

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 007

Ephesians 1:10

November 10, 2024

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Take your Bible and open it up to Ephesians 2:8-9. We are continuing our teaching through a brand-new subject that we have introduced. And believe it or not, we are still introducing it. I am hoping and praying to finish our introduction today, Lord willing. We are dealing with this whole subject in Sunday School, a topical study on Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible.

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

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

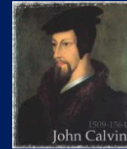
A portrait of John Calvin, a French theologian, pastor, and reformer. He is depicted with a long, dark beard and a black cap, wearing a brown robe. The portrait is set against a dark background.

We have gotten a lot of good feedback on this series, because a lot of people are sucked into Calvin or some kind of Calvinistic interpretation of the Bible. So, in Roman numeral "I", we dealt with how Calvinism is a mixed blessing. There are some good things that come out of Calvinism.

Now we are in Roman numeral "II", which we are going to try to finish today. It is why I get into this subject. I get into the subject of this kind of movement amongst the youth called, "The young, the reformed and the restless." It is an insurgency of Neo-Calvinism that many people are experiencing in their churches.

II. Why Critique Calvinism?

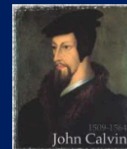
- A. General calling to defend the faith (Jude 3)
- B. The call to admonish fellow believers (2 Thess. 3:15)
- C. Calvinism is a serious issue
- D. The prophetic implications of Calvinism



I was on letter “D” in the outline: The prophetic implications of Calvinism. One of the things we left off with the last time I was with you is that one of the things you are not seeing in Neo-Calvinistic circles is something that is very important in terms of understanding the whole Bible. It has to do with the distinction between Israel and 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



The thing to understand about the Bible is that God does not have just two separate people groups. These are not just two separate peoples, but they are two separate programs. God has a program for the nation of Israel, and He has a program for the church. God can have two programs happening, and yet, like a talented author, at the end He will bring both programs together, just like an author would bring together different subplots and tie it all together.

That is what God is doing with this distinction between Israel and the church. And these are not the only programs God has. He has a program for the angels. We can divide

that between the good angels and the fallen angels (which would include His program for Satan).

We are living in this time period when God is taking all these different subplots that He has developed in His Word, and He is going to bring them to a climactic conclusion. Then we are going to look back at the whole thing and just say, "Praise the Lord." Only the Lord can pull all this off.

One of the things that we embrace here at Sugar Land Bible Church is dispensational theology. Sometimes I do not even like using the word "dispensational" because it scares everybody.

I had you open up to Ephesians 2, but if you just go back to Ephesians 1 for a minute, and look at verse 10, Paul says,

"with a view to an administration" (Ephesians 1:10).

Now, "administration" ("oikonomia" [οἰκονομία]) is translated "dispensation" in many Bible translations. I am using the NASB, in which "oikonomia" [οἰκονομία] is translated "administration."

"with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth...." (Ephesians 1:10).

So what is this word? The Greek reads "oikonomia," where we get the word "economy." It is a compound word: "oikos" meaning "house," and "-nomia" from "nomos" meaning "law." You put them together. It is translated "economy" sometimes, or "administration" sometimes. Some English translations will use the word "dispensation."

What is dispensationalism? Well, traditional dispensationalism is a theology that embodies three essential fundamental concepts called the "sine qua non." That is Latin, which means, "Without which there is not." That is what "sine qua non" means. In other words, if you took away one of these things, you would not have a dispensational framework anymore.

The first ingredient (this comes from Charles Ryrie's classic book on the subject, "Dispensationalism") you need is the employment of a consistent, plain, normal, literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation. The key word there is "consistent." In other words, you take the Bible literally, unless there is some kind of conspicuous figure of speech telling you that it is not to be interpreted literally.

Other than that, you take the Bible at face value and you do not just do it in Romans or Galatians. You have to do it in early Genesis and you have to do it in Bible prophecy. The prophets speak of a coming kingdom. You use the literal method there. You use it in the Book of Revelation.

In the Book of Revelation, it is a little more difficult because you have a lot of symbolism that you have got to navigate your way through. But the bottom line is that it is the same hermeneutic, which means method of interpretation, to the whole Bible. And once you become committed to that, it reveals that the church is distinct from Israel.

So this idea that God has separate programs for Israel and the church is not something that you bring to the Bible. It is something that you derive from the Bible. And you derive it from the Bible because you have made a decision to interpret the whole Bible literally. Once you see that, you will see very fast that God is not finished with the nation of Israel.

Literally construed, God has unfinished promises and commitments to Israel, and those have never been canceled. They are largely not even being fulfilled now. You put them in the future Millennial Kingdom where those prophecies will be fulfilled.

Well, then, what is God doing today? He is not fulfilling His program with Israel. Today He is working through the church, which is the body of Christ that began in Acts 2. That dispensation will end with the Rapture, or the translation, of the church.

So these are all things that we teach. And we do not teach them because we think they are swell. I mean, they are swell. I like them. I like all of them. But they are derived out of a decision to take the whole Bible literally. Then from there you will see that God has an overall purpose in history, which is to glorify Himself. It is called the doxological purpose of God.

God works in history to glorify Himself. Everything He does is to glorify Himself. And He has the right to do that because He is who He is: God. So God's ultimate purpose in human history is not even to save people. Now, I say that because you can take the soteriological purposes of God, that means salvation, and you can clearly see that even when God saves a lost sinner, who gets the glory? God does.

So even the salvations of people are subsumed under His ultimate purpose, which is to glorify Himself. And if you think that God's whole purpose in history is to save people, well, then you have no explanation for how He deals with the angels: good angels and fallen angels, because the plan of salvation is not open to the angels.

So whatever you are going to say is the ultimate purpose of God, it has to encompass all of the biblical data. But essentially, once you move down this road, that is what makes you a dispensationalist. You are interpreting the whole Bible literally, number one.

Dispensational Theology is a System of Theology

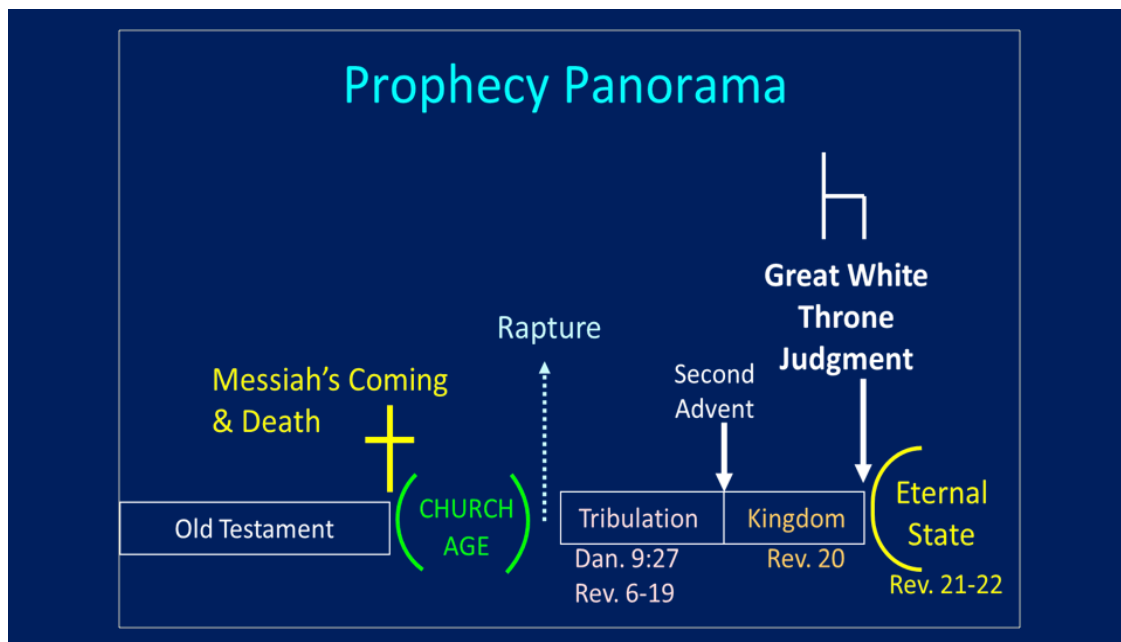
Traditional-normative dispensational theology is a system that embodies three essential, fundamental concepts called the **sine qua non** (lit. “without which is not”):

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

Number two, you are seeing from that literal interpretation that God has separate programs for Israel and the church. And number three, everything that God does, either in creation or redemption, is ultimately to glorify Himself.

So this approach yields this kind of structure here, moving from left to right. God is working through Israel in the Old Testament. They, national Israel, rejected their King. That is what the Cross is all about. The Jews turned Jesus over to Rome for execution.



But God is very good at taking lemons and turning them into lemonade. So, beginning in Acts 2, because He does not leave the earth without a witness of Himself, He started the church.

Now, who is the church? The church consists of everyone who has trusted by faith in the Messiah that Israel rejected. God took that terrible tragedy, the Jewish rejection of their own Messiah, and turned it around for good, because He used the cross of Jesus Christ to pay the sin debt of the world.

And as the nation of Israel is in unbelief, she is put on the shelf for a season. And God, instead—He has been doing this for the last 2,000 years—is developing the church, the body of Christ, which is not a nation, but rather consists of believers from all nations and all ethnicities that have trusted for personal salvation in the Messiah whom national Israel rejected in the first century.

Just slip over for a moment to Ephesians 3:11. In the first three chapters of Ephesians is really where Paul develops the doctrine of the church. Paul did not start the church. The church started in Acts 2. But Paul does the best job in explaining the church.

In Ephesians 3:11, Paul says,

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

So the church is not the result of God saying, "Oh no, the nation of Israel rejected My Son. What am I going to do? Oh, I know!"—as a footnote or as an afterthought—"I will create the church."

God already knew what Israel would do with His Son, and He had already planned to unleash the church in the Church Age. We are living in the Church Age now. It began in Acts 2.

The doctrine of the church was always in the mind of God. You have to understand it that way. That is why Ephesians 3:11 says,

"...in accordance with the eternal purpose..." (Ephesians 3:11).

So the church is not Plan B, as our theological detractors like to say that we believe. We believe that the church was always Plan A. It just had not been disclosed yet. But God knew what He was going to do.

God was not taken off guard, or by surprise. That is why the church, in Ephesians 3:11 is called,

"...in accordance with the eternal purpose [of God]..." (Ephesians 3:11).

So that is the period of time that we are living in now. We are living in the Church Age. One of these days, the Church Age is going to end with a miracle, just like it started with a miracle in Acts 2.

It is going to end with a miracle, which is the translation of the church, sometimes called the Rapture. Are you guys looking forward to that event? I am. Maybe it will occur this weekend. Who knows? (The church in heaven is represented by the twenty-four elders—see our Revelation series to get evidence of that, because we went into a lot of detail.)

Once the church is in heaven glorifying Jesus Christ, God, who has never forgotten His promises to Israel, puts His hand right back on Israel and leads them to Christ in the events of the great Tribulation Period, in which God is judging the world because of its sins.

Then the nation of Israel will actually call Jesus back to the earth to rescue them from the satanically energized beast or Antichrist. And that is the Second Advent. We are returning with Christ, by the way, in that Second Advent.

And then Christ will start the thousand-year kingdom (Revelation 20). And in that thousand-year kingdom, He will fulfill every single promise He has ever made to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We believers will be co-rulers, functioning alongside Christ's delegated authority during the Millennial Kingdom.

Then that age will end with the Great White Throne Judgment. That is a judgment for all unbelievers. And then from there we will be rolled into the eternal state where sin will not even be a part of it at all.

So the story of the Bible is from a garden to a city, the New Jerusalem, with a Cross in between. That is basically dispensational theology.

Sugar Land Bible Church is a dispensational church. This is what we believe. This is what we teach. You will see it in all of our positional statements in our church, constitution, etc.

Now the thing to understand is that John Calvin, although he did a lot of good, would deny all the distinction between Israel and the church. He would say (and I have given you this quote many times, so I do not know if I have to reread it) that all of Israel's promises have been transferred to the church.

He arrived at this conclusion through a non-literal method of interpretation, and this is called replacement theology. Sometimes it goes by the title supersessionism, meaning that the church has superseded Israel's place in the outworking of God's purposes and programs.

I gave you the quote from R.C. Sproul recently, which basically said, "What about the Jews? What about Israel?" And R.C. Sproul says, "Here we are." Calvin borrowed this idea from Augustine (I will connect the dots between Calvin and Augustine probably next week, Lord willing, or start connecting the dots, I should say).

Augustine and Calvin absorbed this supersessionism/replacement theology. They call the church the New Israel: God is finished with Israel nationally. Jews can get saved today, but that is the best thing that can happen. God has no purpose for the nation of Israel as a distinct national entity.

And when Calvin and Augustine transferred Israel's promises from Israel to the church, it is interesting that they never transferred Israel's curses to the church. There are a lot of curses for disobedience for Israel, particularly in the Mosaic Covenant.

They never transfer those, but they transfer all the good stuff. And to get that to work, you have to move away from point one in the sine qua non, the consistent use of a plain, literal, or normal method of interpretation.

So Calvin and Augustine will say things about the Dead Sea coming back to life, Ezekiel 47. A river is going to come out of Jerusalem in the Millennium. It is going to flow into the Dead Sea. Miraculously, sea animals will start to team in the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea's salt content kills everything. That is why it is called the Dead Sea, amen? And by the way, when you go to Israel—I say when, not if, because you are going to get to Israel one way or the other—

You are going to be ruling and reigning there with Christ for a thousand years—if that is your first trip to Israel, you will not be able to see the Dead Sea because the Dead Sea will come back to life, as prophesied in Ezekiel 47.

So if you want to float in the Dead Sea, which is what you are able to do today because of its high salt content which destroys all life in the Dead Sea, you have to go over now to do that. So how is that for a selling point for an Israel trip?

In fact, I was convinced I would be the first person to sink in the Dead Sea. But sure enough, it buoyed me up very nicely because of this salt. The salt kills all the fish and everything in the Dead Sea.

In fact, as I was floating in the Dead Sea, I looked at the shore and I saw that there were lifeguards there. And I thought to myself, "What do these guys do? I mean, I cannot sink." So I have been working on my retirement plan. At some point, I am going to apply for a job as lifeguard on the Dead Sea so I can just read my newspaper all day and watch people float.

Ezekiel 47 talks about this river coming out of Jerusalem. It goes into the Dead Sea and everything in the Dead Sea comes to life again. Now, Augustine and Calvin, from the perspective of supersessionism/replacement theology, would say that is not literal.

They would say, "That is the soul coming to life when they receive Christ." Well, what about peace in the animal kingdom? I know we are not in the kingdom now because I have two cats, and I watch them fight with each other.

And every time I see my cats fighting, I say, "Look, they are fighting. We are not in the kingdom now, obviously, because the prophet Isaiah says that the wolf and lamb will lie down together. A little child will put his hand into the cobra's nest and not be harmed."

Now Calvin and Augustine would come along and say, "Well, that is just peace in your heart when you receive Christ." So what they do to get this whole thing to work is they de-literalize all of these prophecies. If you do that, you are not a dispensationalist, because you just took away one of the sine qua non.

Sine qua non is like a three legged stool. You take one leg away and the stool falls over. So they are denying a normal, literal approach to the whole Bible. So as Neo-Calvinism is coming back to life in the church today, they are recycling a lot of these things.

They are recycling supersessionism. They are recycling replacement theology. They never have a critical word to say about Augustine. They actually call him Saint Augustine.

And this is why, when you go to their conferences, like Together for the Gospel, which is a big Calvinistic conference, they will showcase certain books. And I was shocked to discover that it takes a ton of money to have a book fair or a book booth at these conferences hosted by Neo-Calvinists.

I cannot remember the exact amount, but I was shocked to learn how much they charge to have a book fair or book table or book booth set up. And these are conferences that draw hundreds and thousands of people, particularly young people.

So, the kind of books that they circulate—they were circulating this a few years ago at Together for the Gospel—are like this book called "Divided by Faith." "Premillennialism and Racism" is the title of this particular slide.



Premillennialism and Racism

“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 King’s famous ‘I have a dream’ speech that his children might one day play together with white children, ...

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.



Premillennialism and Racism (cont’d)

...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.”

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.

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I have given you this quote before, so I will not re-read it to you, but it basically blames dispensationalists—they even mention Billy Graham here—for structural institutionalized racism in the United States.

So they actually try to make a case in which the dispensationalists are, in a twisted way of thinking, involved in perpetuating racism in the United States, which is an outrageous allegation. There is no validity to that whatsoever.

¹ 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.

But this is the tone in which these Neo-Calvinists operate. They have no room for dispensational theology, right down to wanting to tag dispensationalists with this title of perpetuating structural racism.

So I want to give you a few quotes by John MacArthur, who is certainly one of the leaders in the Neo-Calvinist movement. I want to just show you these quotes to show you how negative John MacArthur is on dispensationalism, because a lot of people will give John MacArthur a pass and say, "Yeah, he is Calvinistic, but he is very pre-Trib."

I guess MacArthur is pretribulational in some ways. He is very premillennial. But he really does not deserve this pass, in my opinion, because of these quotes in his published writings.

This quote comes from his famous book, "The Gospel According to Jesus," page 31. I am just showing you these things to show you why I am getting into this subject of Neo-Calvinism. Because I am a dispensationalist, and I find that these folks are constantly trying to tear down the dispensational belief system.

John MacArthur writes,

"There is a tendency, however, for dispensationalists to get carried away with compartmentalizing truth to the point that they make unbiblical differentiations. An almost obsessive desire to categorize and contrast related truths has carried various dispensational interpreters (Chafer, Ryrie, Hodges, etc.)..."²

These are all the types of minds that we quote from frequently here at Sugar Land Bible Church. But MacArthur is saying that these men, even Charles Ryrie, have gone far beyond legitimate distinctions between Israel and the church.

"Many would also draw hard lines between salvation and discipleship (justification and sanctification),..."³

Now, we draw a hard line between justification and sanctification. We teach that there is a world of difference between spiritual birth, the condition that God has laid out for a person to be born again, and spiritual growth.

There is one condition for spiritual birth: faith alone in Christ alone. Birth in Christ and growth in Christ are two totally different animals. How does a person grow in Christ? They grow in Christ not by fulfilling a command, but by fulfilling multiple commands.

² John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, page 31.

³ Ibid.

In spiritual growth, there has to be a heart of obedience, seeking to obey Jesus under the power of the Holy Spirit. So, there is one command to be justified. There are multiple commands to move into spiritual growth.

And just as in the natural world, you can have someone who is physically born but not maturing correctly, with developmental delays, and all kinds of things. If a person has that, it does not mean that they are not born.

They are born. You cannot erase your birth. But just as in the natural world, you have people that are physically born, but are not maturing developmentally the way they should. You have the exact same thing in the spiritual world.

There are a lot of people out there who are born again spiritually, but they are not growing as they should because they have not really understood, or maybe they are not interested in, the whole issue of discipleship.

So there is a hard line distinction between justification and sanctification, which MacArthur says comes from an obsessive desire to compartmentalize truth. Now, it does not come from an obsessive desire to compartmentalize truth.

It comes from just reading what the Bible says. The nation of Israel was redeemed through the crossing of the Red Sea and the sacrificing of the Passover lamb to be exempted from plague number ten.

But after those events happened, you have Exodus 19:1, which says that there were two months between those events and God taking Israel to Mount Sinai to receive the law.

What is the purpose of the Mosaic Law? It was not to redeem Israel. They already had redemption. It was to teach a redeemed people how to live. See that? And there is a two month gap between the two.

Now, if there is no hard-line distinction between justification and discipleship, God would have put the Israelites under the Mosaic Law right away. The two-month gap would not exist. Do you see that?

So these are the things that MacArthur rejects. He rejects this clear distinction between salvation and discipleship. What else does he reject here? He rejects the distinction between

"...the church and the kingdom,..."⁴

⁴ Ibid.

Now, this kind of thing is happening in seminaries all over the place today. People do not see a distinction between the Church Age, which is what we are living in now, and the coming kingdom, which will take place during the thousand years.

So they start to argue things like, "Well, Jesus is on David's throne reigning now. He is just doing it from heaven." So what they did was took the Davidic promises and just ran them through a non-literal, inconsistent method of interpretation.

This is why I wrote my whole book, "The Coming Kingdom," to explain this key distinction between the Church Age and Kingdom Age. We are not in the kingdom right now. If we are in the kingdom now, Satan will be bound.

And if Satan is bound now, as some have said, he must be on a pretty long leash, because he is creating havoc everywhere he goes. But it is interesting how MacArthur, in his diatribe against dispensationalism, is denying something that is very, very obvious in the Bible.

What else does MacArthur not like, continuing with his quote here?

"...Christ's preaching and the apostolic message,..."⁵

John the Baptist, in Matthew 3:2; and Jesus Christ, in Matthew 4:17; and then the twelve disciples, as they were sent out into the cities of Israel, Matthew 10:5-7; preached the offer of the kingdom to Israel.

Meaning, "Israel, since the King is here, if you accept the King on the King's terms, then hypothetically the Millennial Kingdom would have materialized." And it is couched in the expression "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (paraphrase, Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 10:5-7).

And when you study Matthew 10:5-7, that was an offer given only to Israel, and it was given to them at that point in time, because the King was present, and they could have hypothetically had the Millennial Kingdom.

That message of the kingdom gospel is not to be confused with the message of personal salvation that we preach today. When we evangelize people today, we do not say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

We say what Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer,

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

So, personal salvation is something that has always been preached ever since the Fall in Eden. But we recognize that the offer of personal salvation is not the kingdom gospel.

⁵ Ibid.

That offer was a limited offer given to the nation of Israel, while the King is present. That offer will be extended to the nation in the future, and in the future they will accept the kingdom gospel.

So if you are going to take the kingdom gospel and merge it with the personal gospel—because you do not like that distinction, because you have an obsessive desire to categorize and contrast truths—you know what you are going to end up doing today? You are going to end up preaching a perverted gospel, a gospel of works.

So that is why you have to keep the two separate. MacArthur denies that. In fact, in my book, "The Coming Kingdom," I have quotes from him from his books and sermon tapes, etc.,—transcripts,—where he is basically saying that there is no distinction between the personal gospel and the kingdom gospel.

That is why when MacArthur preaches the gospel today, it is very confused. It is very garbled. He is going to the wrong passages. He is adding conditions that God never added. Because he is not making a basic distinction that dispensationalists make.

This is so common in these Neo-Calvinist circles. So MacArthur rejects

"...Christ's preaching and the apostolic message..."⁶

He rejects the distinction between

"...faith and repentance..."⁷

Now, I would probably agree with him there, because repentance, when it is used with the personal gospel, just means a change of mind. That is what the word repentance ("metanoia" [μετάνοια]) means. "Meta-" (μετά-)—"change," as in "metamorphosis," or your cancer, God forbid, has "metastasized"—it has changed.

And then "-noia" (-νοια), "mind." You get the word "notion" from this root. A notion comes out of the mind. "Metanoia" (μετάνοια): change of mind.

So when a person hears the personal gospel today and places their personal faith in Christ alone, simultaneously, their mind is changed. They are no longer trusting in themselves for salvation, but they are trusting in Christ. So I agree with MacArthur there.

MacArthur goes on and he says that dispensationalists also draw an unwarranted distinction—and this one's unbelievable to me; and there it is in his best-selling book, page 31. Just just go and read it and you will see it. I am not taking them out of context.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Dispensationalists draw a distinction between

"...the age of the law and the age of grace."⁸

Yeah, we draw that distinction. If you followed our teaching last Wednesday, we went into some detail explaining why we as the church are not under the Law of Moses.

If we were under the Law of Moses, you people should not be here on Sunday. You should be here on Saturday, and you should have brought your unblemished lamb with you to sacrifice, because that is what Israel was required to do under the Law of Moses.

We believers are under a different system called the law of the spirit, or the law of Christ, which looks similar to the Law of Moses at some points, but is very, very different. Go back to Tuesday night's teaching to get more on that.

So what I am saying is that John MacArthur is denying very basic things, that dispensationalists have acknowledged as being in the Bible.

So as this Neo-Calvinism starts to resurface, you will notice this kind of mindset and attitude in their leaders, including one of their elder statesmen, John MacArthur.

Here is a quote from a sermon transcript. This is what MacArthur says about dispensationalism. He says,

"I was raised in a dispensational environment; there's no question..."⁹

Now, the MacArthur that I agree with is not John MacArthur. The MacArthur that I agree with is Jack MacArthur. Jack MacArthur was John MacArthur's father. I think he is with the Lord now.

But if you are going to hear a guy that is crystal clear on all of these subjects, listen to his dad. Do not listen to the son, because the son just took a very different path from the father.

So in this particular sermon, MacArthur says,

"I was raised in a dispensational environment; there's no question... But, as I got into seminary, I began to test some of those things."¹⁰

No problem there. We should test everything. Now watch this.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Transcribed from tape, #GC 70-15, entitled "Bible Questions and Answers." A copy of the tape can be obtained by writing, Word of Grace, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412. Copyright 1994 by John MacArthur Jr., All Rights Reserved.

¹⁰ Ibid.

"I have perhaps been aptly designated as a leaky dispensationalist...."¹¹

And boy, that bucket is full of holes and it is leaking quick, because he is going after all these basic distinctions that dispensationalists have always acknowledged.

These are things to bring up, because people, when they hear someone they like,—and John MacArthur is a very good orator—just want to defend that person.

In fact, I know somebody that came from MacArthur's church and went to Dr. John Walvoord's office at Dallas Seminary, and she announced herself as a member of John MacArthur's church.

And John Walvoord said to her, "Well, how is my friend John doing?" And then Walvoord said, "He is a really good preacher, but he is not so good a theologian."

There are people who just gravitate towards people because of the sound they like, that they hear, or watch. And so they just want to defend the person, because maybe the person blessed them in some way.

I am not denying that John MacArthur has not blessed people. What I am saying is that you have to be really careful with this guy. He says,

"I was raised in a dispensational environment; there's no question... But, as I got into seminary, I began testing some of those things. I have been perhaps aptly designated as a leaky dispensationalist..."¹²

Those are his words about himself. It is not me mischaracterizing him.

"Here's my dispensationalism—I'll give it to you in one sentence: there's a difference between the church and Israel—..."¹³

Yay! I like that. But then he says,

"—period!..."¹⁴

So all these other distinctions in the quote from "The Gospel According to Jesus"—the church versus the kingdom, the kingdom gospel versus the personal gospel, justification versus sanctification—throw all that out, is what MacArthur is saying.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

So MacArthur is dispensational on a point, but the rest of it is leakage. This is what he says about himself in his sermon. He says,

"At the same time in seminary, I began to be exposed to reading among more Reformed theologians... And over the years of exegeting the scripture, it has again yielded to me a Reformed theology."¹⁵

Now, Reformed theology is moving in the direction of Calvinism, supersessionism, and replacement theology. And even if MacArthur has not gone all the way, he is clearly moving in that direction.

MacArthur got this by listening to heroes of the faith who are of the Reformed, sometimes called covenant, theology, people like John Calvin, of that mindset. So MacArthur is admitting in this particular quote that he got these ideas from these theologians and read them back into the Bible.

He does not quite say it that way, but that is my interpretation. Now, that is a denial of the *sine qua non*. Look, I love theologians. But my authority to believe something and to preach something does not come from what some theologian said, even if it is a theologian that is in our camp.

My authority to believe and to preach something comes from the Word of God. And I am getting that from a consistent use of the literal, or normal, method of interpretation.

MacArthur goes on and says,

"I was convinced of it (Reformed theology) when I started and I'm more convinced of it now as I've gone through the text."¹⁶

Well, MacArthur is really not going through the text. He is reading the text through a set of lenses of Reformed theologians. That is what he is saying here. And this is where John MacArthur started to drift away from Jack MacArthur.

"I was convinced of it when I started because I read so many noble men who have held that view (Reformed Theology)."¹⁷

Now watch this.

"It was more at that point hero worship, and now it's become my own."¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In other words, MacArthur started to look at these Reformed theologians as heroes, great men of the faith. Probably a lot of them, I am sure, were. And the temptation is that you start to gravitate towards those ideas. You embrace those ideas, and you read them backwards into the Bible.

Now, anybody could do this. I could be guilty of this. I quote a lot from Ryrie, Fruchtenbaum—those kinds of people. And it is a very dangerous thing to fall in love with Ryrie or Fruchtenbaum and start to read Ryrie and Fruchtenbaum back into the Bible.

That is a very dangerous thing. We all have the ability to do that, and we should not do that. We should go back to point one of the *sine qua non*. And then, where Ryrie, Fruchtenbaum, or whoever you like, happens to harmonize with a literal reading of the Bible, you embrace a theologian at that point.

But you do not elevate a theologian over the Bible. And this is a fascinating quote to me from a transcribed tape that MacArthur gave, because he is admitting that is what he has done.

So we put in parenthesis at the bottom here: "(My point here is only to demonstrate how John MacArthur, who claims to be a dispensationalist, has arrived at his position on Lordship salvation)"—I will explain Lordship salvation in just a minute—or, for that matter, any other theological position.

John MacArthur's ministry is called "Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time." And to a large extent, that is what he is doing. But by his own concession, he is really not unleashing God's truth one verse at a time. He is unleashing God's truth through an *a priori* lens.

It goes through that lens, through MacArthur's oratory, to the Christian public. This kind of thing, I am sad to say, is so common in Neo-Calvinist circles, which may explain why I have got my dander up just a little bit on this.

Why are we going into this? I am not so much giving you the answer to the "What?" question today, but the answer to the "Why?" question. Here is a quote from John MacArthur in an interview. He says,

"When I wrote [GAJ] ['The Gospel According to Jesus'] I didn't know anybody outside of my circles really, and I didn't know how this book ['The Gospel According to Jesus,' which is his seminal book] would be received. But Jim Boice [a Reformed theologian] agreed to write the foreword, and John Piper [a Reformed theologian] wrote an endorsement that was absolutely stunning to me, because I was really not moving in Reformed circles at that time."¹⁹

¹⁹ Interview with John Piper and Justin Taylor, *Stand*, p. 129.

Now, do you think, if I wrote something today, that I would get a call from Jim Boice and John Piper saying, "Andy, we just love what you have done. We want to endorse your book."? I mean, hell would freeze over before something like that would ever happen, because I am a dispensationalist.

But they love John MacArthur's book on the gospel—all of these non-dispensational theologians—to the point at which they wanted to write forewords and so forth for his book. And here MacArthur says it again—

"I was a leaky dispensationalist. That was my world, and I realized that I was much more one of you [Reformed theology] than I was one of them."²⁰

Here is a quote from another book that MacArthur wrote, called, "The Gospel According to the Apostles." MacArthur's first major book, departing from dispensational understanding, was "The Gospel According to Jesus."

MacArthur then followed up with "The Gospel According to the Apostles." This quote is from page 221. It is not me mishearing him. It is just reading comprehension. MacArthur writes,

"The lordship debate..."²¹

Now, what is the lordship debate? The lordship debate is a debate, not about the Lordship of Christ. We all know that He is Lord, amen? The lordship debate is about one simple thing. What is necessary for the lost sinner to do to be made right with God?

That is the debate. Our side believes, coming from the Bible, that there is one condition: faith alone in Christ alone. End of story. What their side says is that faith alone in Christ alone is not enough.

Now, immediately when they say, "That is not enough," all of a sudden, my discernment antenna goes up, because they are going to add something. They are going to add a condition, which they do.

In their minds, a person is not saved until they have submitted, or at least are willing to submit, every area of their life to Jesus Christ. You have to, on the front end, surrender to the Lordship of Christ.

And if you have not done that, you are not a true Christian. Your faith is just illusory, or spurious. That is what they say. Our side looks at the concept of Lordship as referring to

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*, 221.

how you grow as a Christian, not how you become a Christian. God is very clear that what is necessary for someone to get saved is a free gift received by faith alone.

And if you put the onus on the lost sinner and you basically say that faith alone is not enough and you have to submit every area of your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you have just lost, in the process, the gospel being a free gift, not by works.

And although when you first look at some of this, it looks like semantical debating, this is a big deal. It is interesting that John MacArthur ties his disagreement on the issue of Lordship salvation, which he embraces, to dispensationalists.

He says,

"The lordship debate has had a devastating effect on dispensationalism. Because no-lordship theology [a pejorative term for Free Grace, which is our view]..."²²

And my response to that is that we do not believe in non-Lordship theology. All you have to do is change the vocabulary around. We believe in Lordship sanctification: Lordship as necessary to grow as a Christian. Not, faith plus the acknowledgment of Christ's Lordship to be justified.

"The lordship debate has had a devastating effect on dispensationalism. Because no-lordship theology is so closely associated with dispensationalism, many have imagined a cause-and-effect relationship between the two...Frankly, some mongrel species of dispensationalism [which he (MacArthur) has defined as the Dispensationalism of Ryrie, Chafer, and others]..."²³

The viewpoint that we teach here—MacArthur calls us "a mongrel species."²⁴ He did not just say this out of anger. It is in his book.

"Frankly, some mongrel species of dispensationalism ought to die, and I will be happy to join the cortege."²⁵

("Cortege" means a parade.) In other words, there is some species of dispensationalism that MacArthur calls "a mongrel species,"²⁶ and he cannot wait for it to die. And when it dies, he is going to join the parade celebrating its death, because he traces free grace theology back to dispensationalism.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

So all of these people that want to give John MacArthur a pass on the dispensational issue, they have to, at some point, interact with these quotes. This is what one of the leading Neo-Calvinist elderly statesmen is saying today regularly.

Those who are following in MacArthur's lineage are saying the exact same thing. George Ladd, of Fuller Seminary, a dispensational hater to the core, has a quote, and I wish I had brought it in.

Ladd said that there is not a more spiritual body of men than dispensationalists. They have done more to promote biblical teaching in the church than any other group. They have done more to promote worldwide missions than any other group in the church.

MacArthur is attacking that blessing in the church called the dispensational movement. The whole Neo-Calvinist movement does this, if you listen to what they are saying.

Here is another quote from MacArthur, from "The Gospel According to the Apostles," page 35. He says,

"Who are the defenders of no-lordship dispensationalism?"²⁷

Okay, I am a dispensationalist, but I am not no-Lordship. I just believe that Lordship relates to growth, not birth—sanctification, not justification.

"Who are the defenders of no-lordship dispensationalism? Nearly all of them stand in a tradition that has its roots in the teaching of Lewis Sperry Chafer."²⁸

Now, the last time I checked the website, I am still the president of Lewis Sperry Chafer Seminary, because we felt that Dallas Theological Seminary was not honoring the teachings of Lewis Sperry Chafer anymore. We developed Chafer Theological Seminary in the early 90s through our founding president, Dr. George Meisinger.

So it is interesting how MacArthur is connecting the dots between his view of salvation, which denies the kingdom gospel-personal gospel distinction, which denies the church-kingdom distinction, which denies the justification-discipleship distinction.

And MacArthur is laying the blame for the whole thing at the feet of Lewis Sperry Chafer. That is why they are circulating books at the Together for the Gospel conference by the Gospel Coalition—books which blame dispensationalists for everything, including structural, or institutionalized, racism in the United States.

MacArthur goes on and says,

²⁷ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to the Apostles*, 35.

²⁸ Ibid.

"I will show...that Dr. Chafer is the father of modern no-lordship teaching. Every prominent figure on the no-lordship side descends from Dr. Chafer's spiritual lineage. Though Dr. Chafer did not invent or originate any of the key elements of no-lordship teaching, he codified the system of dispensationalism on which all contemporary no-lordship doctrine is founded. That system is the common link between those who attempt to defend no-lordship doctrine on theological grounds."²⁹

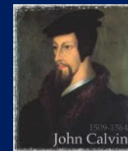
So there it is in print. MacArthur has declared war on dispensationalism, because he thinks that in it is where all this free grace stuff started.

So why go into a series on the whole topic of Neo-Calvinism? Because this Neo-Calvinism stuff is wreaking tremendous havoc all over the body of Christ, even in the area of prophecy itself, denying the Israel-church distinction.

Now, MacArthur does not go that far, but he is certainly moving in that direction, causing confusion on a lot of different issues. The last thing I want to point out is that the reason that we are going into this is that Calvinism itself is a fulfillment of prophecy.

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



Let me show you what I mean by that. The Bible in the last days predicts a departure from the truth in the church. First Timothy 4:1, which is in one of Paul's last letters, says,

"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

When people are developing a theology from John Calvin, who got most of his ideas from Augustine, and reading that back into the Bible, and publishing books through that grid, and giving lectures through that grid, and giving sermons through that grid, and

²⁹ Ibid.

having conferences through that grid—then the church is moving away from God's truth, which is actually a last days prediction.

5. Calvinism as a Prophetic Fulfillment

- a) Apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-13)
- b) Holds to a Form of Godliness (2 Tim. 3:5)
- c) Works based salvation (2 Tim. 4:3-4)
- d) Divides churches and families (Matt. 10:36)



A second thing that is predicted for the last days is that there would be people within the church that would hold to a form of godliness, but deny its power. That prediction is in 2 Timothy 3:5, where Paul, at the very end of his life, says of people within the church in the last days,

*"holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;
Avoid such men as these" (2 Timothy 3:5).*

As I will show you, Calvinism turns a God-centered gospel into a man-centered gospel. The focus is, "Are you really persevering as you should as a Christian? Because if you are not, you never got saved." That places all of the onus on a human being.

It is a subtle, even not so subtle, form of a gospel of works. And once you move into a gospel of works, you deny the power of the gospel, which is in the fact that the gospel is a free gift.

So even as Neo-Calvinism percolates throughout Christianity, it is actually fulfilling multiple last days prophecies. Here is a third one.

Not only is Calvinism a form of apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-13), not only does it hold to a form of godliness denying the true power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), but also Calvinism is actually a works-based salvation (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

The fact that God's people would fall in love with a works-based gospel is predicted by Paul also concerning the last days, which is the time period we are living in. Second Timothy 4:3-4 says,

"For the time will come..." (2 Timothy 4:3).

Can I be so bold as to add a parenthetical comment? Just a comment—

"For the time will come..." (2 Timothy 4:3)—

Andy's comment: "...and now is..."—Forget Andy, let's get back to the Bible.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Lost and sinful people love works-based theology. They just love it. Do you know why? It gives them something to boast about. With the pure gospel of grace, bragging rights are gone.

That is why Galatians 5:11 says that the pure gospel is an offense. You have nothing to brag about when you are saved. If you want to brag about something, brag about what Jesus did.

But if I am adding Lordship submission as a condition for justification—if I am moving into what Calvinists call the Perseverance of the Saints: I have to be doing good works to prove I am saved—who gets the credit for all that? Not God and Jesus. I get the credit.

But Romans 3:27 says that the gospel excludes the principle of boasting. I did have you guys open to Ephesians 2, didn't I? So I have to at least read that.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

That is why pure grace is obnoxious to people. There is no bragging room for a human being. Neo-Calvinism, as I will try to show you, changes that. That is why people are drawn to it.

The last reason I believe that Neo-Calvinism is a fulfillment of prophecy is that it divides churches and families (Matthew 10:36). Jesus said that would happen. He is making a statement here that I think blends into the end times. He says,

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36).

If you could see some of the phone or email interactions that I regularly get from people who say, "My own family does not talk to me anymore because I have never embraced their Neo-Calvinism doctrine." "The church that I grew up in and love has seemingly moved into this Neo-Calvinism mindset."

I say, "What happened?" "Well, we got a new preacher." "Well, what seminary did he graduate from?" "Well, The Master's Seminary." I say, "There is your problem right there. That is John MacArthur's school."

Tom Littleton, who has looked at this very carefully, in his blog, called "thirtypiecesofsilverdotorg" (<https://thirtypiecesofsilver.org/>) says of The Master's Seminary that people who have come out of that school have divided about three hundred churches.

There was a kind of a mini coup here amongst people when I first started. They did not like the direction I was moving in, which was just going back to what Sugar Land Bible Church was originally founded on. And there was a little bit of a power struggle that in and of itself is an outworking of the last days.

Jesus said that would happen. This is all under the rubric of the prophetic implications of Neo-Calvinism. So now we have spent seven lessons on Calvinism's Mixed Blessing and Why Critique Neo-Calvinism?

Where are we going now? We are going to Roman numeral III in the outline, which we will start next week. From where did John Calvin derive his ideas? And you are going to be somewhat shocked at the answer, because everybody looks at Calvin as if he is like the purest exegete.

Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion," written at age twenty-six, is looked at by the Neo-Calvinistic movement as if it is some kind of Mount Sinai revelation. And I am going to show you exactly where Calvin got his own ideas, by his own quotations.

And then from that, we will move into studying what kind of person was John Calvin? And then from there, we will spend the bulk of our time running the famous TULIP of Neo-Calvinism through the grid of Scripture.