

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 006

Matthew 28:19

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All right, well, good morning everybody. Locate Matthew 28:19. We are, I hate to tell you, just beginning our critique of Neo-Calvinism. We are on Roman numeral 'II'.

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

Hopefully I am going to finish that today. We are dealing with the question, "Why critique Neo-Calvinism—the New Calvinists within modern day Christianity?" I have given you several reasons for that.

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

One of the things that we have been dealing with is the prophetic implications of Neo-Calvinism. And one of the things that you are not seeing in Neo-Calvinism is an Israel-church distinction: that certain passages go with Israel, and certain passages go with the church.

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**

All Scripture is for us, but not all Scripture is about us. So in Genesis 6, for example, when God told Noah to build an ark, I personally do not go out to my driveway and grab some gopher wood and start building an ark on equal dimensions as Noah was told. Because I understand that Genesis 6 was a passage that was for me, but it was about Noah.

And that is where you get really confused within Bible interpretation—when you do not allow an Israel-church distinction. So some of this I laid out last time.

What we hold to here at Sugar Land Bible Church is what is called dispensational theology. Basically, that means that we hold to a literal method of interpreting the whole Bible, even prophecy, except when there are figures of speech in the Bible. (Those are usually conspicuous, or obvious.)

Dispensational Theology is a System of Theology

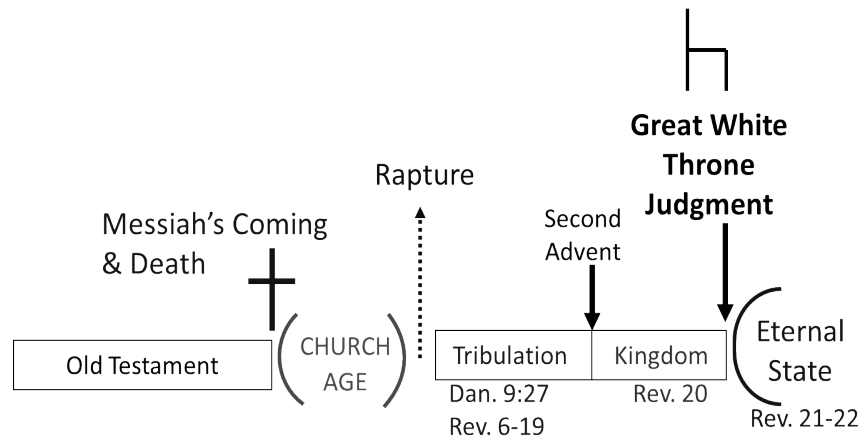
Traditional-normative dispensational theology is a system that embodies three essential, fundamental concepts called the **sine qua non** (lit. “without which is not”):

1. The **consistent** use of a plain, normal, literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation;
2. Which reveals that the **Church is distinct from Israel**;
3. God’s overall purpose is to bring **glory to Himself** (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

Dr. Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, pp. 38-41

But other than intended figures of speech, we take the whole Bible literally, Genesis to Revelation. And once you do that, you will start to see very fast that Israel and the church are distinct. It is not just that they are separate peoples; it is also that they are entirely separate programs. God has one program for Israel. God has a different program for the church.

Prophecy Panorama



So that kind of theology leads to a chart like this. We are in the parenthesis there, in the Church Age, which will terminate with the Rapture. Maybe the Rapture will happen today. What do you think? I cannot think of a better day, Lord.

I am not promising it will happen today, but maybe it will happen today. Once the Rapture takes place, God puts His hand back on Israel, because she obviously, literally construing the Bible, has prophecies about her which have never been elapsed.

The only way to say that those unfulfilled prophecies are not for Israel is to literalize them. So that is why non-dispensationalists are always attacking our foundation, which is our literal method of interpretation. So those prophecies will be fulfilled in the events of the Tribulation Period and then the kingdom that follows.

We believe in a Pretribulational Rapture and we believe in a Premillennial return of Christ. Pre-pre. (Bill up here does not even eat Post Toasties anymore. He is so pre-pre—right, Bill?) So it is not as if we are saying, "Hey, this is a swell theology!"

We are concluding this through a literal interpretation of the whole Bible. Now, what you are finding in Neo-Calvinism is that this whole structure is denied. They do not have an Israel-church distinction.

Last time I gave you this quote from Augustine. We will be talking about him next week a lot. John Calvin drew a lot of his ideas from Augustine. Here, Augustine essentially denied the Israel-church distinction.

Augustine writes in his classic book, "The City of God," developed in the fourth century,

"Therefore the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven."¹

Obviously, what we are presenting here in this chart (see Prophecy Panorama above) is the exact opposite of what Augustine is saying. Augustine elsewhere calls this belief in a future kingdom something that he embraced at one time. The whole early church embraced that for its first two centuries. But Augustine got bitten by the bug of Gnosticism.

Gnosticism had a dualism that the spiritual world is good and the physical world is evil, which goes directly against the Bible. Because God, when he created everything in six days, said not just, "It is good," but, "It is very good" (Genesis 1:31, paraphrase).

So we do not believe that the physical world in and of itself is bad. It is in a state of decay. But it is not evil. Physical things are not evil in and of themselves. So once you start to believe this, then you start to say things like, "Well, if that is true, then Jesus could not have come in a body because the physical world is evil."

And that is why you read these kinds of statements in 1 John 4:2-3, for example, where John says,

"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God;..." (1 John 4:2-3).

¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, trans., Marcus Dods (NY: Random House, 1950), Book XX, chap. 9, p. 725-26.

Now why would John say that? Why would he have to say that every spirit that does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh is not of God, but is of the Antichrist (1 John 4:2-3)? Well, he had to say that because the first-century world was being bitten by a bug called Gnosticism, which said that the physical world is evil.

So if the physical world is evil, then Jesus could not have come in a body. So within Gnosticism there arose something called docetism from the Greek verb "dokeo" (δοκέω), which means "to seem or appear." And Gnostics would say, "Well, Jesus really did not have a body. It just seemed like it."

So that is why in John's writings you find all these statements, such as the words of Thomas—Doubting Thomas—who touched Jesus' hands, wounds, side, etc., and said, "This is flesh and blood," in His resurrected body (John 20:24-29, paraphrase).

John is showing there, indirectly refuting docetism, that Jesus in fact had a physical body. And it also led in the direction of Cerinthianism.

Cerinthus, a famous Gnostic, said that Jesus was never the Christ. He became the Christ at His baptism, and the Spirit of Christ left Him just prior to His crucifixion. But Jesus was never the Christ.

And why would Cerinthus say this? Because he bought into Gnostic thinking: that the physical world is evil. So if the physical world is evil, Jesus could not have been God in human flesh. If He had human flesh, He really was not the Christ.

So this is all an outworking of Gnostic presuppositions. John, probably more than any other apostle I can think of, has to deal with this, because this is the stuff that was percolating at the end of the first century. And John, being the last living apostle, writing his material about AD 85 to 95, has to keep making these kinds of statements.

Over in 1 John 2, John talks about how Jesus has always been the Christ. He says here in 1 John 2:18,

"Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists. have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18).

And then John will say things like this, in 1 John 2:22—

"Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?..." (1 John 2:22).

Why would John say that? He is dealing with Cerinthianism, which was an outworking of Gnostic dualism. So Augustine, in the fourth century, was bitten by this bug as well.

And Augustine started to say, "You know what, if the physical world is evil, we cannot have a Millennial Kingdom on the earth. I mean, Jesus cannot rule the world for a thousand years on planet Earth, because the physical world is evil." So from that comes the doctrine of Amillennialism.

So Augustine would say things like this (I shared this quote with you last time).

"And this opinion would not be objectionable...for I myself, too, once held this opinion."²

That is, the coming earthly reign of Christ. Today we call it Premillennialism.

"But, as they assert that those who then rise again shall enjoy 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."³

So Augustine literalized all of those earthly promises of a kingdom, because to him it was carnal—reigning on this earth, banquets on this earth. That is carnal.

Now, why did he think that? Because he had bought into Gnostic dualism. Augustine says, "I used to believe in Premillennialism." They did not call it Premillennialism back then. They called it chiliasm, because the Greek word "chilias" (χιλιάς) means a thousand.

And so Augustine is attacking here the chiliasts, who later became known as the Premillennialists. Premillennial is Latin: "pre-" "-mille-" "-annum." "Chilias" (χιλιάς) is Greek.

So that is why the early church did not use the word Premillennialists, because it is a Latin word. They use the word "chiliast." So Augustine writes this:

"They who do believe them are called by the spiritual Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians."⁴

Augustine uses both terms because he is writing in the fourth century AD, when Latin, as the lingua franca of the known world, was coming into existence. But what Augustine is doing here is criticizing an earthly reign of Christ on the grounds that an earthly reign of Christ is carnal.

² Augustine, chap. 7, p. 719.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Now, John Calvin, in the sixteenth century, reached back into the fourth century, and took Augustine's thoughts on this and brought them back to life. Calvin writes (I have shared this quote with you before),

"But Satan has not only befuddled men's senses to make them bury with the corpses the memory of resurrection; he has also attempted to corrupt this part of the doctrine with various falsifications...Now their fiction is too childish either to need or to be worth a refutation. 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 still toiling on earth..."⁵

So Augustine just took the kingdom promises, yet future, and through a non-literal method of interpretation, said, "Well, they are all happening now in a spiritual sense. So do not look for a future temple, as Ezekiel predicted."

Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not look for the Dead Sea to come back to life as Ezekiel predicts in Ezekiel 47. That is just the soul being regenerated in the current Kingdom Age.

Calvin says,

"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."⁶

So Augustine is saying, "If you believe in this future earthly reign of Christ, you are carnal, you are following Satan, and you are casting reproach on the true kingdom, the spiritual kingdom which exists now."

So what you see in Calvinism is this denial of the Israel-church distinction. And what concerns me is that all these people are going back to the Reformers to try to find truth. The Reformers had some truth, no doubt about it. But these people are wanting to make John Calvin sort of a gold standard.

What you are finding in this Neo-Calvinist movement is that they are indiscriminately bringing all of this Amillennial stuff back to life as well. And so I am sharing all of this with you to show you why I am critiquing Neo-Calvinism.

Once you get into Neo-Calvinism, it is not just a TULIP (which we will be explaining) thing. It is an entire eschatology and it is an entire worldview that goes against a literal reading of the Bible. And once you deny the Israel-church distinction, what can start to

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

⁶ Ibid.

happen is that you take certain passages that belong to Israel and you apply them to the church.

Martin Luther himself did that, and he began to argue that baptism is necessary for infants. Here is a quote from Alister McGrath, writing about Luther. McGrath says this of Luther: Luther believed that "such sacraments [infant baptism] could generate faith; and hence baptism could generate faith of an infant."⁷

In fact, I have actually been to Germany and this is the first church of the Reformation. Martin Luther, when he started down this road, really did not want to be the leader of a new movement called the Protestant movement.

It is just that the more outspoken he was against some of the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church, such as purgatory—

Purgatory is what really bothered Luther. "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." The Roman Catholic Church was making beaucoup bucks off this doctrine of purgatory.

Well, why didn't the people just pull out their Bible and read the Bible and refute the doctrine of purgatory. Well, it is kind of hard to do when you do not have the Bible in your own language, right? It is hard to do when the Bible is not accessible.

That is one of Luther's first orders of business was to translate the Bible, not from the Latin Vulgate, which he felt was corrupted, but from the Greek and Hebrew, into the language of the German people.

Because Luther did not like the idea that the Roman Catholic Church was making all this money telling people, "Send us money and we will get Uncle Harry, or whatever grandma, or whatever, sprung out of purgatory."

So when you go to Rome and you visit Vatican City, and you see all this wealth there, it is really interesting. When you go there, you take one step outside the building and go down the steps and there are immediately beggars that want a hand out.

But inside Vatican City is untold wealth: pictures, paintings you name it, as you are touring it. And you say, "How did the Roman Catholic Church get so rich?" Well, they got rich by ripping people off for over a thousand years by telling them, "You have to pay us money to get your relatives sprung out of purgatory."

So Luther rightfully reacted against that. And the more he reacted, the more they gave him the right foot of fellowship, as I call it. They kicked him out of the church. So Luther, when he started the Protestant movement, had been studying to be a Roman Catholic priest.

⁷ Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 179.

He had a lot of Roman Catholic baggage that he took with him. And one of the things Luther took with him was Augustinian Amillennialism, which denies an Israel-church distinction. If you deny an Israel-church distinction, it leads to the doctrine of infant baptism.



So there is the first church of the Reformation in Germany, and there is the baptismal font set up. And you can see by the size of it that they used it to baptize infants, which is an unbiblical practice.

The guide that shows you around kind of has a funny story: the water that they baptized these infants in was really cold. And the infants being baptized were screaming and crying. The church members kept asking Luther to heat the water up, and he would not. But when it came to baptizing his own children, Luther decided to heat the water up a little bit to make it a little bit more bearable.

But this is the kind of thing that you see in Protestant Christianity. The Protestant Reformers did some wonderful things in certain areas, like condemning the doctrine of purgatory and condemning the sale of indulgences. "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

The Reformers did some wonderful things in terms of taking the Bible and trying to translate it and put it into the language of the common man. But they also dragged with them a lot of junk. Luther did not invent infant baptism, but he brought that with him into the Protestant movement.

So the Protestant movement, some parts of it—I will show you the quote from R.C. Sproul in just a minute—even today, argue for infant baptism. Why did I have you open up to Matthew 28:19? Because if you read it, it refutes infant baptism. It says,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,..." (Matthew 28:19).

That is the first thing we do. Then what is the next thing?

"...baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19).

In other words, you cannot baptize someone unless they are a disciple. And as we are going through the Book of Acts on Wednesday nights, what we are seeing over and over again is a pattern. First someone believes, and then they are baptized second.

Baptism contributes nothing to salvation, but it is an outward symbol of an inward reality. And you cannot baptize an infant—in fact, there are no examples of anybody in the Book of Acts baptizing an infant—because an infant cannot talk. How in the world could you affirm the fact that they are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?

So what happens with infant baptism is that you baptize people before they are regenerated, which reverses the biblical model, in which people believe first and then they are baptized second. That is why at Sugar Land Bible Church, if you want to get baptized we have to have some kind of verbal commitment from you, or belief, or something, an articulation that you, in fact, are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot do that with an infant.

I will baptize any infant in this church that comes forward and can clearly articulate their Christian testimony. So what you see in Protestantism, in Lutheranism, is that he is baptizing infants.

Now, why is Luther baptizing infants, when there is no biblical authority for baptizing infants? What he will turn around and say is, "Well, there is authority. Haven't you read Genesis 17, in which the infants are circumcised on the eighth day?"

Now, why in the world is Luther going into the Old Testament to develop a doctrine for infant baptism? The answer is that he is following Augustine, who denied the Israel-church distinction. If someone comes to us and says, "We think Genesis 17 is grounds for baptizing infants," we have a very easy answer for that.

Our answer is, "That is a beautiful passage. That is a wonderful passage. But that concerns God's program for Israel and not the church. The church started in Acts 2." So because we hold to an Israel-church distinction, separate programs for Israel and the church, we do not baptize infants because we cannot find any biblical support in the Church Age for such a practice.

Now, if you do not have an Israel-church distinction, and you can just rummage through the Bible and grab things in a non-literal way to support a preexisting doctrine, then voilà, support for infant baptism exists.

Now, you might be thinking, "Well, that is what Luther did. That was the sixteenth century. I mean, certainly no one today, within Neo-Calvinism, is arguing for infant baptism, are they?" Well, you know the name R.C. Sproul, right? He is a very famous Calvinist.

And this is what Sproul says in his Ligonier.org question and answer section. He says,

"The Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed churches all practice infant baptism."⁸

And I am saying to myself, "Well, of course they do, because all those churches deny an Israel-church distinction." Sproul goes on and says,

"Today we want to look at...lines of evidence that show the validity of this practice."⁹

So we are going to look everywhere. Don't just anchor me down to Scripture, and don't just anchor me down to Church Age Scripture. I am going to look at all the Scripture, and beyond that, I am going to look at church history.

So Sproul is building an authority structure outside a literal reading of the Bible to support a practice that is not in the Bible. He says,

"...just as baptism is the sign of entrance into the community of the new covenant, so circumcision was the sign of entrance into the core community of the old covenant (the people of Israel; God-fearing Gentiles did not have to be circumcised)..."¹⁰

So where did Sproul just go to find support for infant baptism? He found it in Genesis 17. Why would he find it in Genesis 17? Because he thinks that the church is the new Israel, as I showed you the quote from last time.

So Sproul is operating by a completely different method of interpretation than we are operating by. He says,

"The absence of the controversy anywhere in the early church indicates that the church was comfortable with infant baptism..."¹¹

⁸ R.C. Sproul, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-infant-baptism-question/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Now, where is Sproul arguing from now? Church history. And it is kind of interesting listening to him. He is so aggressive about *Sola Scriptura*: "Scripture alone." And Sproul is right when he talks about *Sola Scriptura*.

It is very interesting to me how easily Sproul casts aside "Scripture alone" to support something he already has determined we should do. Then he concludes by saying,

"...and was carrying on the apostolic tradition of the New Testament."¹²

If churches are baptizing infants today, they are not doing it because of the Bible or the apostles. They are doing it in spite of the Bible.

And I bring this up because everybody hears R.C. Sproul on the radio or TV, and everybody thinks he is just wonderful and he is the real standard bearer for conservative Christianity. And I am thinking to myself, "Have these people really investigated R.C. Sproul in all areas?"

Because what he is doing here is flatly and patently unbiblical, and it emanates from a denial of the Israel-church distinction. Thank you, Augustine, for that, because it was Augustine who basically said, "We cannot have a future kingdom through Israel because the physical world is evil."

So you start to see these things pile up, and you are starting to understand why I am delving into this subject of Neo-Calvinism, as they are bringing back all of these types of things. It is throwing people into tremendous confusion.

If you deny an Israel-church distinction, it also leads in the direction of a theocracy. Because if we are the kingdom, then we ought to set up a theocratic kingdom now, and we ought to coerce people through the force of law—rather like what Islam wants to do—into becoming Christian.

Once you get rid of the Israel-church distinction, and suddenly the church is not a strange and alien and peculiar people in the world, suddenly it is "Let's get power. Let's grab the reins of power. Because we are the kingdom of God on the earth."

That is why the papacy is so politically involved. In the second hour, I will show a little bit why we as Christians today should be politically involved. We should be salt and light everywhere. But when political involvement turns into "We are going to set up the Kingdom of God on the earth," count me out.

I am not going to go along with that. Even if I agree with you on all these different political issues, once you start talking that way do not sign me up. I am not on board,

¹² Ibid.

because I believe that the kingdom of God will not be set up until Jesus, premillennial, returns to the earth and sets it up.

I am pre-pre (Pretribulational and Premillennial). Now, if you are not pre-pre, because you do not have a literal method of interpretation, and you are going to take, as Calvin and Augustine did, all these kingdom passages and make it sound like they are happening now.

That leads into the direction of the churches getting involved in wanting a theocracy. So this issue of premillennialism and all these things, people look at that and say, "Well, that is just some kind of ivory tower thing that people get into."

But you'd better start thinking about it, because what you think about it will control what you think the church should be doing on Earth today. You will hear absolutely no language from this pulpit on why we need to impose social justice on the world.

And the reason that you will not hear any language like that is because the social justice stuff will be taken care of by Jesus in His Second Advent. You will hear a lot of language from this pulpit about our ambition to reach and teach, evangelize, and disciple, but not anything about how we are going to set up a kingdom of God on the earth.

Because my pre-pre position—which, by the way, are reflected in the Sugar Land Bible Church statement of faith and teaching positions—come from a literal reading of the Bible. So we are uncontaminated by Augustine here. This is an Augustine-free zone right here.

But a lot of churches are very contaminated by Augustine because they follow Calvin, who followed Augustine. So there is a lot of language about the kingdom, and we are bringing in the kingdom. A lot of luck with that, by the way. How is that progressing for you?

All these people think they are bringing in the kingdom. It is like, "Do you guys ever read the newspaper?" As my friend Tommy says, "If this is the kingdom, I must be living in the ghetto section."

But when you throw out the Israel-church distinction, not only does it lead to confusion in the area of infant baptism, but it also leads to confusion in the area of theocracy—Kingdom Now theology.

Now Alva J. McClain has it absolutely right. I quote him at length in my book, "The Coming Kingdom." Here he says,

"Theological confusion, especially in matters which have to do with the church, will inevitably produce consequences which are of grave practical concern."¹³

McClain is saying that you had better think about this, Christian, because this is going to practically affect what you think the church should be doing in the present age. He says,

"The identification of the Kingdom with the church has led historically to 'ekklēssia'stical policies and programs, which, even when not positively evil, have been far removed from the original simplicity of the New Testament 'ekklēssia' [the Greek word for 'church']. It is easy to claim that in the 'present kingdom of grace' that the rule of the saints is wholly 'spiritual,' exerted only through moral principles and influence. But practically, once the church becomes the Kingdom in any realistic theological sense, it is impossible to draw any clear line between principles and their implementation through political and social devices. For the logical implications of a present 'ekklēssia'stical kingdom are unmistakable, and historically have always led in one direction, i.e., political control of the state by the church."¹⁴

The Pope has Kingdom Now theology. This is why the Pope has such an influence in the United Nations, in different governments around the world; because in his view, he is the vicar of Christ on the earth—someone who reigns in the place of Christ.

That is why there is a capital city, Vatican City. Does the Bible Church movement have a capital? No. We believe in political involvement in salt and light. But are we trying to get control of all the political institutions of the world and coerce people into becoming Christians? No.

Why does the Pope do it, but we don't? Because of this issue here. The Pope, through a non-literal method of interpretation, thinks that his movement is the reigning kingdom of God on the earth.

We, through a literal method of interpretation, say that the kingdom is yet future, Jesus will bring it in. What we are doing now is reaching citizens of the coming kingdom, sons of the kingdom, as they are called in Matthew 13:38.

But if you get fuzzy on this, "Katy bar the door," is what Alva J. McClain is saying. You will move right in the direction of theocracy, because that is the direction the church has always gone in when it gets confused on this Israel-church distinction.

The quote continues.

¹³ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God as Set Forth in the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 438-39.

¹⁴ Ibid.

"The distances traveled down this road by various religious movements, and the forms of control which were developed, have been widely different. The difference is very great between the Roman Catholic system and modern Protestant efforts to control the state; also between the 'ekklēssia'stical rule of Calvin in Geneva..."¹⁵

In Geneva, Switzerland, Calvin set up a theocracy. Calvin put people to death that disagreed with his views on the Trinity and on other things.

And even though I would look at some of those arguments and side with Calvin in his defense of the Trinity, I am in no way, shape, or form, in favor of putting people to death who disagree.

Because once you get the reins of power and you start killing people who disagree with you, that is really like a Christian form of Sharia law when you think about it. And that is not what Jesus has called the church to do. Spread the good news, yes. Disciple people, yes.

Take control of the earth and impose your brand of social justice on dissenters, no way Jose! Augustine wanted to do stuff like that. Calvin, borrowing from Augustine through a non-literal method of interpretation, wanted to do stuff like that.

I cannot do it, and I will not do it, because it is not biblical. So McClain is giving all these examples in which the blurring of the Israel-church distinction leads to theocracy, and he mentions Calvin in Geneva. And then he mentions

"...the fanaticism of Münster and the English 'fifth-monarchy.' But the basic assumption is always the same:..."¹⁶

What unites, McClain is saying, all of these movements within Christendom trying to impose a theocracy?

"The church in some sense is the kingdom, and therefore has a divine right to rule;..."¹⁷

That is the tie that binds all of these theocratic movements together historically.

"...or it is the business of the church to 'establish' fully the Kingdom of God among men."¹⁸

Now, what happens when the church does this?

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

"Thus the church loses its pilgrim character..."¹⁹

We cease becoming a peculiar, heavenly people, and we just take our place amongst the nations of the earth, like the papacy does regularly.

"...and the sharp edge of its divinely commissioned 'witness' is blunted."²⁰

In other words, McClain is saying that you just changed the character of the church. That is why the subtitle of my book, "The Coming Kingdom" is "How Kingdom Now Theology Is Changing the Nature of the Church." That is practically what happens when the church starts to see itself as the kingdom of God on the earth.

"It becomes an 'ekklēssia' which is not only in the world, but also of the world...."²¹

See, we are in the world, but we are not of it. But if we are the kingdom of God on the earth, now we are in it and of it, and we are no different from any other country that wants its political will.

"It becomes an 'ekklēssia' which is not only in the world, but also of the world. It forgets that just as in the regeneration of the soul only God can effect the miracle, even so the 'regeneration' of the world can only be wrought by the intrusion of regal power from on high (Matt. 19:28)."²²

How do people get saved? Well, eventually they get regenerated. In fact, the word for "regenerated" in Matthew 19:28 is "palingenesia" (παλιγγενεσία). It is only used twice in the Bible, and literally what it means is "beginning again."

"Palingenesia" (παλιγγενεσία) is a compound word: "-genesis" (from which we derive the word "genesis"), and "palin" (πάλιν), which means "again." Compound word: beginning again—regenerated—the impartation of divine life.

How does a person get divine life? Well, a person believes the gospel and the Holy Spirit comes into them. God does a miracle on the front end at the point of faith. So a person can be regenerated. And Alva J. McClain is wisely saying, "That is how the kingdom comes."

The kingdom will not come through human means. The kingdom will come through the personal intrusion of Jesus at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period, resulting in the thousand-year kingdom.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

And there is a reason McClain is quoting Matthew 19:28. Regeneration is used here of the kingdom and used in Titus 3:5 of the regeneration of the soul. The regeneration of the soul is accomplished exactly on the same basis as the coming kingdom of God.

A soul is regenerated because the Spirit comes inside of him first through a miracle, and then the person is regenerated as a result. The kingdom comes the exact same way. The kingdom comes with Jesus touching down on planet Earth at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period, resulting in the thousand-year kingdom.

And the church can get into social justice causes all it wants before that, and it will utterly fail in bringing the kingdom of God on the earth. In fact, the more the church succeeds in trying to bring the kingdom of God without the King, the more you will move into theocracy, which is always a disaster everywhere it is tried, including Calvin's Geneva.

Do we want evidence of this historical disaster? Look at these words of Philip Schaff. Philip Schaff was a very respected, well-known church historian. If you can get Philip's Schaff's "History of the Christian Church" multi-volume set (I am quoting Volume VIII) you will have a source that is respected by everybody as a first-rate historical source.

Schaff is long since deceased. But this is what he writes about the practical consequences of the church moving in this theocratic direction. He says,

"The Reformers inherited the doctrine of persecution from their mother Church, and practiced it as far as they had the power. They fought intolerance with intolerance. They differed favorably from their opponents in the degree and extent, but not the principle, of intolerance. They broke down the tyranny of the popery [these are the Protestant Reformers, John Calvin included], and thus opened the way for the development of religious freedom; but they denied to others the liberty which they exercised themselves. The Protestant governments in Germany [Luther] and Switzerland [Calvin] excluded, within the limits of their jurisdiction, the Roman Catholics from all religious and civil rights, and took exclusive possession of their churches, convents, and other property."²³

Roman Catholicism, with its theocratic belief, was very intolerant, illegalizing, punishing, criminalizing anyone that would think different. The Protestants got the right foot of fellowship, so to speak, and they started the Protestant movement.

The Protestants never fixed this Israel-church distinction issue that I am trying to talk about here. And as the Protestants broke away and got political control of different areas and different cities, they were just as bad as the Roman Catholics that they had fled from.

²³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8 , p. 700.

The Protestants said, "Oh, you want to illegalize us Protestants? We are going to illegalize you Catholics." And look at what the Protestants did.

"They banished [when they got political control], imprisoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged, and burned..."²⁴

Wow. That never comes up in studies of John Calvin. I mean, this guy "imprisoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged and burned."²⁵ People try to make excuses for him. Well, he did not do it directly. His henchmen did it.

"They banished, imprisoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged, and burned Anabaptists, Antitrinitarians,..."²⁶

That is one way to deal with people that disagree with you on the Trinity. Just throw them in jail, drown them, cut their head off, hang them, or burn them. That will end theological discussion, will it not?

This is what the Protestants did to the "Anabaptists, Antitrinitarians, Schwenkfeldians..." We probably can't pronounce it because the Calvinists killed them all and they are no longer around. "...and other dissenters."²⁷

So you have this Neo-Calvinism movement saying, "We gotta get back to John Calvin and bring back Calvinistic teachings." And I am saying, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. What part of Calvin's teachings are we going to bring back here? Because there is a very dark side to Calvin and Calvinism."

You all know Edward Gibbon, who wrote the famous "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." He was a first-rate historian. This is what he says,

"The Reformers came out of Roman Catholicism which was known for its intolerance and persecution of anyone who differed from Catholic dogma, as anyone who has studied the Spanish Inquisition fully knows. The tragedy is that John Calvin and some of the other Reformers, became shamefully intolerant of those who differed from their doctrinal position, even to the point of executing the offender!...The Reformers were ambitious of succeeding the tyrants whom they dethroned. They imposed with equal rigor their creeds and confessions; they asserted the right of

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

the magistrate to punish heretics with death. The nature of the tiger was the same..."²⁸

All right. You fled Roman Catholicism, which was intolerant, and now you are creating a Protestant version of the intolerance that you fled from. Dave Hunt, in a debate book with James White entitled, "Debating Calvinism," James White being a five-point Calvinist, Dave Hunt brings this up.

Hunt writes,

"In February of 1555, Calvin's supporters gained the absolute majority on the council [in Geneva]. On May 16, there was an attempted uprising because Calvin had excluded certain libertarian civic officials from the Lord's Supper."²⁹

See what Calvin is doing here: mixing church and state, getting control of the government, and using government as a tool for who can take communion. Where did Calvin get that idea to do stuff like that for him? He got it from the Roman Catholicism that he had fled.

"Leaders of the rebellion who fled to Bern were sentenced to death in absentia."³⁰

I mean, so much for the right to confront your accusers, or all of the other basic criminal justice rights that we take for granted today.

"Four who failed to escape were beheaded, quartered, and their body parts hung in strategic locations as a warning."³¹

Now, quartering is just such a grisly, disgusting way to die. It is hard to even talk about it, but it is this idea that you take people's extremities—the two arms, the two legs—and you attach them to different horses. And then you have the horses scatter and it obviously severs the person.

When you look at our own Constitution and you look at the Eighth Amendment, there is a provision in there that we are protected from cruel and unusual punishments. What were America's Founding Fathers thinking about when they put that protection into the Eighth Amendment? They were thinking of quartering.

²⁸ Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. LIV. Initial quote by George Zeller, "Should We Go Back to the Reformation?" online: www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/backto.htm, accessed 22 November 2019.

²⁹ Dave Hunt, "Calvinism Denied," in *Debating Calvinism: Five Points, Two Views*, ed. Dave Hunt and James White (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), pp. 23-24.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

"We do not do that kind of stuff in the United States." That is what they were saying. But Calvin practiced this, or he was presiding over people that did practice it.

"Evoking the phrase 'henchmen of Satan' [that is what Calvin called people that disagreed with him], which he had used years earlier against the Anabaptists, Calvin justified this barbarity by saying, 'Those who do not correct evil when they can do so, and their office requires it, are guilty of it.'" ³²

So John Calvin thought that he was biblically justified in doing this. Now, why would you think that? Because you are the kingdom of God on the earth, and the kingdom is supposed to rule with justice over injustice.

Dave Hunt writes,

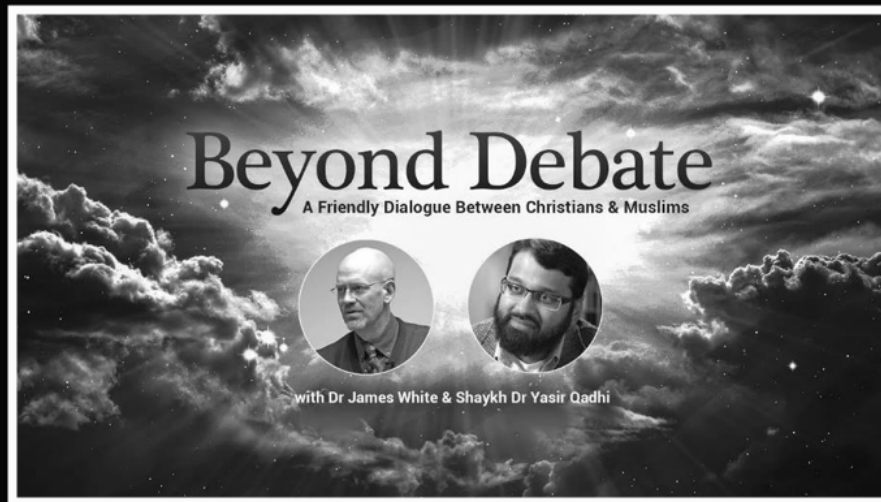
"From 1554 until his death in 1564, 'no one any longer dared oppose the Reformer [Calvin] openly.'" ³³

Well, I bet they did not. Because if you do, this is what is going to happen to you. And we are going to hang these body parts all over the city to show you what we will do to people that challenge my understanding of the Trinity.

That is Calvinism. This is a part of Calvinism, the dark side of Calvinism, that all the Neo-Calvinists are not wanting to talk about.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.



This is something that I have shared with you before. It is a debate. Well, it is not a debate. It is just "Beyond Debate." James White brought in a jihadi imam to have an interfaith dialog before the church, God's assembled people.

James White, a very good debater, did not refute what the imam, Yasir Qadhi, said. And if you watch that online, you will see Yasir, in a church, denying that Jesus died on the cross. Because the Muslims believe it was actually Judas that died on the cross.

And the Muslims take the prophecies, I believe, of Isaac and Ishmael, and reverse them. So Qadhi is in there spewing all of this nonsense in a church while James White, a capable debater, sits there like a potted plant and does nothing to refute what the guy is saying.

Because the goal of this event was not a debate. It was an interfaith dialog to find out the commonalities between Islam and Christianity, which is like hoping oil and water do not separate. That is what they did here.

The whole dialogue is public knowledge. You can grab it online and watch the whole thing.³⁴ In this particular exchange, James White keeps calling Yasir Qadhi his mentor, and all of this stuff.

³⁴ "Beyond Debate: A Friendly Dialogue Between Christians & Muslims (Part 1)":

<https://youtu.be/WDUEvHbfAao?si=J61d7Am3MbLr5EUb>.

"Beyond Debate: A Friendly Dialogue Between Christians & Muslims (Part 2)":

<https://youtu.be/yJbYaMIhKrM?si=X9AYUoJL84GcoZuM>.

But one of the things that is really peculiar in this particular Beyond Debate exchange is that James White says, "The two of us, us Christians and you Muslims, we need to really work together to build some kind of theocracy, because we cannot let the secularist take over.

"Because once the secularists take over, the secularists are going to persecute us." Probably true. "So the two of us, because we do not really have enough voting power individually to do it, but if we work together, we can set up this sort of theocracy—this sort of kingdom of God on the earth. And we can insulate our two movements from secularism."

So what would give White the idea that we ought to be building this kingdom now, to protect ourselves from the secularists? Well, he thinks that way because, just like R.C. Sproul, he thinks that there is no Israel-church distinction—Amillennialism at its core. It is recycled Augustine eschatology.

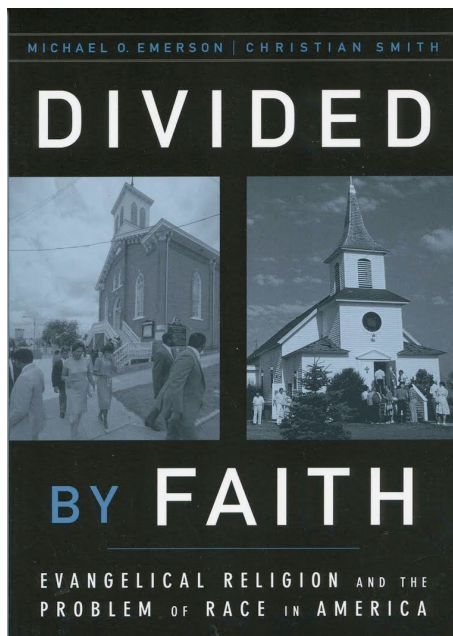
One of the things that the Neo-Calvinists disdain is the dispensationalists. I can tell you this much: the way James White was treating Yasir Qadhi on that stage, if a dispensationalist was sitting next to him, he would not treat the dispensationalists the same way. He would be very bold, very aggressive, trying to refute the dispensationalists.

So the Neo-Calvinists have absolutely no love lost—let's just put it that way—with dispensationalists: people who will come along and say—

"No, we are not going to set up a theocracy because we are in the Church Age, and the theocracy concerns Israel, not the church. And Israel is Israel, and the church is the church. And you cannot take Israel's prophecies literally and apply them to the church."

So that is why when you get into these Neo-Calvinists circles, what they are always tearing down are dispensationalists—always. So at this particular event called the Together for the Gospel, which is a big event, packed with Neo-Calvinists, a few years ago, they were circulating this book called "Divided by Faith."

And they were getting into social justice, racial issues, and things like this. Very sadly, I was forced to read this particular book for our book club at the school that I was working for before I came here. So I am really familiar with this book.



And there is a line in this book that says, "Racism in the United States is the fault of the dispensationalists."

So if you are a dispensationalist and you believe in an Israel-church distinction, then, according to this book, one of the sections of which is written by a scholar here at Rice University, then basically you are responsible for institutional racism in the United States.

So all of the struggles that we have had with civil rights, the Jim Crow laws, slavery in the pre-Civil War era, it is you dispensationalists who are at fault. And that is what they say in this book.

This is what everybody is reading together for the Gospel Coalition. And I am showing you that they do this stuff all the time: they take everything that is wrong in the world, and they blame it on us.

So it is really a funny thing listening to critics of dispensationalism. One of the things they say is, "Well, you guys are not in favor of political activism." Then the other thing, which is the argument that is being made here, is, "You guys are so politically active, you are going to cause World War III."

So which is it? I mean, either I do not care about politics or I am trying to blow up the world. You cannot have it both ways. That is how you know you are being exposed to propaganda. Because there are these wild contradictions that cannot be reconciled.

But this is what they say in this book.

"To understand this, we must account for the pre-millennial view that had come to dominate the American evangelical worldview and played a role in limiting evangelical social action on the race issues. According to this view, the present world is evil and will inevitably suffer moral decline until Christ comes again. Thus, to devote oneself to social reform is futile. The implications of this view were clearly expressed by Billy Graham. In response to [Martin Luther] King[Jr.]'s famous 'I have a dream' speech that his children might one day play together with white children, Graham, who had been invited but did not attend the 1963 march on Washington, said: 'only when Christ comes again will little white children of Alabama walk hand-in-hand with little black children.' This was not meant to be harsh, but rather what he and most white evangelicals perceived to be realistic."³⁵

³⁵ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 47.

Now, obviously, everybody in this room does not agree with racial segregation, and would be in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, etc. But what this book is saying is that the reason we had all of this racism in the country was because of the dispensational view.

Because the dispensational view taught that Jesus will bring in social justice—"if Jesus is going to bring in social justice, then I will not pursue it now." And so we left the United States in a racially segregated state, which I think is a completely distorted view of history.

I do not think dispensationalists have ever taught that. Yeah, we believe that Jesus is coming back to restore His kingdom one day on the earth, but we also believe in being salt and light while we are here. The salt does not do much good as long as it is still in the salt shaker.

So let's permeate culture with Christian values. But because we were not saying, "Let's take over and start the kingdom," we actually, through our apathy, are responsible for all the vestiges of racism in the United States. This book, "Divided by Faith," is saying this.

"Divided by Faith" is being circulated like crazy at the Gospel Coalition which is filled with Neo-Calvinists. And you have to wonder why a book like this would be so popular there. Well, it is popular there because it maligns dispensationalists.

And Neo-Calvinists do not like dispensationalists because dispensationalists are always holding to a literal interpretation of Scripture saying, "No, that Scripture is for Israel, not the church."

And in their minds that throws a wet blanket over the Kingdom Now mentality that they have. So they are always attacking, always trashing, always putting down dispensationalists. So if you are a dispensationalist, you should be concerned about Neo-Calvinism, should not you? Because the Neo-Calvinists have nothing good to say about dispensationalists.

And the only reason I am bringing this up is to show you why I am getting into this subject matter. "Yeah, but John MacArthur, he is a Calvinist and a dispensationalist." Really? Are you sure about that?

I have some quotes here demonstrating that almost every time John MacArthur opens his mouth on the subject of dispensationalism, it is to tear it down. It is never to build it up. It is to misrepresent it and mischaracterize it.

You can see from these quotes—I have one, two, three, four, five, six pages there, so I cannot do them all right now—the role of John MacArthur in the area of Neo-Calvinism and his attitude towards dispensationalists.

I hope to share these quotes with you next time. And then once we finish with that, I will talk a little bit about how Neo-Calvinism is a fulfillment of prophecy, actually. And once we get beyond that, then we will be moving into Roman numeral II: what is the source of John Calvin's ideas?