

"Jesus, what are You talking about You are going to build Your church? What church?" Then in the Upper Room, just prior to His death (John 13-17), for the very first time He starts to reveal truths about the church in seed form that the apostles in their writings, who were there with him in the Upper Room, are going to water and bring into full fruition.

But one of these days the Church Age will be over. There will be a translation of the church. The church will leave this world just as miraculously as it came into this world. There was an absolute miracle on the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the church (Acts 2). One of these days the church is going to miraculously leave the earth. That is the Rapture. God is going to put His hand right back on Israel because He has not forgotten about His wife. It is just that He needs to bring them to faith.

Now R.C. Sproul comes along and he says, "If you believe that, you believe in plan B theology." What he is doing here is a flaw in logic called a straw man argument, where you misrepresent what your opponent is saying. Just watch politicians; they do it all the time. You misrepresent what someone believes and then you tear down not what they actually believe, but this misrepresentation that you have created, this man of straw. That man of straw falls over quickly because he is not real.

That is what Sproul is doing here when he talks about how we, in intercalation theology, believe that the church is plan B. He says:

"We deny that the church is God's 'plan B.' We deny that we are living in God's redemptive parenthesis."⁵

He does not like that chart. You are not going to see that chart in R.C. Sproul's "Table Talk" magazine, I can guarantee you that much. He says:

"There, we are again one people. In His holy and heavenly temple there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, pre-mil nor post-mil. There, we are all together, the Israel of God, princes with God, and the 'ekklesia,' the set apart ones."⁶

Excuse me, Mr. Sproul. Dr. Sproul, excuse me. I have a question. Can you give me one New Testament verse, just one—I will be happy with that—that takes the name Israel and says Israel is a synonym for the church? Answer: crickets. The New Testament does not teach what he just taught here. The New Testament never teaches that the church is the New Israel. There is no corroborating evidence anywhere in the New

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Testament, despite the fact that the name Israel is used about 73 times in the New Testament.

Every time that the word Israel is used in the New Testament, 73 times, or 2,500 times in the Old Testament, guess what it always means? Israel never means the church, never means the Gentiles, never even means a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum got hold of that quote. This is from Middletown Bible Church, who posted his response there. Middletown Bible Church writes:

"We believe the answer to, 'What about the Jews?' is, 'Here we are.' I shared this comment with a friend of mine who was a converted Jew. He was born in Russia after his parents were released from a Communist prison. With the help of the Israeli underground, his family escaped from behind the Iron Curtain. He received Orthodox Jewish training while living in Germany from 1947 to 1951 and then his family immigrated to New York. He is a dedicated servant of Christ and a respected author. When told about Sproul Jr.'s comment 'Here we are. [We are the Jews]' he commented, 'It's a good thing he was not declaring this on the streets of Berlin, Germany around 1941!'"⁷

What a great answer. With the advent of the Nazis, you did not have a lot of Christians walking around saying, "I am Israel," as the Nazis were leading the Jewish people off to the concentration camps.

What you see here is a picture of a group of people that are called preterists. I know more about Preterism than I wish that I knew. In fact, you guys should be in prayer right now that I do not tell you everything I know about Preterism, because I would completely bore you to death. The reason I know about it is because I did my master's thesis and my doctoral dissertation against Preterism.

I probably read everything that could be read on the subject of Preterism, because when I was going through the program at Dallas Seminary, they told me to graduate I had to make an original contribution and a doctoral dissertation. I do not really have anything original to contribute, to be honest with you. Original contribution? I think that I agree with Solomon that everything that has been said has already been said. What is there that is original to talk about? Since I am not an original contributory thinker, I decided to react to something that was a new false teaching. If I reacted to it, that qualified as an original contribution. That is how I escaped Dallas Seminary.

Preterism is basically the idea that the Book of Revelation already happened. The beast is Nero, not a future anti-Christ. There are different shades of Preterism. Some are full preterists, some are partial preterists leaving a few futuristic prophecies, but all of these guys, whether it is R.C. Sproul, N.T. Wright (who I call N.T. Wrong), and some names

⁷ George Zeller, "Is R. C. Sproul Jr. Really A Jew?," online: <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/sprouljr.htm>, accessed 17 February 2018.

you may not recognize like Scott Hahn, Ford, David Chilton, you recognize the name Hank Hanegraaff, who at one time called his ministry the Bible Answer Man. Then the guy at the bottom is Kenneth Gentry.

Gentry is a very interesting guy. He was developing all this stuff academically. These other guys, as far as I can tell, jumped on board what Gentry was saying. Gentry, by the way, was developing Lordship Salvation long before John MacArthur got hold of it. The only thing John MacArthur did was that he took Lordship Salvation, which is not our subject for today, and brought it into our circles at a popular level. Gentry was developing Lordship Salvation along with Preterism, long before John MacArthur popularized Lordship Salvation.

Preterism basically means "past." It is a Latin word for "past." Basically what they believe is that the harlot in Revelation 17-18 is the city of Jerusalem that was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. They say that those Jews, those Christ killers, got what they deserved. God stuck it to them. Look at how He torched Babylon, which is a code word for first-century Jerusalem in AD 70.

In fact, one of these guys that I did not mention here is Gary DeMar. You can actually go to his website where he sells posters of Jerusalem burning. You can put them on your mantel. You can use them as placemats. Isn't this a great thing? Think of this gift you could give to your children and grandchildren? Jerusalem burning. They think that is some kind of happy thing, where Jesus at the very prospect of AD 70, Luke 19, verse 41 was weeping (Luke 19:41).

They reached this conclusion, that Revelation 17-18 equals Jerusalem, the way these guys always reach their conclusion by de-literalizing the text. They make it sound as if Jerusalem burning is some kind of happy thing where a million Jews lost their lives in AD 70. That is why Jesus was crying over it.

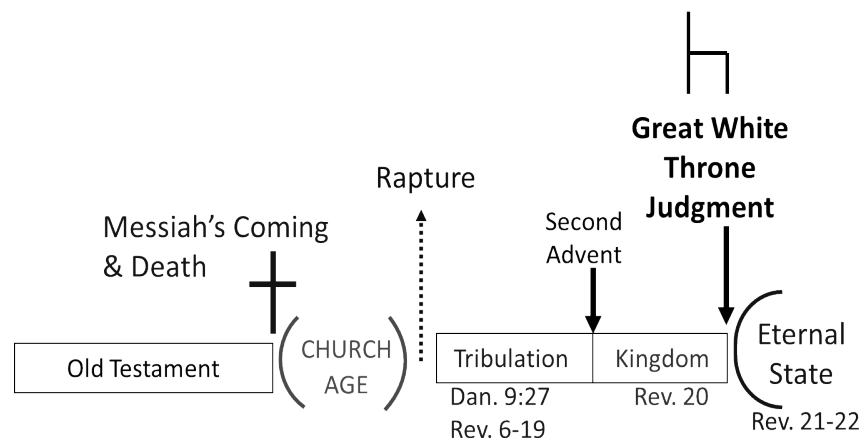
It shows this callous mindset that these interpreters, who may be right in other areas, have towards the Jewish people. This is my concern as Neo-Calvinism is now coming into full swing and everybody is hitching their wagon to John Calvin. They are recycling all of this anti-Semitic thought at a time in Israel's history where she really needs Christians to speak up on her behalf. Would you not agree with that in the events that have happened since October the 7th, as our college kids are saying, "From the river to the sea, the land of Palestine shall be free"?

I have never seen such anti-Semitism in our country the way I am seeing it right now. Here is the time when the Christian church really needs to speak up for Israel and articulate clearly what God says about Israel, but our theology has been warped by Preterism, which basically says the Jews have been forever cut off; God judged, He did not discipline, but He judged Israel in AD 70, and God cut the cord between Himself and Israel and transferred all of Israel's blessings to the church. They never transfer God's curses to Israel to the church, never. We will take the blessings, though. This becomes one of the reasons why I am concerned about Neo-Calvinism.

Another problem with Neo-Calvinism, in addition to anti-Semitism, is the implications of a lack of an Israel-church distinction. What does it take to be a dispensationalist? It is not hard. You have to believe in the consistent use of a plain, normal, or literal method of interpreting the Bible. You take the whole Bible at face value, except sections where there is an obvious figure of speech. You do not only do that in Romans. You do it in the whole Bible. As you do that in the whole Bible, you will see that God has something special for Israel.

Number two, when you do that, it reveals that the church is distinct from Israel. Number three, when you do that, you will see that God's purposes in human history are to glorify Himself.

Prophecy Panorama



This kind of a chart comes out of that. Starting on the left hand side, that is the Old Testament. God's focus there was Israel. Then came the cross where Israel rejected her King. Then God raised up what He knew He would always raise up, but had not revealed it yet: the church. There is the intercalation, the interval. The church consists of anybody, Jew or Gentile, that has trusted in the Messiah that national Israel rejected.

We are living in this Church Age. We have been living in this Church Age for 2,000 years, but one of these days that Church Age will be over and we will be translated to heaven via the Rapture. Then God will put His hand back on Israel, bring them to saving faith as a nation in the events of the Tribulation Period, and as they get saved they are actually going to call Jesus back to the earth to rescue them from the satanically possessed beast who is trying to wipe them out.

They will call Jesus back to the earth. You will see this in Matthew 23:39. He will come back and regather them and rescue them. Then to the believing Jews that are on the earth at that time, God will fulfill all of His ancient promises, and the glorious Kingdom Age will start, which will last for a thousand years.

This is the angle in which we teach here at Sugar Land Bible Church. This is in our doctrinal statement, our position statements. You say, "Pastor, I do not know if I agree with this theology." That is fine. There are a lot of other churches in the area you could look into. If you want a Replacement theology church, they are not hard to find, but we are honest enough to say this is the angle that we come from. Full disclosure. We are not hiding the ball here.

What you have to understand about Neo-Calvinism is that they reject this whole thing. They call this plan B theology. There is no Church Age because we are the new Israel; we have replaced Israel. Now where are they getting this from? Where did John Calvin get this idea from? Calvin taught this Replacement theology, but where did Calvin derive his ideas from?

He derived them largely from a man named Augustine who articulated Replacement theology around the fourth century AD. Augustine wrote:

"The saints reign with Christ during the same thousand years, understood in the same way, that it is, of the time of His first coming."⁸

The thousand years already started when Jesus came 2,000 years ago. Is that not a little odd? If it has been 2,000 years, how did He start the thousand-year Kingdom when He came the first time? The last time I checked, 1,000 does not equal 2,000.

"You see, brother, you are taking it way too literally. It is a stretchy accordion. A thousand years it is not literal." That is how they reach all their eschatological conclusions, by de-literalizing what the text says, and in so doing, violating the first tenet of Dispensationalism: taking the whole Bible at face value.

Augustine says:

"Therefore the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, even now His saints reign with Him."⁹

Did you know that you are reigning with Jesus right now? Excuse me. We have had Christians martyred in great numbers in the 20th and 21st century. There are probably more martyrdoms in the 20th century alone than all of the martyrdoms in church history. "You are taking that too literally." As my friend Thomas likes to say, "If this is the Kingdom I am living in the ghetto section."

Here is Augustine elsewhere. He says, speaking of Premillennialism, that first Jesus comes back, which is what we believe; then He starts His Kingdom. We are not in the kingdom now; we are in the Church Age.

⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, trans., Marcus Dods (NY: Random House, 1950), Book XX, chap. 9, p. 725-26.

⁹ Ibid.

"And this opinion would not be objectionable...for I myself, too, once held this opinion. But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy the leisure of immoderate carnal banquets, furnished with an amount of meat and drink such as not only to shock the feeling of the temperate, but even to surpass the measure of credulity itself, such assertions can be believed only by the carnal."¹⁰

Now we are getting to the root of the problem. Augustine was influenced by Gnosticism. Gnosticism taught Dualism. They taught that the physical world is evil and the spiritual world is good. Is the physical world evil? The last time I checked, God on creation day number six, after creating sunlight, food, and procreation, He did not only say that it was good, He said it was very good. Is it in a state of corruption today because of the fall? Yes, but there is nothing wrong with the physical world; it is not inherently evil.

But if you believe that the physical world is inherently evil, what do you do with all of these prophecies about people feasting in the Millennial Kingdom? That is carnal. Augustine spiritualized all of those kingdom promises and made it sound like they are happening today. He ran it through the grid of a non-literal allegorical lens. He says:

"They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians."¹¹

In Augustine's day, they were not called premillennialists because premillennialism is Latin, they were called Chiliasts. It is the Greek word for a thousand. Those that believed in a future kingdom of Christ on the earth, that was literal and physical were called carnal. The whole church, by the way, believed this for 200 years until Augustine came along and overthrew everything. We are called carnal because Augustine was influenced by Gnosticism.

They were called Chiliasts because that is how they designated themselves. Later they would be called premillennialists because "milli," a thousand, and "annum," years, is Latin. Here we are dealing with very early on in church history, where he called them Chiliasts.

Augustine notes:

"...which may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians."¹²

Notice that he once believed it, but he did not like it anymore. John Calvin comes along over a thousand years later, and he reaches back into Augustine and says, "That is a

¹⁰ Augustine, *The City of God*, trans., Marcus Dods (NY: Random House, 1950), Book XX, chap. 7, p. 719.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

swell theology. Let us drag all of that into Protestantism," as the Protestant movement was getting off the ground.

John Calvin writes here, "But Satan—". Notice he uses the S word, Satan. If you believe in intercalation theology, if you believe in premillennialism, if you are a Chiliast, then you are being influenced by Satan. That is what Calvin said when he was 26 years old. You wonder why you go to a church that bears the name Calvin or venerates Calvin, and you will not hear a single word about Israel? I am explaining to you historically why that is true.

Calvin did not invent this corrupted theology; he borrowed it from Augustine. He reached back over a thousand years into the writings of Augustine and brought all of this stuff into the Protestant movement. A lot of these Protestant churches, who might be good in a certain area, still think this way today. Try to talk to them about it.

I had a Lutheran guy, a Lutheran pastor, call here when I first became pastor. He called me and I asked politely, "Why are you calling?" He says, "I noticed you wrote something on Dispensationalism, and I have never talked to a dispensationalist before." He wanted to talk to a real live dispensationalist.

We were talking and doing this back and forth. He said, "So, you take all those prophecies literally in the Old Testament, do you?" I said, "Yes, every single one of them." Okay. Then we talk a little more. Then he would circle back again. "So, you take all that stuff literally?" "Yes, all of it. Literally." Talk a little more. Here he comes again the third time around. "You take all that stuff literally, huh?"

It was very obvious that what separated us in terms of our theology was the fact that I was trying to employ a literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation to the whole Bible, where he was only doing it to part of the Bible, by his own admission, because he kept recycling and saying, "So, you think it is literal?"

"But Satan has not only befuddled men's senses to make them bury their corpses the memory of resurrection; he has also attempted to corrupt this part of the doctrine with his various falsifications...Now their fiction is too childish either to need to be worth a refutation. 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 but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church while toiling on the earth...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."¹³

¹³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, xxv, 5.

In his mind, what we are teaching is destructive. If all of this is true, why in the world do I want to channel John Calvin, and bring him back into the life of the church? Yet that is what is happening. This is why the subject of Bible prophecy is being injured, which explains why we are looking into the subject matter.