

BASIC
REFORMED
THEOLOGY
EXPLAINED
AND
EXPOSED

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INTRODUCTION

Foreward

Personal Experience

Foreword

This manuscript began as an effort to help local friends and their teenagers distinguish the differences between Reformed theology with its gospel of Calvinism, from the Biblical theology and its gospel of faith from the heart. We set aside an afternoon to discuss these two systems. I assumed they all had at least some knowledge of Calvinism. However as the class progressed, it became clear that much more discussion and many more class sessions were needed to cover the detailed and nuanced system of Reformed theology. Eight sessions later, we finished only to find that we had scratched the surface of this confusing theology. This notebook is a compilation of materials covered in our class to help those interested understand the differences between Biblical theology and Protestant theology.

The time between classes provided time to research topics more thoroughly, create charts and prepare more lengthy class handouts. This notebook is not meant to be an exhaustive scholarly work. My intention is to help the simple and uniformed get a quick, working knowledge of Reformed Theology and its attending doctrines.

It is useful to realize that different theologies are taught within the visible church today; the two predominant ones functioning under the titles 'Dispensational Theology' and 'Protestant Reformed Theology.' Each has distinct origins and philosophies for interpreting the Bible which causes their theologies to be quite different. They each have different characteristics, books, authors, scholars, seminaries, churches, evangelistic techniques, doctrinal statements, views of the Christian life, views of the Bible, views of God, views of the cross, understandings of salvation, of the covenants, and different definitions for the same terms. The lines between these two theologies are blurred for many Christians when the Word of God is not clearly taught, discussed and compared against false theologies. This document is an attempt to clarify these two approaches in understanding God's intended message for man which is conveyed through His Word. To get God's message wrong is to get His identity, gospel, theology, sanctification and eschatology wrong.

As these two theologies are compared, it will become evident, by the test of scripture, which is a philosophy of man and which is the truth of God. Hopefully by the end of this notebook, the reader will easily identify Reformed theology when encountered. It is advised that those who finish this notebook read reformed documents to see how this theology is being promoted under the guise of truth.

Reformed theology has lodged itself comfortably within the walls of the visible church. Most believers in the church today assume Protestant theology is basically the same theology found in the Bible or in most Christian churches. Christians innocently point to the 'Five Solas' of the Reformation, the various creeds and confessions and find they ostensibly agree with their own personal beliefs.

Most assume that the Reformers had their doctrine straight when they reformed the Roman Catholic Church. Few realize how much Catholicism was retained in the Reformation and how a different gospel was systematized in this movement. It is useful to keep in mind the Reformers were attempting to reform the Roman Catholic Church rather than separate from it. Objections to Papal abuses led the reformers back to the fathers of the Catholic Church rather than to the Bible alone. Hence, Protestant theology retains much Catholicism that is 'baptized' by an Augustinian understanding of scripture. Also keep in mind that the Reformers and adherents subsequent to the 16th century Reformation put Christians who didn't submit to their theology to death. This fact alone should give us pause and consider whether Reformed theology is of God.

In the pages of this document, the reader will find that Reformed theology, in its purest form, is an entirely different belief system from that of the Bible, yet operates under the guise and words of true Christianity. It is important to note that most people brought into the scheme of Protestant theology don't fully understand all the nuances of this system. Unsuspecting Christians who read or listen to

Reformed teaching will unwittingly have their thinking and actions molded by these precepts even while denying the label 'Calvinist.' Most assume teaching from either of these two "camps" is basically the same and consider any differences to be minor or not important enough to take issue with. What is not readily apparent is how Protestant theology significantly distorts the character of God, subtly redefines the gospel and ruins the Christian walk by faith by replacing it with works. What a person believes dramatically affects their thoughts, choices, and behavior....in short, how a person lives. Therefore it's important to be biblically correct about our theology, the character of God, and the gospel of Christ so we can walk by faith and offer true salvation to all.

My desire is to help free those already under the influence of Calvinism and inoculate others from being taken captive to it. My hope in writing this notebook is to expose Reformation theology for what it is. May we all stand before Christ without shame and hear those blessed words, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*"

Personal Experience

I was taken captive to the heresy of four point Calvinism for 14 years of my Christian life. Shortly after believing the gospel and attending church, my pastor at the time gave me lecture tapes covering the book of Romans which taught predestination and election from a reformed point of view. Hungry to learn truth as a new Christian, I trusted that both my pastor and the reformed scholar were giving out solid Biblical teaching. I never dreamed there were such vast differences in understanding the Bible or that deception was so prevalent inside the walls of the visible church.

Upon moving from the small Wyoming town we lived in to the city, I was afforded more study opportunities. I eagerly attended Bible studies and listened to hundreds of sermons on tape. Unknowingly, they all had reformed leanings that prepared my mind to accept four point Calvinism. Everywhere I turned, some type of election was being taught. I trusted ministries, leaders, pastors and scholars who eventually convinced me that some form of Calvinism's predestination was taught in the Bible because the scriptures '*seemed*' to say this.

After 14 years, God mercifully allowed me to see that I'd been deeply deceived. He used Christians to challenge, teach and guide me in looking at His Word correctly. I consider it nothing short of a miracle to be delivered from this deception that distorts the Word, His character, the gospel and the Christian walk. Looking back, I now realize how difficult it is to be delivered from deception because in the case of Calvinism, the Word is used to implant it. The scripture is explained using the traditions of men which in effect nullify the true intent of God's message to mankind and the church.

The Calvinist, who highly esteems the Word of God, doesn't realize their defense of the Word is actually a defense of a wrong understanding or explanation of the Word. When challenged about their understanding of the Word, the Calvinist will sometimes become offended, argumentative and even hostile. They already know what they think the scripture is saying and so defend the truth with all their heart. Unknowingly, they are defending a Calvinistic tradition. They have emptied the Word of its intended meaning and replaced it with a different meaning. They have been taken captive by the philosophy of reformation theology.

[Colossians 2:8 NIV](#)

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

While under the influence of Calvinism, I couldn't make sense of what opponents to Calvinism were trying to tell me. To my shame, materials opposed to Calvinism made absolutely no sense to me. I was thoroughly indoctrinated with the teachings of total depravity and unconditional election while denying limited atonement. Since that time, I've learned that believing even one point of Calvinism's TULIP is to be entirely on the wrong road. The thinking process is virtually the same regardless of whether one is a one, two, three, four or five point Calvinist. Interestingly, I wouldn't argue with 'free choice' verses because I effectively incorporated them into my Calvinistic understanding. The result was a confused theology that I relegated to the mystery of God's will.

The sad reality is that anyone is vulnerable to being misled. Research shows it is the intelligent that are most susceptible. They can follow all the 'ins and outs' of this complicated theology. God warns all of us not to be deceived. We are to be accurately informed by sound doctrine so we won't be misled by commandments or traditions of men.

When I came out from under this deception, I was deeply ashamed at having misunderstood God's character and His Word. One of Calvinism's key tenets, gifted faith was revealed to be an imprecise teaching through some interesting and unexpected circumstances. As I researched the topic further, I realized I had not been told the entire truth concerning the Calvinist tenet; 'faith is a gift.' The implications of false teaching were staggering. What else did I not understand correctly? Gifted faith

is one of the pillars of Calvinism. When it fell, Calvinism fell with it. Immediately I was gripped with the realization that I had severely misunderstood the character of God. Then came the keen awareness that I had been deceived. I had been immersed in studies, lectures and resources of various sorts, yet all of these only tightened my entrapment because I understood them from a Calvinist point of view.

After realizing how thoroughly I'd been deceived, deep shame haunted me for months. I couldn't confess my sin of misunderstanding God's character enough. I had fully repented, but wanted to apologize to God over and over. I was so sorry. I hung my head in humiliation too embarrassed to discuss scripture with anyone. My prideful arrogance had been completely broken. Amazingly, God in His mercy had other plans. He brought others to me to ask how to understand Calvinistic key verses. They had no idea how deep my regret and disgrace was. In my shame, I had nothing to offer. My silence prompted those asking to offer their explanations that I was finally willing to listen to. Without their awareness, God was bringing them to me in order to teach me the correct way to understand scripture. I was being taught how to interpret the Bible with God's character as in mind.

Even though I knew that Calvinism was wrong, the stronghold of unconditional election was yet to be broken. I returned to the dispensational teachers, who imbedded four point Calvinism in the first place, to search for answers. How was I to understand these election passages and preserve God's character at the same time? And how could election be understood differently? I didn't want to believe it anymore, but had no other way to understand these verses.

My deliverance came one afternoon while listening to a Calvinist teaching on Jeremiah 1:5.

[Jeremiah 1:5 NASB](#)

⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Again, it seemed as if unconditional election were true. Crying out to the Lord to help me understand this verse that was consistent with His character, He showed me that this par excel lance verse for Calvinism actually refutes it. Rather than this verse supporting election, it instead revealed that God's actions in forming, consecrating and calling Jeremiah as a prophet were all predicated on His foreknowledge of the future! I was finally and forever free from the pull of Calvinistic election! Never again would I interpret passages through the lens of unconditional election. Rather, I always keep the character of God in mind first, then the context and the interpretation easily falls into place.

The power of mind control exerted in this theology can't be underestimated. Scholars, pastors, ministries, blogs and leaders can knowingly or unknowingly propagate this teaching of unconditional election which takes believers captive to a philosophy of men that severely impact the believer's view of God, the gospel, theology, sanctification and prophecy. My hope is to help others either become educated about, inoculated against or come out from under this powerfully deceptive theological stronghold.

GENERAL
BACKGROUND

Deception

Mind Control

Cults

Character of God

Deception

It is useful to get a clear handle on deception and some of the ways it operates. Deception is defined as a fraud, a misleading falsehood, the act of deceiving or using deceit, a ruse, a trick or using something that deceives or is intended to deceive. Deception is to make something appear to be real when it is not. It is the manipulation of perception to alter thoughts and feelings through lies and cleverness. It involves concepts like propaganda, distraction and concealment. Lies deceive when they are portrayed as whole truth or half-truths. In many cases it is difficult to distinguish deception from unintentional wrong information. A person or an entire organization will unknowingly promote deception if they are deceived themselves.

Deliberate deception occurs with the concealing of truth. In the case of half-truths, concealing parts of truth results in deception. Lies can be camouflaged, disguised and obfuscated. Deception can also involve the distracting of someone's attention from the truth by offering enticements to divert attention away from the object being concealed.

Deception can't be easily recognized unless there is a standard to compare it against. In identifying counterfeit money, bankers study real money so that the counterfeit can be easily recognized. The same is true of truth. By definition, there is only one truth. Knowing the truth protects against falsehoods and lies. Therefore, the believer who has embraced and loves the truth needs to study the whole counsel of God to be thoroughly equipped to resist lies and deceit when encountered. Discernment is developed by contrasting the true against the false. The Bible warns believers about following deceivers and being deceived. Both are possible.

Examples of being Deceived

[Genesis 3:13](#) NIV

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

[Luke 21:8](#) NASB

⁸And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them.

[2 Corinthians 11:3](#) NASB

³But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

[Galatians 3:1](#) NASB

¹You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

[Galatians 5:7](#) NIV

⁷You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?

[Colossians 2:8](#) NASB

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Examples of Deceivers

[Matthew 7:21-23](#) NASB

²¹"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²²"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

[Matthew 15:6b](#) NIV

⁶...thus you nullify the Word of God for the sake of your tradition.

[2 Corinthians 11:13-15](#) NIV

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

[2 Timothy 4:3-4](#) NASB

³For 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, ⁴and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

[2 Timothy 3:1-13](#) NASB

¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. ⁹But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. ¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

[Titus 1:10-11](#) NASB

¹⁰For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

[2 Peter 2:1](#) NKJV

¹But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

[1 John 4:1](#) NIV

¹Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[2 John 1:7](#) NASB

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Comments

- We need to know what God says in His word because men will come along and explain the Word wrongly. Some protective precautions that can be taken are to study the whole counsel of God and always keep His character or His attributes in mind!!
- Lies are often couched in truth and truth is often couched in a lie. One might say, *"I'm not saying..."* and actually go on to say exactly what they wanted you to believe they weren't saying. For instance, one might say...*"I don't want to hurt your feelings"* but goes on to do exactly that. Or one might also say, *"Now I'm not saying that we're adding works to the cross"* but actually goes on to teach exactly that. You can't quit listening. You have to pay attention to every word.
- Deceivers often times will be deceived themselves. We tend to pacify ourselves by thinking that they aren't doing this on purpose and excuse them because we want to give them the benefit of the doubt. Deceivers and liars aren't deceivers and liars because of their intentions; they are deceivers and liars because they **are** deceiving and lying.
- Deceivers can be the nicest and best intentioned people you know. Emotions don't determine facts. Just like God says, whether you know it or not when you sin, it is sin and you are accountable for that sin.
- Deceivers will give much truth which leads the listener to think he's correct in other areas of doctrine. Evil will almost always wrap itself in a garment of good or in truth. We have to evaluate **all** of what is being taught.

- Deceivers use Biblical words with different definitions. The result of arguing with their words is that you end up arguing against your words. Thus, you will end up arguing against yourself.
- Therefore when they can't or won't concede to the correct understanding conveyed through the Word, it is best to drop the argument as scripture instructs.

2 Timothy 2:14-16 NAS

¹⁴Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. ¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of truth. ¹⁶Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

- Deception can be more easily recognized by understanding mind control techniques which is often going on around us. We need to be alert and sober.

Semantics

Another technique used in deception is semantics, which is the scientific or philosophical study of the relationship of words and their meanings. People in communication must agree on word meanings and definitions before ideas or thoughts can be conveyed. If words have different meanings in conversation, then information will not be communicated. The result of discourse will be differing information where no real communication has taken place. If language is to communicate information at all, then definitions have to be held in common.

In the case of religious deception, evil does not come into the light but rather hides itself in ideas or words that most think are safe. For instance, the word 'grace' can mean several different things to different people. We have to agree on clear definitions before we can communicate ideas. In the case of religious and biblical words, presuppositions and theological systems can load words with differing definitions. The unsuspecting think words mean one thing when they are intended to mean something quite different. Those who are 'in the know' will use words held in common yet hold special definitions to avoid openly and clearly stating the controversial position. Same words; different definitions. And the unsuspecting will not detect the problem. Reformed theology redefines words constantly which is why it's so hard to identify and so easy to lure the naive in. Unfortunately, we need to study this theology to know what their words really mean.

For instance:

We know that the media will use the politically correct term 'insurgent' when actually the word terrorist more accurately describes the scenario.

Insurgent

Rebelling against the leadership of a political party.

Rising in revolt against established authority, especially a government.

Terrorist

a person who terrorizes or frightens others.

a person, usually a member of a group, who uses or advocates terrorism.

For instance:

The name 'Jesus' for the Christian means the eternal God, second person of the Trinity who is Almighty God, Creator and Savior ...but for the Mormon, 'Jesus' means an exalted mortal man who is the brother of Satan. The Jehovah's Witness thinks of Jesus as the Archangel Michael. The name of Jesus means different things to different groups. The character, identity and description of the 'Jesus' being embraced determine whether the Jesus of scripture is being honored and discussed.

Same words, different meanings!!

Presuppositions

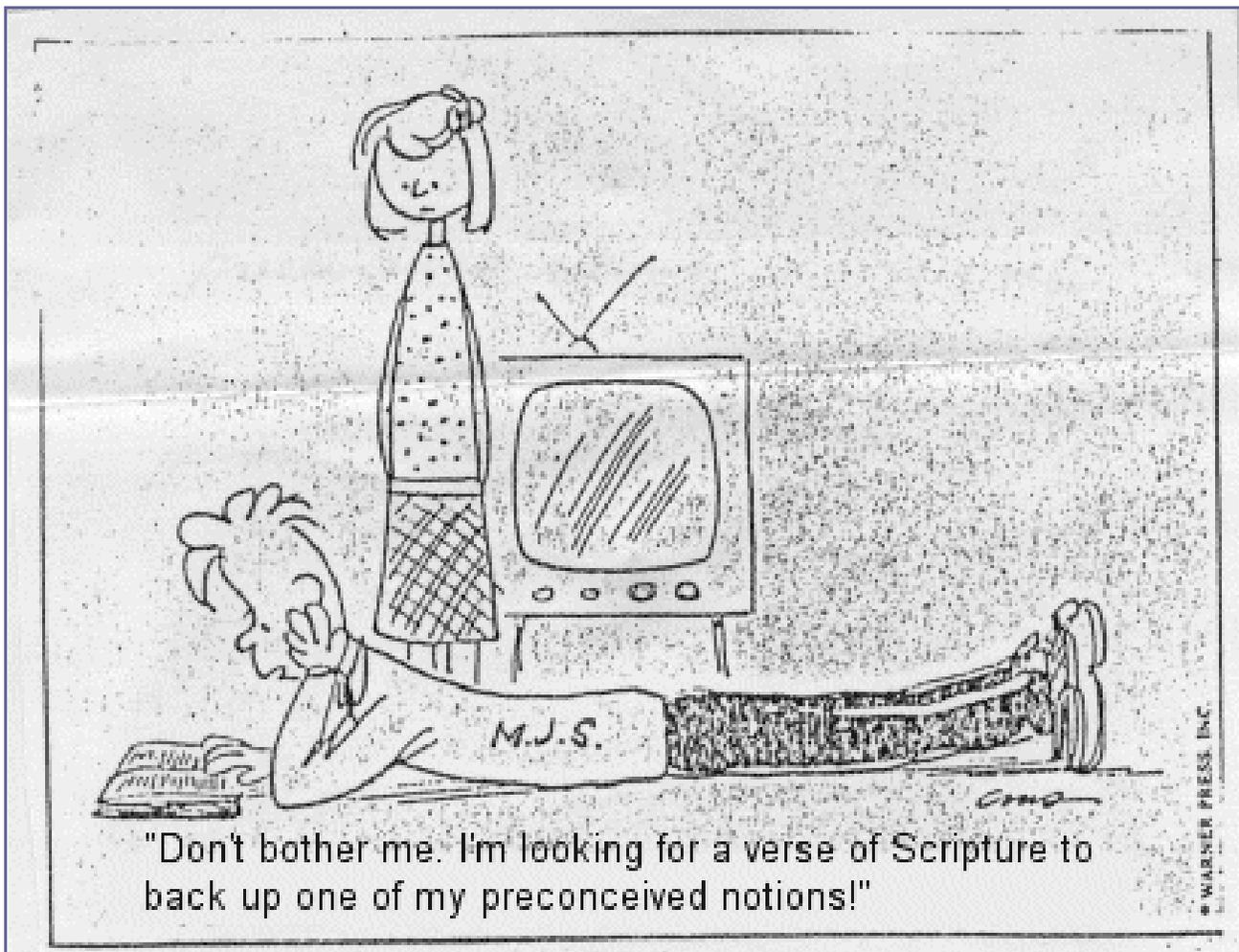
When studying the Bible, we need to take the whole counsel of God and His character into consideration through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit when discerning what a passage means. What does God want to convey? Many men will come to the scripture with a presupposition, find a verse out of context, and use that verse to support their preconceived ideas or presuppositions. Here we encounter what's known as 'eisegesis' vs. 'exegetis.' When a presupposition is held, the Bible won't be properly understood.

Eisegesis

An interpretation, especially of Scripture, that expresses the interpreter's own ideas, bias, or the like, rather than the meaning of the text. A person's interpretation of a text (especially of the Bible) using their own ideas.

Exegesis

Critical explanation or interpretation of a text or portion of a text, especially of the Bible



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Mind Control

While it may seem obtuse to bring mind control into the discussion at this point, it should never be underestimated or dismissed. Certain techniques can be used to make deception more effective. Mind control techniques are used in a myriad of circumstances to produce conformity in any number of situations. These techniques can be easily used whenever people gather together for a common purpose. The danger occurs when they are used for destructive purposes.

For instance, in employment, a person is paid a wage to represent an employer or company in ways consistent with the purposes of that business. Orientations, training and workshops instill the company's ideals into the employee over time. The employee may be highly skilled and praised for their value, wear a uniform, be monitored, etc. all with the aim to further the betterment of both the employee and the company. In a sense, the employee is being trained to '*think*' in a certain way. Or take the example of a family; love, training, values, authority, and discipline instill a mindset designed for the good of everyone involved.

Mind control becomes destructive and binding when an organization or individual uses these powerful techniques to control another person or group of people for erroneous and self-serving purposes. Destructive mind control has been well documented in abusive relationships, abusive organizations or even in fascist governments. The classic, yet hideous example of destructive mind control is Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. The ultimate example of destructive mind control will be the worship of Antichrist under the one world governmental system during the Tribulation.

Many think that mind control is for the weak minded, but actually it is the motivated and intelligent who are most susceptible to being bound by an organization, individual, teaching, or ideal. Everyone is at risk. Identifying and evaluating various mind control techniques prepares an individual to recognize the early warning signs before becoming bound and before finding it difficult to extricate one's self from controlling circumstances!

God has given us His Spirit and truth so that we who believe may be of one mind and be conformed to the image of Christ. Believers fully trust that God has preserved His revealed Word perfectly, and therefore trust it for their rule of life. The Bible's own internal and historical proofs prove its accuracy and authenticity. Christians trust that the Bible accurately describes God character of love, kindness, goodness, mercy and grace toward all men, especially to those who believe Him. In the Bible, He fully discloses His plan for humanity, His plan for their salvation and His plan for living an abundant life. His Word is given to us for knowing and trusting Him. Believers do well to pay attention to God's instructions for us for He is trustworthy and has our ultimate good at heart.

Mind Control Techniques^[1]

The mind processes information by putting new information into an already existent framework. While the mind is processing new information, new information can be forced into acceptance by several manipulative techniques employed against the conscious will of the individual. Not all molding of behavior is bad, but if an individual is being coerced against their will, threatened with eternal punishment or losing salvation, these mind control techniques may be operating on some level, both knowingly or unknowingly. Acquainting one's self with these mind control techniques helps identify and ward off early advances toward being held hostage by ideologies or group dynamics.

Three Principles of Re-Education

Repetition

Going through the same subject over and over again until it is known by heart.

Activity Pedagogics

The subjects are never left alone nor give any private time of their own, they are always in activity.

Criticism and Self-Criticism

The subjects are supposed to feel uncertain; under the constant threat of being humiliated and despised.

Mind Control and Brainwashing Techniques

Hypnosis

Inducing a state of high suggestibility by hypnosis, often thinly disguised as relaxation or meditation.

Peer Group Pressure

Suppressing doubt and resistance to new ideas by exploiting the need to belong.

Love Bombing Creating a sense of family and belonging through hugging, kissing, touching and flattery. Rejection of old values accelerating acceptance of new life style by constantly denouncing former values and beliefs.

Confusing Doctrine

Encouraging blind acceptance and rejection of logic through complex lectures on an incomprehensible doctrine.

Repetition

Repeating of certain desired doctrines or goals for the sake of conforming the group to ideals or teachings.

Metacommunication

Implanting subliminal messages by stressing certain key words or phrases in long, confusing lectures.

Removal of Privacy

Achieving loss of ability to evaluate logically by preventing private contemplation.

Time Sense Deprivation

Destroying ability to evaluate information, personal reactions, and body functions in relation to passage of time by removing all clocks and watches.

Disinhibition

Encouraging child-like obedience by orchestrating child-like behavior.

Uncompromising Rules

Inducing regression and disorientation by soliciting agreement to seemingly simple rules which regulate mealtimes, bathroom breaks and use of medications.

Verbal Abuse

Desensitizing through bombardment with foul and abusive language.

Sleep Deprivation and Fatigue

Creating disorientation and vulnerability by prolonging mental and physical activity and withholding adequate rest and sleep.

Dress Codes

Removing individuality by demanding conformity to the group dress code.

Chanting and Singing

Eliminating non-cult ideas through group repetition of mind-narrowing chants or phrases.

Confession

Encouraging the destruction of individual ego through confession of personal weaknesses and innermost feelings of doubt.

Financial Commitment

Achieving increased dependence on the group by 'burning bridges' to the past, through the donation of assets.

Finger Pointing

Creating a false sense of righteousness by pointing to the shortcomings of the outside world and other cults.

Flaunting Hierarch

Promoting acceptance of cult authority by promising advancement, power and salvation.

Isolation

Inducing loss of reality by physical separation from family, friends, society and rational references.

Controlled Approval

Maintaining vulnerability and confusion by alternately rewarding and punishing similar actions.

Change of Diet

Creating disorientation and increased susceptibility to emotional arousal by depriving the nervous system of necessary nutrients through the use of special diets and/or fasting.

Games

Inducing dependence on the group by introducing games with obscure rules.

No Questions

Accomplishing automatic acceptance of beliefs by discouraging questions.

Guilt

Reinforcing the need for 'salvation' by exaggerating the sins of the former lifestyles.

Fear

Maintaining loyalty and obedience to the group by threatening soul, life or limb for the slightest 'negative' thought, word or deed.

Replacement of Relationships

Destroying pre-cult families by arranging cult marriages and 'families'.

References

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Cults

The word 'cult' stirs up a variety of images, applications and definitions in the minds of people. Generally the word 'cult' can be defined as a system of practices and rites; the veneration of a person, ideal or thing by a body of admirers; an object of devotion, a sacred ideology with ceremonial rites and symbols; a sect or religion considered to be false, unorthodox or extremist, with members often living outside of conventional society under the direction of a charismatic leader; a system for treating human sickness that originated by a person usually claiming to have sole insight into the nature of disease that employs methods regarded as unorthodox or unscientific; the attracting and grouping of devotees. In practice, a cult can develop in religions, businesses, activities, entertainment; etc....hence the term 'cult following.'^[1]

In a religious environment, when mind control techniques are applied, cults can easily form. Most think of 'cults' as being bizarre, radical groups of wacky kooks walled off from society in some off beat location. Many fail to realize that cults can have large followings which operate openly in mainstream society. Remembering that no one is immune from the deception of mind control, we can understand how high functioning, intelligent adults can participate in cults, often unknowingly. An example would be the highly moral and professional Mormons who revere their modern day prophet and function under several of the mind control techniques. Anyone under mind control will defend the beliefs and practices of the organization with intense loyalty. It is helpful to look at the identifying marks of a cult to evaluate if you or others you know are under the control of a religious group. Again this can occur in any church or religious organization when mind control techniques are implemented.

It is also interesting to note that several Reformed scholars have intimated or outright accused Dispensationalism of being a cult that operates inside Christendom.

"What is indisputably, absolutely, and uncompromisingly essential to the Christian religion is its doctrine of salvation... If Dispensationalism has actually departed from the only way of salvation which the Christian religion teaches, then we must say it has departed from Christianity. No matter how many other important truths it proclaims, it cannot be called Christian if it empties Christianity of its essential message. We define a cult as a religion which claims to be Christian while emptying Christianity of that which is essential to it. If Dispensationalism does this, then Dispensationalism is a cult and not a branch of the Christian church. It is as serious as that. It is impossible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation."^[2]

The cult of Dispensationalism spread throughout America largely through the efforts of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, born in 1843.^[3]

.....a group of so-called Christians, and by so doing, help break the chains and break down the barriers that prevent us from seeing our families, friends and loved ones, trapped in what many are calling a bona fide Cult.^[4]

Dispensationalism is perhaps best known for its distinctive doctrines of a "secret rapture" of the Church, a future "great Tribulation" over which will preside an evil world leader known as the "Antichrist," and the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem along with the reinstatement of the Old Testament sacrificial system under a restored Levitical priesthood. However, the most pernicious errors of this system are not eschatological, but soteriological. As this book demonstrates, Dispensationalism, as popularized in the early 1900s by C.I. Scofield in his Reference Bible, and believed today by a large segment of the professing Evangelical Church in America, so far departs from the biblical Gospel that it warrants classification as a non-Christian cult.^[5]

Marks of a Cult ^[6]

Used with permission: <http://www.rapidnet.com/%7Ejbeard/bdm/Cults/marksof.htm>

1. Extrabiblical Authority:

All cults deny what God says in His word as true. Cults have shifted their theological point of authority away from God's full and final written Word, the Bible, to their own unique, self-promoting opinions about the Bible; they generally will use parts of the Bible but will have their own unique scripture which is considered to be superior to the Bible. While some cult groups give token respect for the Bible and go through the motions of accepting the authority of Scripture, in reality, they honor the group's or leader's novel *interpretation* of Scripture as normative.

2. Works Salvation/Legalism:

Cults teach that eternal life depends upon something other than the Atonement; i.e., faith in the atoning, finished work of Christ on the cross is deemed *not* to be sufficient (usually replaced with human works and human responsibility). Rather than relying on the grace of God alone for salvation, the salvation message of the cults always boils down to required obedience to, or abstention from, certain obligations and practices (some even including obedience to the Old Testament law).

3. No Assurance of Salvation:

The issue of a cult member's salvation is never settled, but is constantly affected by the changing circumstances of life; in this way, cult leaders are able to produce continued obligation and spiritual bondage, rather than spiritual freedom.

4. Guru-Type Leader/Modern Prophet:

The cult leader is looked to as the infallible interpreter of Scripture, specially appointed by God to be a special saint, guru, or contemporary messiah, and thereby, has divine authority that must not be violated. Cultists almost always quote their leader rather than the Bible. The cult's adherents often expound the virtues of the founders and seek to cover the founder's sins and wickedness.

5. Vacillating, Ambiguous Doctrines/Spiritual Deception:

In order to gain favor with the public, and thereby aid in the recruitment of new members, cult "doctrine" tends to be characterized by many false or deceptive claims concerning the cult's true spiritual beliefs (e.g., Mormons are not quick to reveal their belief that God was a man, who has now become the God of planet Earth).

6. Exclusivity from/Denunciation of Other Groups:

Each cult group, regardless of what other doctrines are taught, will all have this one common idea -- "The Only True Church Syndrome." All other groups are false. The group's leaders will explain that it is impossible to serve God without being a member of the specific group. Moreover, when the cult leader announces himself as the true "Messiah," all others are declared to be dishonest, deceitful, and deluded, and must be put down; alternative views are denounced as being satanic and corrupt. Persecution is welcomed, and even glorified in, as "evidence" that they are being persecuted for righteousness sake. Thus, if a member decides to leave the group, they have been told that they are not simply leaving an organization, but rather they are leaving God and His only true organization. Hence, for a member of a cult who has been in a group for any length of time, the action of leaving the group is much more difficult than what most Christians understand. To leave the group is, in the minds of the cult member, tantamount to leaving God.

7. Claims of Special Discoveries/Additional Revelation:

Acceptance of new, contemporary, continual revelations that either deny the Bible or are allowed to explain it. The fundamental characteristic of Christianity is that it is historical, not dependent upon private knowledge and secret, unconfirmable relationships, while the almost universal basis of cult religion is the claimed exclusive revelation that one person has supposedly received. Rather than conforming to Biblical rules of evidence (2 Corinthians 13:1), cult leader revelations almost always emanate from hallucinations, visions, dreams, private discoveries, etc. These new revelations often become codified as official written "scripture" of the cults (e.g., *The Book of Mormon*), and are considered as valid as that of the apostles (and even more relevant because they are given in these end times).

8. Defective Christology:

Cults always have a false view of the nature of the Person of Jesus Christ; a cult will usually deny the true deity of Christ, His true humanity, His true origin, or the true union of the two natures in one Person.

9. Defective "Nature of Man:

"Most cults do not see man as an immortal being; instead they see him either as an animal without a soul or as a being which is being perfected to the point of becoming a god. They usually do not see man as a spirit clothed in a body of flesh awaiting the redemption of body and soul.

10. Out-Of-Context Scripture Use as Proof-Texts/Segmented Biblical Attention:

Cults tend to focus on one verse or passage of the Bible to the exclusion of others, and without regard for the context in which Scripture is given (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:29 used by Mormons to justify baptism for the dead). In addition, cults have made an art form out of using Christian terminology, all the while pouring out their own meanings into the words.

11. Erroneous Doctrines Concerning Life After Death and Retribution:

Covering the gamut from soul sleep to annihilationism to purgatory to universalism to the progression to godhood, cults invariably deny the existence of a final judgment of, and a final "resting" place for, the unrighteous.

12. Entangling Organization Structure:

The less truth a movement represents, the more highly it seems to have to organize itself; the absence of truth seems to make necessary the application of the bonds of fear. Cults often demand total commitment by their converts to an organizational involvement that entangles them in a complicated set of human restrictions, giving the impression of passionate and often irrational devotion to a cause.

13. Financial Exploitation:

The cultic practitioner strongly implies that money contributed to the cause will earn the contributor numerous gifts, powers, and abilities, and in many cases, outright salvation.

14. Pseudomystical/Spiritistic/Occultic Influence:

Occult influence is often found in either the origin of the group and/or in its current practices. ^[6]

Summary

If we find ourselves involved with organizations or 'theological camps' whose teachings contradict the Bible, we can ask ourselves if any of these mind control techniques are contributing to our continued involvement which might make separating from them difficult. For instance, are confusing doctrines being repeated often, is the community of people keeping us in the theology, are we privately fearful, is it hard to extricate oneself from the setting, have oaths been made, is leaving the philosophy linked to losing salvation, is there legalism, etc. These are only sample questions. Many more questions could be asked. These sample questions are provided to help evaluate the circumstances we might find ourselves in. As a test, ask and answer these questions with your group in mind and then answer the same questions with God in mind to see if the answers differ. God truly loves and sets us free by His truth and love. And ultimately, we are accountable to Him alone.

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Character of God

God's Image in Man

Keeping the character of God in mind as the Word is being studied and interpreted is essential. Its importance can't be stressed enough. All men have a basic knowledge of who God is as they observe the world He created (Romans 1:20) and by the image of God in each of us. The character of man, even in its fallen state, reflects something of the character of God. If we are able to love, then we know God is able to love in ways beyond human ability because He is exceedingly greater than man. If man is able to show compassion, then God is able to be perfectly compassionate in an exceedingly abundant way. If we are able to be morally good, then God is the defining standard of morality and goodness because He is God and our Creator. Even though the fall severely marred the image of God in man, we still see vestiges of His character in our humanity. We might even say that these characteristics of man are analogous to the image of God, even though God is far superior to His creation.^[1]

Even after mankind's fall into sin, men can still comprehend morality, love, goodness, and right or wrong through conscience. Men have retained the knowledge that God is good. Therefore if these vestiges of the character of God are imprinted in us, how much more would these characteristics become evident through the reading and study of God's written Word? Isn't the study of God's revealed Word supposed to deepen our understanding of His character? Don't all men understand that God is good and loving? And while many want to hide from God, still many others want to know this God of goodness and love and want to know what pleases Him. We study the Word to understand who He is, how to relate to Him and how to fellowship with Him.

The Word Reveals God's Character

In the Bible, God reveals His character through His dealings with man which are chronicled in the pages of scripture. The written record further clarifies His character. If we are to understand His character and what pleases Him, we need to understand the word correctly. To take this point a step further, since Jesus is the word; His character is embedded in the message conveyed through the words of scripture. To wrongly interpret the word is to misunderstand the character of God. To rightly understand the word is to understand the character of God.

For instance, many of the cults think that man has to work for salvation and will therefore interpret the Bible legalistically. They read the printed words of scripture but interpret them to fit their view of God, which in this case would be an exacting image God. Their god insists on works rather than dependence on the cross alone for salvation. They've missed the true grace and love of God. The character of their god is different than the character of the true God of the Bible. Their view of God is reflected in how they interpret the word.

Or in the case of the world, they think that to be saved one needs only be 'good' not realizing the goodness they speak of isn't good enough. They consider themselves good relative to other people. But when one compares the goodness of man to the perfect goodness of God, all men fall woefully short. God has been redefined as One who saves those who consider themselves good by man's relative standards. They haven't understood that God's standards require faith in the goodness of Christ which was demonstrated by His death on the cross. Jesus Christ is alone good (Mark 10:18).

All this debate begs the age old question, posed by Jesus to His disciples, which is still relevant for us today, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). Implied in this question is 'what is the character of God' and 'how does God save men?'

Learning the Character of God

Often times Christians will form their opinions by listening to a pastor, scholar or teacher and let these men interpret the word of God for them. Rather than praying through the scripture and keeping the character of God in mind as they develop their understanding of doctrine, many listen to authoritative leadership and assume they are correct because of the position they hold. The believer is warned to test the spirits to see if any teaching is of God (1 John 4:1). Sadly, Christians will not always double check what is being taught against the Word. Christians should train themselves to ask if the teaching is in context, consistent with the rest of the Bible and consistent with the character of God.

It is by far easier, but often dangerous to let others do the work of interpreting scripture by letting them interpret what the Bible is saying. Listening without an open Bible can quickly imbed falsehoods. Even various Bible studies can manipulate one's understanding of the Word by asking leading questions in a particular order and directing the student to an incomplete set of cross references that shed only partial light on the subject at hand. Of course with time, the trained disciple will recognize error, but the young Christian is particularly vulnerable. The young Christian needs to be taught the character of God and trained in correct study methods to easily identify what the scripture is clearly teaching by the words used. Every student should learn to discriminate between Biblical truth and close counterfeits. The best protection against heresy is keeping the character of God in mind as scripture is being interpreted.

As I was coming out from under the mind control of Calvinism, I learned through my shame that I had trusted scholars to interpret the character of God for me. Rather than trusting the Spirit to interpret the Word through the lens of God's nature, I trusted men (Jeremiah 17:5). Even as a new Christian, I should have kept in mind what I knew to be true about God and His character rather than allow scholars to introduce confusion. Degreed and educated men can persuasively reason and argue the new or uneducated Christian into a scriptural corner where they seem to have no choice but to accept the premise being foisted on them. The immature Christian is not equipped to spot all twisted interpretations when presented and never dream that someone in the church or someone under the 'Christian' umbrella would lead them astray! They are so in love with Christ and believers that they trust unwittingly.

Which Theology is Held?

Not only does a tainted view of the Word lead to a perverted image of God, but it also leads to a twisted theology. The problem may seem small to some in the church, but in reality one's view of God is reflected in their entire understanding of the Bible. An erroneous view of the character of God leads to an erroneous understanding of salvation, gospel, theology, and eschatology. In short, the character of God defines all the other doctrines of the Bible. Conversely, if a doctrine is held by a group or teacher, then it can be traced back to their belief about the character of God. Ever wonder why some in the church think we're in the kingdom now, or think we need to bring in the kingdom while others are waiting for the kingdom? These various views can ultimately be traced back to the doctrine of God and to His character. These various beliefs will be covered throughout this manuscript. Laying a proper foundation of God and His character will help keep these doctrines straight.

The Balance of God's Character

When we consider the character of God, we need to remember that God's attributes are all fully functioning at the same time. None of His attributes are ever diminished or not functioning at full capacity. Therefore since God is loving; He loves completely all of the time. If God is just, He is always just. Since God is holy, He always acts in a manner completely consistent with His holiness. His attributes are working at full capacity and in complete harmony all of the time.

The harmony and consistency of God's attributes creates a dilemma for man, because in his fallen nature man perverts the definition of love. His idea of love might mean favoritism which might cause him to believe that God would wink at sin. Or man might think that God is unfair when judgment is prophesied because man wants God to abandon justice in his case. Man might understand God's holiness to mean that He accepts all men rather than requiring belief in the truth from all men. Man might think love means ignoring the bad and focusing only on the good so that God would see that our good outweighs the bad in life.

Therefore in trying to make certain doctrines more acceptable, men will often view God in a way where His attributes are out of balance. For instance, the world insists that if God is loving, He should save all men regardless of their sin. In this case His love would be working at 100% but His justice would be operating at say 25%. Or in the case of the teaching that the promises to Israel have now been given to the church, God's faithfulness would be working at say 50%. Or in the case of Calvinistic election, God's love is working at say 25% and His justice at 100%. There are many other examples to show how the functioning of the attributes of God might be skewed, but these are given merely for the sake of illustration. All of God's attributes fully function in perfect harmony all of the time.

There is no perversion with the character of God. The balanced view of God's character also helps us to interpret the scriptures correctly. On the other hand, when we see that the attributes of God are out of balance, this indicates the understanding or teaching of a particular doctrine is not quite right.

Example of Redefining Scripture

In 1 Timothy 2:3-5, we learn that God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. There is, unfortunately, more than one way to interpret this verse. The various interpretations are determined by one's view of God. One's view of God becomes the lens through which we interpret the verse. Does God love all men that have ever lived or only some men that have ever lived? Most would understand 1 Timothy 2:3-5 to say that God does indeed love all men and desires to save all men. But Calvinists will insist that God merely loves all **types** of men who have ever lived rather than each **individual** who has ever lived. By all types of men they mean all types of races, classes, nations, tribes and tongues, but not each individual within these groups. They say that God doesn't discriminate against **types** but does discriminate against **individuals**.

Not only do Calvinists redefine who God loves, but they also redefine the Word 'desire' in this passage. Again, the Word 'desire' would be understood by most to mean that God does indeed want and provides for all men to be saved. But some incorrectly explain that 'desire' has two interpretations; God desires in a **passive** sense for every individual to be saved, but **actively** works for only some, the chosen, to be saved.

So this verse has been subtly redefined and twisted to open the possibility that God's love can be interpreted as both **unlimited** yet **limited** and that His desire toward men's salvation can be **passive** or **active**. These warped explanations pervert the character of God and contradict the whole counsel of scripture. Thus the character of God has been changed from the character of the true God who loves **all men** and desires all men to be saved, to one who loves only some men and desires only **some men** to be saved. Even the unbeliever knows instinctively this is not the character of God. The unbeliever knows God's love is for every single individual and He actively provides for each person to come to faith!

It is interesting to note:

Satan is the master counterfeiter. In his perpetual quest to be like God and to lead mankind to follow him in that pursuit, he offers counterfeits for every characteristic, every blessing, every good thing that God has for His children. As the master counterfeiter, he offers idols that are fakes for the characteristics of God, which are described by His names. ^[2]

1 Timothy 2:3-5

³This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...

This technique of twisting to open alternative interpretations is recorded in Gen 3:1-7 and was used by Satan in the Garden of Eden with Eve. He twisted the command of God when speaking to Eve by asking, ^{1b}"Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

This question caused Eve to examine the command of God to Adam differently than she had understood it up to that time. She states her simple understanding back to the serpent by saying, ^{2b}"From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

The serpent then reinterprets the command of God back to her with a different perception than she previously maintained. ⁴The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! ⁵"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

With the correct understanding of the command now set aside, what was originally forbidden now seems acceptable and even desirable. ⁶When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

And finally, fig leaves were required to cover the result of shame and sin. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

These descending steps of Adam and Eve into sin are no different than the steps taken today by men that also descend into sin. The obvious intent of the Word is questioned, re-explained and embraced. The result is illumination by hidden knowledge forbidden by God and which further results in hiding the shame of that sin with fig leaves.

In the case of our example, Calvinists will explain 1Timothy 2:3-5 incorrectly to provide a fig leaf covering for the shame of having descended into the sin of Calvinism which misunderstands the intent of God's love. They've been taught to question the written Word, as Satan questioned the Word given to Eve. They've been taught to abandon the plain truth of God's Word in exchange for a perverted explanation of His Word, as Satan perverted the reason for God's command to Adam and Eve. They've viewed the Calvinistic system of interpreting God's Word as plausible, desirable and even scintillating as Eve saw the forbidden fruit as good, delightful and able to make wise. And finally, the construct of Calvinism with all its re-explained verses provides the fig leaf covering to hide the shame of redefining the character of God and tasting forbidden and perverted knowledge. The clear teaching of God's Word has been set aside to entertain the falsehood that God loves only some men.

Now only the partakers of this hidden knowledge have the necessary perception to understand its new interpretations of God's Word. Their eyes have now been 'opened.' Once this new understanding

is embraced, other doctrines of the Bible are seen differently. Those who have eaten this forbidden fruit are now equipped to enter the rarified circles of the 'enlightened' that have the new illumination to understand the hidden meanings of scripture. And so begins the intellectual parlor game of '*Spread Sheet Theology*' where hours upon hours are spent adjusting doctrines of the Bible in order to accommodate this new view of God and His Word. These partakers engage in redefining biblical words which provide more hidden meanings for other verses. Soon a whole construct of theology is erected using Biblical words but with a completely different God and theology. The Bible calls these idols and strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4).

These new definitions are unknown by the simple so that when the initiated discourse with the naive, the words are the same but the definitions are different. The pure in heart have no idea that their fellow church member is speaking about a completely different theology. They hold words in common, but not definitions. Hence these enlightened ones gather together with one another causing factions and divisions within the visible church which grow and threaten to infect the unsuspecting with their deadly poison. The deadly venom is thinking that God doesn't love some and therefore might not love them. The result is the character of God is severely maligned! It should now be clear why it is necessary to understand the Word with the character of God in mind.

Summary

So in summary, a wrong understanding of the scripture leads to a warped view of God, Christ, the cross, the Word, the gospel, faith, salvation, grace, sanctification, acceptance, and assurance. A wrong understanding of the Word leads to a wrong belief system. We need to remember the character of God when we approach difficult passages which might seem to suggest God's attributes are different than what the whole counsel of scripture teaches. I can't stress this huge safeguard against deception enough. Interestingly, when one is delivered from Calvinism, the overwhelming conviction and shame is from having misunderstood the character of God.

God's Character and Attributes (not exhaustive)

In examining the character of God, we need to remember that His attributes are all constantly working at 100%. They are never out of balance. At any given moment His justice and His love and His righteousness are all functioning fully in perfect harmony and balance. Never is one attribute at 75% and another at 50%. They are all working at 100% in perfect harmony. In considering Calvinism, God's attributes aren't working in balance at 100% if God has already sentenced men to hell without a possibility of believing the gospel? One asks how righteous, holy, loving and just is that? In this scenario, His love would be working at say 50% while His justice is working at 75%. So ask yourself, "Is it really the character of God to condemn a person without any honest chance to believe in Him?" Put yourself or someone you love in that situation? We cannot explain away the horrific abuse of His character by claiming divine mystery!

Omniscient	Immortal	Immutable	Sinless	Patient	Creator	Good
Omnipotent	Sovereign	Righteous	Loving	Just	Wise	Sovereign
Omnipresent	Peaceful	Infinite	Truthful	Merciful	Knowable	Forgiving
Personal	Holy	Invisible	Humble	Faithful	Kind	Generous
Eternal	Gracious	Self-existent	Triune	Moral	Living	

Man's Character and Attributes (not exhaustive)

On the other hand man's sinfulness is reflected in his attributes fluctuating in presentation and intensity.

Adulterous	Conceited	Envyng	Immoral	Oppositional	Strife	Vain
Angry	Contradicting	Fornicating	Impure	Outbursts	Sensuality	Vengeful
Ambitious	Divination	Factionous	Intemperate	Perverse	Swindling	Volatile
Argumentative	Dissenting	Greedy	Jealous	Pugnacious	Spiritism	Wavering
Arrogant	Disorderly	Hypocritical	Murderous	Selfish	Sinful	Wicked
Bitter	Depraved	Homosexual	Lying	Reviling	Sorcery	
Covetous	Effeminate	Idolatrous	Occultist	Rebellious	Thieves	

Verses

Galatians 5:19-23 NASB

¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

James 3:14-16 NASB

¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

James 3:17-18 NASB

¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

References

[1] Charlie Clough's 'Framework' series - <http://www.cclough.com/about.php>

[2] <http://www.titus2menandwomen.org/Articles/DanetteTucker/Idols/PrinterFriendly.shtml>

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Gospel Review

Biblical Timeline

Dispensationalism

Gospel review

Much confusion abounds with respect to the gospel in theological circles where scholars discuss how man is saved. Does man believe from his heart? Is man gifted with believing faith? Is man indiscriminately chosen before time to believe? Does man have to perform good works to be saved? Is Christ accessed through icons or rituals? Is Christ spiritually present in the waters of baptism or in the Lord's Supper? Where is the place of confession? What about imitating Christ? Or being a Christ follower? Is self-inflicted suffering necessary? Is there another mediator to go through? What about spiritual experiences? There are myriads of ideas and speculations about the nature of the true gospel that saves, but the Bible is clear; the gospel that saves is by grace through faith! But even that clear declaration needs to be defined.

We'll see in the following pages that committed Protestants load the terms 'grace alone' by 'faith alone' with definitions that lead to trusting works and rituals in addition to the cross. Proponents of Reformed theology would *never* openly admit this, but instead lead the unsuspecting with words meanings that have been altered to fit a Reformed understanding of salvation. These redefined words are positioned in explanations and arguments in ways that conceal their false use. So the words 'faith' and 'grace' carry different definitions and different applications within these two theological 'camps,' yet on the surface appear the same.

The term 'gospel' is generally used to collectively express the gospel doctrines. Preaching the gospel includes proclaiming the good news as well as how men can avail themselves of the offer of salvation. Preaching the gospel includes the declaring of all the truths, precepts, promises, and warnings of Christianity. It is termed 'the gospel of the grace of God' (Acts 20:24), 'the gospel of the kingdom' (Matthew 4:23), 'the gospel of Christ' (Romans 1:16), 'the gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15), 'the glorious gospel,' 'the everlasting gospel,' and 'the gospel of salvation' (Ephesians 1:13).

The word 'gospel' is Anglo-Saxon in origin and means 'God's spell,' Word of God, 'good spell,' good news or good message. It is the Greek rendering of the word evangelion. It denotes the welcome of salvation to man as preached by our Lord and his followers. It is also applied to each of the four gospels of our Lord's life. Therefore those who spread the good news of the evangelion are called 'evangelists.' So with all that background, what exactly does God say the gospel is?

What is the gospel?

Romans 10:9 NIV

⁹That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

1 Corinthians 15:1-5 NASB

¹Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the Word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Ephesians 1:13 NIV

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

Colossians 1:22-23 NIV

²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Verses that Define the Gospel

Believing that we are sinners

[1 John 1:8-10](#) NIV

⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his Word has no place in our lives.

[1 Timothy 1:15](#) NIV

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

Believing that Jesus is the Eternal God

[Matthew 11:27](#) KJV

²⁷All things are delivered unto Me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him

[John 8:24](#) NASB

²⁴"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

[Titus 2:13](#) NASB

¹³looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

[1 John 5:20](#) KJV

²⁰And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Believing in Jesus' payment

[Leviticus 17:11](#) NASB

¹¹For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

[Mark 10:45](#) NASB

⁴⁵"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

[1 Timothy 2:6](#) NASB

⁶Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

[John 1:29](#) NASB

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Believing that Jesus resurrected

[John 10:18](#) NASB

¹⁸"No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again This commandment I received from My Father."

[John 20:15-18](#) NASB

¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

[1 Corinthians 15:14](#) NASB

¹⁴and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

Believing by faith

[John 6:29](#) NASB

²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

[Romans 3:22](#) NASB

²²even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

John 1:12 NASB

¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

Romans 4:5 NASB *Emphasis added*

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him **who justifies the ungodly**, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Romans 4:11 NASB *Emphasis added*

¹¹and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of **the righteousness of the faith** which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all **who believe** without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

Galatians 2:16 NASB

¹⁶nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Galatians 3:9 NASB

⁹So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Galatians 3:22 NASB

²²But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Hebrews 11:6 NASB

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The True Gospel Saves

Luke 4:18 NASB

¹⁸" THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED

Romans 1:16 NASB

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1:17 NASB

¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

2 Corinthians 11:4 NASB *Emphasis added*

⁴For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or **a different gospel** which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

Galatians 1:6-8 NASB

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

Galatians 1:11 NASB

¹¹for I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

Galatians 2:14 NASB

¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Galatians 3:8 NASB

⁸The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

Ephesians 1:13 NASB *Emphasis added*

¹³In Him, you also, **after** listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Ephesians 6:19 NASB

¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

Colossians 1:22-23 NIV

²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation ²³if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 NASB

⁵for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 NASB *Emphasis added*

¹⁴It was for this He **called** you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Testing the Various Gospels

Since believers easily recognize the different gospels of the cults, we know which questions to ask of our own theology to make sure we are following the true God and the true gospel of Christ. For instance, we might ask the following questions, "Who is God? What is His character and identity? Who is the Father and what is His character and identity? Who is Jesus and what is His character and identity? Who is the Spirit and what is His character and identity? What scriptures are used? Are additional books or writings authoritative? How is the gospel defined? Who has to be trusted for salvation? How is salvation explained? What is taught about eternity? What is taught about hell? Are there additional requirements for salvation? Are there extra beliefs and practices? Who are the founders? How are terms defined such as atonement, justification, righteousness, faith, grace, life, regeneration (born again), salvation, resurrection, etc?"

If we asked these questions of Bible believers, Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus we'd have very different answers. We need to be sure that our own beliefs and the beliefs of those we take instruction from line up with the Word of God.

Asking Questions of Reformed Theology

So let's answer the questions we asked earlier about recognizing the true gospel and see how Calvinism lines up.

Who is God?

The triune God of the Bible

Who is the Father?

The first person of the Trinity

Who is Jesus?

The second person of the Trinity, Creator, Messiah / Savior, Mediator, Judge, etc.

Who is the Spirit?

The third person of the Trinity

What Scriptures are used?

The Bible

Are additional books authoritative?

In the cults, they come right out and say that their additional books or tradition are authoritative. In Protestantism, the Reformer's writings, the Creeds and various post reformation theologians are often used as precedents for interpreting the Bible and formulating theology. They are often cited as authoritative, though not with the same standing as the Bible. They aren't pointing to the Bible alone....although they *claim* 'Sola Scriptura.'

Who has to be trusted for salvation?

Christ's work on the cross *and* His earthly obedient life are trusted and salvific.

How is the gospel defined?

The gospel of Reformed Theology is the TULIP model (or Calvinism) that stems from the Reformed 'Covenant of Grace' which they say occurred before time where the Trinity agreed to choose, elect, regenerate, call, bestow faith and justify some men to believe with no human energy in the process.

How is salvation explained?

Salvation is explained as God foreordaining and choosing some to be saved by His predetermined plan, not based on belief or foreknowledge of personal choice. These elect have the atonement applied to them before belief by *Irresistible Grace*, which also gifts them with the faith to believe the gospel when they hear it. *Irresistible Grace* is necessary to bring gifted faith which enables belief because fallen man is considered too dead in sin to believe without this enabling power of God. Since these elect are saved before belief, at belief they are credited with Jesus' earthly law-keeping righteousness for justification. Salvation is a two step process...Jesus' death applied before belief and His Law keeping righteousness procured by His obedient life applied after belief.

What is taught about the future?

Most Protestants believe we are in some kind of spiritual kingdom now. Many Calvinists believe that Jesus has already come back in a spiritual Second Coming and is now ruling from heaven. Others believe He is still yet to come to usher in the eternal state. Some Calvinists are still looking for the earthly rule of Jesus, but they are a minority among the Reformed.

What is taught about hell?

Reformed believers hold to only one judgment at the end of time that will result in the sentencing of the non elect (reprobate) to the Lake of Fire for eternal suffering. (No sheep and goat judgment, no first resurrection)

Are there additional requirements for salvation?

Yes, Election, Irresistible Grace, Lordship Salvation and adherence to the Law. Some hold to baptismal regeneration.

Are there extra beliefs and practices?

Yes, the sacraments for receiving grace through baptism, communion, Law observance, and good works to give assurance of salvation.

Who are the founders?

Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc. They are called the *Magisterial Fathers* of the Reformation.

How are terms defined?

Atonement - Limited, not unlimited

Justification - Jesus' earthly Law keeping righteousness rather than Christ's eternal righteousness through faith

Righteousness - Jesus' Law keeping righteousness rather than His eternal righteousness

Faith - Faith in the cross, baptism, election and works. Not faith in Jesus' death and blood alone

Grace - Irresistible, internal work of the Spirit...not external resistible faith

Christian Life - examining fruit, striving to obey rather than trusting with assurance from faith to faith

Regeneration (born again) - happens at conception or baptism...rather than at belief

Salvation - election and reprobation, believing by gifted faith

Resurrection - some believe in a spiritual resurrection to the kingdom at belief

Summary of the True Gospel

So, the true gospel is the good news for **all** men, that God the Son took on flesh, was born of a virgin without sin, lived a perfect life revealing Himself to be God which qualified Him as the flawless Lamb of God suitable to be the acceptable sacrifice for mankind's sins who went to the cross where He shed His blood and gave up His life to pay the penalty for all the sins of all men for all time past, present, and future. He was dead three days in the tomb proving He was really dead, and resurrected on the third day proving His blood sacrifice for sin was accepted by the Father. It pleased God to sacrifice His eternal Son. Jesus fulfilled the scriptures that prophesied concerning Messiah's life, death and resurrection. Many witnesses testified that He came back to life. Forty days after His death He ascended to heaven. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers and the church was born. The apostles received revelation to complete the canon of scripture, edify the church and give prophecies concerning the future.

The moment a sinner truly believes the gospel from his heart, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. God's grace then flows through this faith channel to the believer. The Holy Spirit then enters in and releases the power of God for salvation. At that moment, the believer is regenerated (born again), justified, sealed, receives the eternal perfect righteousness of Christ's character, becomes a dwelling place for the Trinity and more. Jesus makes His abode with the believer; the Father also dwells with the believer. Many things happen once the believer is pronounced 'saved' or to say it biblically, declared justified. It all happens in the moment of personal faith that believes the gospel! This belief, which began by faith, continues by faith to trust and believe. This faith never ends.

The Bible acknowledges that there is only one true gospel. Saving faith is personal faith from the heart. Believing is the only work God has given to sinful man which is acceptable to Him and brings salvation!

John 6:29 NIV

*Jesus answered, "The work of God is this:
to believe in the one he has sent."*

John 6:40 NIV

*For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son
and believes in him shall have eternal life,
and I will raise him up at the last day."*

Biblical Timeline

Genesis

Creation
Garden
Temptation
Fall
Expulsion
Cain & Abel
Noah & Flood
Abraham, Isaac & Jacob
Joseph & Famine

Exodus

Slavery in Egypt
Moses
Deliverance from Egypt
Tabernacle
Law
Wilderness

Leviticus - Deuteronomy

Law
Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal

Joshua -Judges

Conquering the land
Occupying the land

1 & 2 Samuel

Saul & David

Psalms & Proverbs

Ecclesiastes, Job, Song of Solomon

Kings & Chronicles

Kingdom under David
Kingdom under Solomon
Kingdom Splits
Idolatry
Israel captive to Assyrians
Judah captive to Babylonians

Ezra, Nehemiah, Ester

Returning from Captivity

Major & Minor Prophets

Turn from sin
Captivity coming
Israel still to receive God's promises

Gospels

Jesus Christ's life, ministry, death & resurrection

Acts

Ascension
Pentecost
Transition history from Israel to Church

Romans- Philemon

Epistles of Paul

Hebrews - 3 John

General Epistles written by
James, Peter, Jude & John

Revelation

John's vision of the 70th Week of Daniel

Beginnings

Israel begins

Slavery & Deliverance

Law

Conquest of Land

King

Kingdom

Divided

Exile

Return

Prophecy

Messiah

Church

End Times

Noahic Covenant Abrahamic Covenant

Mosaic Covenant

Palestinian Covenant

Davidic Covenant

New Covenant

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism is the term applied to the outworking of the various stages of God's dealings with man from the beginning of the Bible to the end. The English word 'dispensation' is an anglicized form of the Latin *dispensatio*. In defining the use of the word theologically, the Oxford English Dictionary says that a dispensation is "*a stage in a progressive revelation, expressly adapted to the needs of a particular nation or period of time.*" The Greek word 'oikonomia' is a compound of oikos, meaning 'house,' and nomos, Meaning 'law.' Taken together, the central idea of the word dispensation is that of managing or administering the affairs of a household.^[1]

The subject of Dispensationalism is broad and affects many aspects of theology. For our purposes, we'll mention just a few issues to get a basic working knowledge of the differences between Dispensationalism and Reformed Theology.

Basically Biblical history can be divided into 7 periods of time or dispensations:

- (1) Innocence of Adam and Eve before the fall to the fall
- (2) Conscience from the fall in the garden to the flood
- (3) Human Government from the flood to Abraham
- (4) Promise from Abraham to Moses
- (5) Law from Moses to Pentecost
- (6) Age of Grace from Pentecost to the Second Coming
- (7) Millennial Kingdom from the Second Coming to the Eternal State

Within each of these dispensations are:

- Certain ruling factors established by God
- Tests of faith
- Man's failure
- God's judgment
- God's display of grace

The chart titled, [Timeline of Dispensational Theology pg.273](#) found in the Appendix, illustrates and categorizes each of these distinctions.

These various dispensations are not different ways of salvation, as some circles accuse Dispensationalists of promoting. Salvation is always by faith and these various dispensations were, in essence, various tests of faith. Throughout time, man has been required to demonstrate faith by following the tests set forth by God in these various dispensations. For instance, Adam was to avoid the forbidden fruit by faith, and the Jews were to obey the Law by faith. God has always provided a way for man to approach Him by faith and blood, but these approaches were not always the same. So the term 'dispensations' helps explain God's various programs in ruling man throughout history and the various ways that man demonstrated faith throughout history. The natural outcome of understanding the Bible literally is Dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism presents a clear and organized picture of God's dealings with man throughout history. Its plain distinctions between Law and Grace and between Israel and the Church provide a framework in which Bible prophecy can be easily interpreted. If literal interpretation is abandoned, then one is left with a spiritualized interpretation of the scriptures which blurs covenants, promises, prophecy, the Christian walk, the gospel and ultimately the character of God. Spiritualizing the text allows the reader to interpret the events of the Bible in the way he conceives rather than from what God has set forth. Supersessionism, Preterism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, Covenant theology and Calvinism all flourish under a spiritualized or allegorical interpretation of scriptures.

However, understanding the Bible literally preserves the distinction between Israel and the Church, provides for a premillennial view of scriptures, and provides support for the rapture as distinct from the second coming of Christ.

Opposition to Dispensationalism

Opposed to Dispensationalism is the Reformed understanding of the Bible. While Dispensationalists believe in a clear distinction between the Church and Israel, Reformed supporters do not. They believe the church did not begin at Pentecost, but rather with Abraham or with Adam in the Garden of Eden (debated within their circles). The church, they say, is made up of all the predestined elect throughout history beginning with Adam or with Abraham. For them, the nation of Israel happened to be the people group occupying the 'church' in the Old Testament. Therefore it was the 'church' rather than Israel who received the covenants, promises and prophecies. Even though literal promises were made to Israel, the Reformed spiritualize their fulfillment and force fit these promises as given to a supposed ancient 'church' that began before Pentecost. They understand the OT literally, but interpret the NT spiritually. Therefore, the covenants given in the OT were really made with the 'church' and which pertain to the NT church today. This includes the Mosaic Law. For them, there is technically only 'one dispensation,' the dispensation of grace which is for the 'elect church' which began with Adam and continues throughout all of history.

To justify this teaching of one 'church' body made up of only the predestined elect, they insist that there are three other covenants made by God that can be inferred and are implied from scripture, even though they aren't explicitly found in the scriptures. These three other inferred covenants, which form the basis of Reformed [Covenant Theology pg.52](#) are called the *Covenant of Redemption*, the *Covenant of Works* and the *Covenant of Grace*. These three inferred covenants are added to the covenants which are clearly spelled out in scripture (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and the New Covenant) with chapter and verse. The Reformed say that all the covenants, implicit and explicit, are successive and build upon one another. These extra covenants, not found in scripture, justify their gospel of election.

Placing NT believers under all of the Bible's covenants explains why Protestant believers currently adhere to Law keeping and justify anti-Semitism. The Law was given to the 'church' which was occupied by ethnic Jews in the OT. Since the church today is occupied primarily by Gentiles, the Reformed say the Jews are no longer the primary 'church' program of God. They say the Jews forfeited their promises which have now been given to the Gentile church. Then they can proudly announce that the 'church' itself has never lost them. They spiritualize the text of scripture in order to establish that NT believers are still under OT covenants. The OT is understood literally, while the NT is understood spiritually.

The general accusations levied against Dispensationalism by the Reformed scholars are that dispensationalists don't understand the finer and more spiritual points of doctrine because of literal interpretation.^[2] For them, a literal interpretation limits the potential to understand what God really intended to convey. They also accuse Dispensationalists of teaching more than one way of salvation, that Dispensationalism is a relatively new viewpoint rather than one from the early church, that the Sermon on the Mount is for believers today, that the church is an afterthought or plan 'B' of God, and that dispensationalists are antinomians for rejecting the Law as the Christian's rule of life.^[3] It's even strongly suggested that Dispensationalism falls within the definition of a Christian cult.^[4]

However Dispensationalism always teaches that salvation is by faith in God throughout all of the dispensations. They teach that **all** the words of Christ and all the teachings of the Bible are for our learning, but not necessarily for our rule of life. Christians live under the rule of the Law of Christ which is by faith! In living by faith that believes and daily trusts God, we will live lives pleasing to Christ and consistent with His teachings. They also teach that God has always intended that the church be His body (a mystery hidden in the OT between Daniel's 69th and 70th weeks). And finally,

it is not new doctrine that originated with Darby, but was rather a theological framework that has been suppressed under Augustinianism.

Quotes Accusing Dispensationalism of Being a Cult

- **Quote** - "What is indisputably, absolutely, and uncompromisingly essential to the Christian religion is its doctrine of salvation... If Dispensationalism has actually departed from the only way of salvation which the Christian religion teaches, then we must say it has departed from Christianity. No matter how many other important truths it proclaims, it cannot be called Christian if it empties Christianity of its essential message. We define a cult as a religion which claims to be Christian while emptying Christianity of that which is essential to it. If Dispensationalism does this, then Dispensationalism is a cult and not a branch of the Christian church. It is as serious as that. It is impossible to exaggerate the gravity of the situation." Source Cited: <http://dispensationalismrefuted.blogspot.com/2006/05/heresy-of-dispensationalism.html>, citing; **John H. Gerstner**, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 150.

- **Quote** - The cult of Dispensationalism spread throughout America largely through the efforts of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, born in 1843. Source Cited: <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Dispensationalism>, citing; Grace Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics, Militant Evangelists on the Road to Nuclear War*, Lawrence Hill and Co, 1986.

- **Quote** - Dispensationalism is perhaps best known for its distinctive doctrines of a "secret rapture" of the Church, a future "great Tribulation" over which will preside an evil world leader known as the "Antichrist," and the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem along with the reinstatement of the Old Testament sacrificial system under a restored Levitical priesthood. However, the most pernicious errors of this system are not eschatological, but soteriological. As this book demonstrates, Dispensationalism, as popularized in the early 1900s by C.I. Scofield in his Reference Bible, and believed today by a large segment of the professing Evangelical Church in America, so far departs from the biblical Gospel that it warrants classification as a non-Christian cult. Source Cited; http://www.pointsouth.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Product_Code=MAUROP-KINGDOM&Category_Code=&Store_Code=ABS, citing; Phillip Mauro, *The Gospel of the Kingdom, Examining Dispensationalism*, 1927

Literal Interpretation

Much more is written about the need for literally interpreting the scriptures in the section titled [Allegorical Interpretation pg. 226](#), but for now, Dispensationalism is the framework which favors interpreting the Bible literally. This method of literally interpreting and organizing the scriptures into a clear framework allows the student to easily separate the various people groups of the Bible and delineate the prophetic program of God.

Dispensationalism clearly identifies the Gentiles before Abraham from the Jews after Abraham. The church, then, is the program of God after the nation of Israel where both Jew and Gentile are joined into one new man, the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:15). The Church and Israel are easily separated into different programs of God's dealings with man. Allegorizing or spiritualizing the text of scripture blurs this distinction and makes room for distorting the scriptures according to one's particular theological preference, in this case that the church really did exist in the OT and that the Church has now assumed the role of and has replaced Israel. See the section titled [Replacement Theology pg.230](#).

Once the Jews are clearly distinguished from the Church, prophecy naturally and easily falls into place. The order of prophecy becomes readily apparent through the Dispensational lens. In this framework, the Rapture, Tribulation, Second Coming of Christ, Judgment of the Nations, the

Millennium, the Great White Throne Judgment and the Eternal State are still future. Prophetic sections of the Old Testament are easily understood for Israel in the future. The Church does not have the same destiny or discipline God has prophesied for the Jews. More of this will be discussed toward the end of this notebook in the section titled [Overview of Biblical Eschatology pg. 196](#). But for now, see the chart titled, [Timeline of Dispensational Theology pg. 273](#).

The Church the Body of Christ

When Dispensationalism is rejected in favor of Reformation theology, the natural question concerning the body of Christ is; '*When did the church begin?*' Reformed theology teaches that the church is made up of all the redeemed throughout time. But the scriptures define the church as the body of believers who have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. If the birth of the church did not occur at Pentecost, how is the role of the Holy Spirit explained throughout history? Was the Holy Spirit indwelling believers before Pentecost? If the church was 'born' with Abraham or earlier, exactly when did the indwelling of the Holy Spirit begin? What did Jesus mean when He promised to send the Comforter? What does the Bible teach? Is this teaching about the Holy Spirit literal or allegorical?

The Scriptures teach us in 1 Corinthians 12 that believers were all made a part of the body of Christ through the baptism of the Spirit and that there is now no distinction between nationalities or between classes of believers in the body of Christ. We are now all one in the body of Christ.

Verses Describing the Body of Christ

[1 Corinthians 12:13 NASB](#)

¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

[1 Corinthians 12:27 NASB](#)

²⁷Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

[Galatians 3:28 NASB](#)

²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

[Colossians 1:18 NASB](#)

¹⁸He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

[Colossians 1:24 NASB](#)

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

[Colossians 3:11 NASB](#)

¹¹a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

The Bible never mentions the body of Christ before Paul, who had been entrusted with the mystery of the church. The mystery of the church is that believers are, by one Spirit, one in the body of Christ. This significant issue highlights the importance for interpreting the Bible literally.

If the church began before Pentecost, this insinuates the Holy Spirit indwelt believers before Pentecost, which presents a problem. The Holy Spirit clearly came at Pentecost and the Bible defines the church by the indwelling Holy Spirit. How can the church, the body of Christ have existed in the Old Testament? What did this pre-Pentecost ministry of the Holy Spirit look like for this ancient church? How does salvation occur in the OT if the NT says we are sealed by the indwelling Holy Spirit after believing? And where is assurance placed in the heart of the OT believer when the NT says that the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (Romans 8:16)? The whole doctrine of the Body of Christ becomes hopelessly confused when the Church and Israel are not kept distinct.

Reformation theology believes that the church is made up of all the elect throughout history. If this is so, then all the elect would, by definition, have to possess the indwelling Holy Spirit. Protestant theology accommodates this necessity by insisting that the Holy Spirit does in fact indwell the elect before they even hear the gospel or respond to it! Therefore, to the Reformed, there is no problem. They've interpreted scripture according to their theological framework explaining that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit occurs either at conception or infant baptism. When the Holy Spirit takes up residency in the elect, He applies the blood of Christ's atonement before the elect hear or believe the gospel.

"A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel...and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.... This church is an autonomous body...The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ, which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages." [5]

The diagram in the appendix, [Timeline of Salvation pg.275](#), helps illustrate this dilemma. Pictured in this diagram is a comparison of the order of salvation between Reformed theology and Dispensational theology. Notice the word 'regeneration' and when it occurs. Is the born again moment of salvation before hearing the gospel or after hearing the gospel?

This thinking was reinforced by John Calvin's belief that when the elect become parents, they only give birth to elect children. So in this warped reasoning, regeneration and the indwelling Holy Spirit can occur at conception.

Our children, **before they are born**, God declares that He adopts for His own when He promises He will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise their salvation is included. [6]

But how, they ask, are infants regenerated, when not possessing a knowledge of either good or evil? We answer, that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null. Infants who are to be saved (and that some are saved at this age is certain) must, without question, be regenerated by the Lord. ...Many He certainly has called and endued with true knowledge of Himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching. [7]

If the Holy Spirit indwells the elect and if the elect comprise the church, then the church is made up of all the elect in time!

Is the Church Under Law?

If the church age began with Adam, then it naturally follows that the Law was given not to the Jews, but to the Church. But we know from scripture that the death of Christ made the Mosaic covenant obsolete (Hebrews 8:13) and that the New Covenant was made in His blood (Matthew 26:28). With the introduction of the New Covenant, the Law of Christ is introduced (Galatians 6:2). The Law of Christ is fulfilled by trusting Christ as believers seek to live by faith in the new man trusting the Word in the power of the Spirit. Dispensationalists reject that the Church began with Adam or Abraham but insist that the Church began at Pentecost. Therefore Dispensationalists agree with scripture that the Law was given to Israel and not the church as the books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews teach. We are not under Law but under Grace. The Law was for Israel while God's grace is for the church.

[Matthew 26:28](#) NASB *Empahsis added*

²⁸for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

[Romans 6:14](#) NASB *Empahsis added*

¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

[Romans 10:4](#) NASB *Empahsis added*

⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Galatians 3:11 NASB

¹¹Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Galatians 3:18 NASB

¹⁸For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Galatians 6:2 NASB *Empahsis added*

²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Hebrews 8:13 NASB *Empahsis added*

¹³When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Hebrews 13:20 NASB

²⁰Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,

Dispensationalism Supports Prophecy

When the Bible is interpreted literally rather than allegorically, the study of prophecy also falls easily into place. The promises of Messiah's first coming were fulfilled literally and so we expect the prophecies concerning the events of His second coming will be fulfilled literally as well. ^[8] If the prophecies haven't literally happened, then they are still yet future. There is no temptation to spiritualize or allegorize prophecy because the dispensationalist trusts they will be literally fulfilled.

Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy, in Daniel 9, becomes the foundation for God's future plan for Israel among the Gentile nations from that point forward in history. The first 69 weeks of years (483 years) ended the very day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey over the Mount of Olives. This very day concluded the 69 weeks of years, hence the words:

Daniel 9:24-27 NASB

²⁴"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. ²⁵"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. ²⁶"Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷"And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

Luke 19:41-44 NKJV

⁴¹Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴²saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Jesus held Israel responsible for knowing the Daniel 9 prophecy! How much more should we, who have been given His Spirit, understand prophecy?

The 70th week of Daniel, also known as the last week of years (7years) from Daniel 9:27, is explained in detail in Revelation 4-19, through the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl judgments. It is known as the "*Time of Jacob's Trouble*" and is still yet future. The book of Revelation is basically an outline of these events, while many OT prophecies fill in the details of these events. Thus when Daniel's 70th week

prophecy is understood for the Jews, then OT prophecies and the book of Revelation make sense. If Daniel's 70th week prophecy isn't understood literally, then much spiritualizing of the scriptures occurs to explain these events as already having happened. While there is some variation within Reformed circles, they generally believe that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 A.D. meaning that there is no rapture, the second coming of Christ and the first resurrection have occurred and we're in the kingdom of Christ now. This is explained in more detail in the sections titled [Overview of Reformed Eschatology pg. 224](#), [Preteriss pg. 235](#), and [Kingdom Now Theology pg. 252](#).

Progressive Dispensationalism

Excerpted with permission from: Dictionary of Premillennial Theology, Mal Couch General Editor, Kregel Publications, 1996, pgs. 96-99

Recently there has been an attempt to blend the Classic Dispensational view with the Reformed View. This new dispensationalism, birthed in 1986, is called "Progressive Dispensationalism" and is not normative dispensationalism at all. Progressive Dispensationalists are called dispensationalists because they hold to four dispensations known as the Patriarchal, Mosaic, Ecclesial and Zionc periods. But they depart from Dispensationalism because they blur the distinction between Israel and the Church and also smear the fulfillment of prophecy with events occurring in our day.

Progressive Dispensationalism holds to an "already, not yet" interpretive framework or in other words, a complementary hermeneutic. Therefore interpretation of the text is not understood literally in context, but is understood by bringing all prior and similar events to bear on the interpretation of a passage as the reader understands them. Everything that has already happened will have future completion and future significance added. So the truth of God is still unfolding in a sense and being complimented in its fulfillment. Therefore a person cannot say with any degree of certainty what a particular passage means because all the revelation concerning that passage may not yet be disclosed. The Progressive Dispensationalist would say that, 'not all the facts are in' so they hesitate to assert conclusions. And because 'not all the facts are in,' they are free to postulate different possible interpretations or scenarios without opening themselves up to criticism. Their interpretive model begins with the reader's presuppositions as a starting point and can have several meanings other than what the author originally intended by adding future texts to the starting text. This near and far fulfillment model creates a semblance of logical consistency while stepping into the thinking that will eventually lead to Reformation theology. It also fits nicely into the Emergent church movement's reluctance to make theological conclusions. Degrees of spiritualizing usually takes place.

Because of their tendency to arrange dispensations by the occurrence of revelation to man, rather than by ages of God's dealings with man, their tendency is to blend dispensationalism with non dispensationalists. Their non-literal hermeneutics have caused them to part company with traditional dispensationalists and become nearly identical to Historic Premillennialists, who are the reformed version of premillennialists, discussed further in the section titled [Kingdom Now Theology pg. 252y](#). Thus their move toward Protestant theology can be seen.

The biggest clue that their theology is headed in the Reformed direction is their assertion that David is currently reigning on the throne in heaven. This spiritualizes the literal promise to the Jews that David is to physically reign over the Jews in a literal, future millennial kingdom (Ezekiel 37:24). If David is reigning now, then it follows that we must be in the kingdom now and the church must be the new Israel. See the section titled [Supersessionism pg. 230](#) which discusses Replacement theology. This viewpoint also further indicates the blending of Israel with the church rather than a complete separation of the two. Some proponents of Progressive Dispensationalism include Craig Blaising, Charles Feinberg, John Feinberg, Darrell Bock, Robert Saucy, Kenneth Barker, David Turner, and John Martin. ^[9]

Ultradispensationalism

Excerpted with permission from: Dictionary of Premillennial Theology, Mal Couch General Editor, Kregel Publications, 1996, pgs. 97-98.

And we need to mention yet another group that tries to crawl into the Dispensational tent; the Hyper or Ultra Dispensationalists. The prefix "hyper" implies a more extreme view of dispensationalism. They are called dispensationalists because they divide the Bible into segments. But, as with Progressive Dispensationalists and the Reformed, they too distort the identity of the body of Christ. Ultradispensationalists say the church began not at Pentecost but with Paul's conversion on the Damascus road in Acts 9, or during the transition period by Acts 13 or even later with Paul's prison epistles in Acts 28. They argue that only the writings of Paul (moderate Ultradispensationalists) or only his prison epistles (extreme Ultradispensationalists) are necessary for the church. They adhere to Paul only because he was entrusted with the mystery of the church and the gospel of grace. They therefore exclude most of the Bible and pay attention primarily to Paul's writings. They assert that the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is for the Jews, not the Church. They deny water baptism for the church age. And they say that Israel, not the church is the bride of Christ. They too have a subtle form of anti-Semitism in that they exclude the Jews from even entering into the body of Christ today. They are so concerned with separating law from grace that they make a hard, impassable wall between Jew and Gentile, even excluding the Jewish remnant from being in the church at all! This is a very real form of anti-Semitism. They accommodate the Romans 11 national repentance of Israel by saying that a Jewish remnant called 'the little flock' is being preserved apart from the church that will repent in the end times. For all their talk of grace, they can be extremely legalistic. They also hamper, if not deny, the person of the Holy Spirit because everything is dependent on their faith alone! Faith in this context is static. God becomes overly sovereign in having ordained all things that the faithful must endure and not question. This view, in a warped way, becomes similar to the Calvinist view where faith and sovereignty become over literalized and therefore idolized.^[10]

Spokesmen for the Acts 13 form of dispensationalism are J C O'Hair, C R Stam, and Charles F Baker. Acts 28 dispensationalism is sometimes called Bullingerism after its leading proponent, Ethelbert William Bullinger (1837 - 1913). It is interesting to note that E. W. Bullinger is a descendent of Heinrich Bullinger who succeeded Huldrych Zwingli as head of the Zurich church of the Reformation. Zwingli is considered the father of the Reformed Church. Other writers holding this Ultra Dispensational position include Charles H Welch, A E Knoch, Vladimir M Gelesnoff, and Otis R Sellers. Others who draw a hard separation between the Jews and the Church and seem to be on the fringes of Ultradispensationalism are William Newell and Miles Stanford.^[11]

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[1] Charting the End Times, by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, Harvest House, 2001, pg 81-82

[2] <http://www.raptureready.com/featured/ice/Literal.html>

[3] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/dispen/fcharges.htm>

[4] The Marks of a Cult DVD by The Apologetics Group 2005 - www.apologeticsgroup.com

[5] http://www.southvalleybaptist.com/About_us.html, South Valley Baptist Church, Statement of Faith, January 2008.

[6] John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Vol.11; (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), p.525 Emphasis mine

[7] John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion, Vol.11, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1962), p. 541,542

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REFORMED
THEOLOGY
OVERVIEW

What is Reformed Theology?

What is Covenant Theology?

What is Calvinism?

The Protestant Reformers

What is Reformed Theology?

Reformed theology had its beginnings in the Protestant Reformation through men like Martin Luther and John Calvin. Martin Luther, who is credited with sparking the Reformation of Catholicism, protested against the Catholic Church's practice of indulgences. Those who joined with him in this movement were labeled 'Protestants' for their protests against the Papacy's authority. The theology that grew out of this opposition to the Papacy is known as Protestant theology, Reformed theology or later, Covenant theology. These three terms are often used interchangeably. Reformed theology proper includes both Covenant theology and Calvinism. The primary purpose of the Protestant reformation was to reform Roman Catholicism, not abandon it. Hence, many Romanist ideas remain, yet reformed in Protestant Reformation theology.

The gospel of this Catholic reformation was systematized and codified in Protestant creeds and confessions. This gospel is now commonly referred to as Calvinism or Calvin's TULIP model, an acronym that will be discussed in some detail later. For now this acronym TULIP, emerged from the Synod of Dort in 1619 where five points of controversy were debated between the followers of John Calvin's theology and those who followed Jacobus Arminius. The council decided in favor of the Calvinists and the leader of the opposing Remonstrants was beheaded.

Calvinism's TULIP model is the center of much controversy within the visible Christian church. Many Christians use the term 'Calvinism' and equate it with Reformation theology. It's sort of like saying you're drinking a Coke when you're really drinking root beer. Everyone knows you're having a soft drink. The same is true of Calvinism. When you say *Calvinism*, people are supposed to know you're talking about *Reformed theology*. But the two are really quite different. Calvinism is the gospel of Reformed theology. Covenant theology is the theology of the Reformed theology.

These terms become difficult to keep straight when used interchangeably. Many think they understand the terms, but have unknowingly understood them within their own thinking. Perhaps a chart will help clarify this confusion before we go any further. On second thought, maybe it makes the problem worse, but for what it's worth, here is how the terms are interchanged.

<u>Protestant Theology</u> ALSO REFERRED TO AS	<u>Reformed Theology</u> ALSO REFERRED TO AS	<u>Covenant Theology</u> ALSO REFERRED TO AS	<u>Calvinism's TULIP</u> ALSO REFERRED TO AS
Reformed Theology Covenant Theology Calvinism's TULIP	Protestant Theology Covenant Theology Calvinism's TULIP	Protestant Theology Reformed Theology	Reformed Theology

And as if we don't have enough confusion, many in Christendom will claim to be a Calvinist and a Dispensationalist at the same time! How can this be so? Because Dispensationalism is the overall framework of the Bible, a theology, and Calvinism is the mechanic of how a person is saved, a gospel. John MacArthur is a good example of someone who blends the two. He sometimes refers to himself as a 'leaky dispensationalist'.

What is Reformed Theology?

Below is a quick overview of Reformed particulars. The remaining portions of this notebook will explain in detail the various teachings that comprise both Calvinism's TULIP gospel and the Protestant's Covenant theology.

It is important to note that most people brought into the scheme of Covenant theology and Calvinism's gospel, don't fully understand the nuanced system. Unsuspecting Christians who read or listen to Reformed teaching will have their thinking unconsciously molded by these concepts. As we shall see, Protestant theology twists the Christian walk of faith and leads to either licentiousness or works.

"Reformed Theology.....

...presupposes God's Word alone as our ultimate authority. [1]

God's Word is our ultimate authority but how the term 'Scripture Alone' is interpreted and understood will affect our theology. Obviously if both Dispensationalism and Reformed Theology come to different conclusions, the Word is being understood differently. Hence the term "scripture alone" can be used to arrive at different conclusions.

...stresses the sovereignty of God, that is, His reign over all things, meticulously determining (Ephesians 1:11) all that comes to pass (i.e. God is never taken by surprise). [2]

God is absolutely sovereign, but these statements, used often by the Reformed, imply a type of predestination where man has no free will to believe the gospel on his own.

...emphasizes a Christ-Centered proclamation of the gospel, that salvation is wholly of God, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as revealed in the Scripture alone to the Glory of God alone. [3]

To them, the 'Christ-Centered' gospel means that Christ's work on the cross is applied to the elect before and apart from the human involvement of belief. Salvation occurs because God chose who would be the elect, applies the atonement to the elect before belief, and grants them faith as a gift so they can believe the gospel when it is heard. Apart from this grace, man is too depraved to believe on his own. The regenerated man then has the grace enabled ability to persevere because he no longer has the old nature but only one new nature which is Christ.

The five 'Solas of the Reformation' carry very different definitions for the Reformed than for the traditional Dispensationalist. Hence, the meaning behind these 'Solas' needs to be examined and defined. The above statement accommodates Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints. In short, the above statement supports the TULIP model of salvation.

...views the Bible as a redemptive-historical organic unfolding of revelation which is structured by three covenants (redemption, works and grace). "[4]

Reformed theology insists that the Bible teaches three extra hidden covenants in addition to the six covenants clearly outlined in the pages of scripture. These extra covenants are called implied or inferred covenants. These extra covenants are the foundation of Reformed theology. Without them, Reformed theology could not withstand scrutiny.

...."It goes without saying that those in the Reformed Tradition hold to the doctrines of grace (the five points of Calvinism), man's helpless condition apart from Christ, the necessity of evangelism and the work of the Holy Spirit who (monergistically) quickens the dead to life through the preaching of the Word as God turning their heart of stone to flesh, and opening their eyes to the excellencies of the gospel (uniting them to Christ). In other words, RT stresses the way the objective, written Word together with the inner, supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit work together. For the Word without the illumination of the Holy Spirit remains a closed book. We (the church) cast forth the seed of the gospel and the Holy Spirit germinates it, so to speak, with the blood of Christ bringing forth life in people from every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev 14:6). RT traces its historical and theological lineage back to the theology of Christ, Paul, Augustine and to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century." [5]

The above quote does not clearly state what is really meant by these 'doctrines of grace.' These 'doctrines of grace basically mean man can't choose to believe without first being elected, regenerated, gifted with faith and given the nature of Christ.

Since Reformation theology depends on Calvinism's TULIP to bring people to faith, not all Reformed men give out the gospel for fear they would be manipulating men's minds to recite an empty confession of faith. They claim God has to do all the work in salvation and therefore if men respond to an altar call with their own human hearts and minds, it might be a false conversion because man was involved. The Reformed insist that salvation is fully the work of God when irresistible grace responds to the truth. True conversion, through irresistible grace, is further seen through the obedient lives of the saints.

While the Reformed trace their theological lineage from the Reformation, through Augustine, Paul and Christ, they fail to see that they interpret the witness of Christ and Paul through the neo Platonist lens of Augustine. Both Catholic doctrine and Reformation doctrine came from Augustine.

Reformed Theology's Distinctives

Note: Degrees of adherence vary with each individual or scholar

<p><u>TULIP</u></p> <p>Total Depravity Unconditional Election Limited Atonement Irresistible Grace Perseverance of the Saints</p>	<p><u>COVENANT THEOLOGY</u></p> <p>Covenant of Redemption</p> <p>Covenant of Works</p> <p>Covenant of Grace</p>	<p><u>FIVE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION</u></p> <p>Sola Scriptura (by scripture alone) Sola Fide (by faith alone) Sola Gratia (by grace alone) Solus Christus (through Christ alone) Soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone)</p>
<p><u>REGENERATION BEFORE FAITH</u></p> <p>(born again) before belief</p>	<p><u>SUPERSESSIONISM</u></p> <p>or Replacement Theology</p>	<p><u>LAPSARIANISM</u></p> <p>Order of Divine Decrees <i>(Election of God with respect to the fall of man)</i></p>
<p><u>CREEDS</u></p>	<p><u>CONFESSIONS</u></p>	<p><u>FAITH AS A GIFT</u></p>
<p><u>VICARIOUS LAW KEEPING</u></p> <p>Atoning value in the life of Christ as well as in His death.</p>	<p><u>ONE NATURE OF THE BELIEVER</u></p> <p>One new nature rather than the two natures of the new and the flesh.</p>	<p><u>SACRAMENTALISM</u></p> <p>Baptism conveys grace Communion conveys grace</p>
<p><u>LORDSHIP SALVATION</u></p>	<p><u>BAPTISMAL REGENERATION</u></p>	<p><u>LAW OBSERVANCE</u></p>
<p><u>ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION</u></p>	<p><u>PRETERISM</u></p>	<p><u>KINGDOM NOW</u></p>

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What is Covenant Theology?

When the legitimacy of Covenant Theology is questioned, most people ask, "What's the problem with Covenant Theology? I believe in the covenants of the Bible and so I think Covenant Theology is fine!" Here is a perfect example of the confusion surrounding the terms of Reformed theology. What the Bible means by the covenants and what the Protestants mean by Covenant Theology are two different things. The Bible clearly outlines six major explicit covenants in the Bible which are found on the chart titled [Timeline of Covenants pg.272](#). The Bible also explains that covenants between two parties are 'cut' (karath in the Hebrew) which means blood is shed for these solemn binding agreements. Other components of entering into covenant are sacrifices, promises, gifts, exchange of identities, names and clothing, a sign, memorial meal, and witnesses. The covenant of marriage would be a good example of covenant which contains many of these components, including the shedding of blood. There is no biblical covenant made by God without the shedding of blood.

Covenant theologians however say there are nine major covenants in the Bible, three of which are not explicit and clearly outlined from the text of scripture, but are rather inferred or implied. These theologians justify these extra covenants which are 1) the Covenant of Redemption, 2) the Covenant of Works and 3) the Covenant of Grace by interpreting verses spiritually, out of context or by reading extra meaning into context. It just so happens that these 'extra' covenants support their presupposition that God chose the elect before time began without regard to foreknowledge or man's free choice. They load words, scripture verses and contexts with hidden definitions and meanings to support their framework and erroneous conclusions. These three pre-time, implied covenants are not recorded in scripture and therefore don't include descriptions of the shedding of blood.

In the Covenant of Redemption, God the Father supposedly chose an elect people for Himself, God the Son agreed to redeem them by dying for the elect only, and God the Holy Spirit agreed to apply the atoning work of Christ to these elect, regenerate them and bestow gifted faith all before belief so that when the gospel is heard, the elect are equipped to respond. In the Covenant of Works, it is assumed that before the fall of Adam, God made a covenant with Adam to work the Garden and exercise dominion over the earth. In the Covenant of Grace made after the fall, God promised to save man by grace through a future Redeemer. Covenant Theology is the foundation of God's redemptive plan for history and Calvinism is how God seeks to save His chosen elect people. Thus Covenant theology becomes the determinant framework of Reformed Theology to help men better understand God's plan of human redemption.

Covenant theology also views the explicit and clearly taught covenants of scripture to be successive to and inclusive of prior covenants. They reason that the church received **all** the covenants. Israel just happened to be populating the church during OT history and therefore represented the 'church' in these various covenants. Successive covenants are said to build upon the previous ones. So the one people of God, also called the elect or the church, supposedly received all the covenants. And since only one people of God, the elect or the church, exists there is no need for older covenants to be obsolete. It was the church who received the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, David, Land and New covenants. They then reason that the promises for Israel's future kingdom were actually promised to the church. It is the church who would receive all the blessings, not Israel. This explains why the Reformed theologians argue for the church being under Law and argue that the church is in the Kingdom now.

Some problems that arise from smearing Israel with the Church are confusing law with grace, works based righteousness, anti-Semitism, replacement theology, amillennial eschatology, spiritualizing the text of scripture and no future fulfillment of prophecies. While Covenant theology remains 'under the Law,' they lay claim only to the blessings and not to the cursings...the Law promised both. And if God has not kept His promises to Israel, then there's no guarantee that He will keep His promises to the Church either!

The history of Covenant theology can be traced back to Irenaeus and Augustine. Augustine was influenced by neo-Platonists Plotinus and Ambrose. Aristotelian reasoning techniques influenced the apologetics for Calvinist and Covenant Theologies. These theological ideas were formalized in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

The Implicit Covenants of Covenant Theology

Covenant of Redemption

- An inter Trinitarian covenant
- Occurred before time began
- The foundation and means for the Covenant of Grace

Covenant of Works

- Between God and Adam
- Requirement of perfect obedience for salvation
- Probationary for a time to test Adam's obedience
- Made during time to work the garden

Covenant of Grace

- Between God and the Elect
- Promise of salvation through Christ
- Sinner enters into it with promise of living a life of faith and obedience
- Includes those who are elect
- Theologians can't agree when it began Gen 3:15 or Gen 12 or Gen 17?
- Requires faith, trust and obedience in Christ
- Christ is the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace
- Promises are temporal blessings
- Includes Covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and the New Covenant

Distorting the Scripture

The Reformed theologians claim this verse proves a covenant God made with Adam. See Hosea 6:7.

NIV Hosea 6:7, "Like **Adam**, they have broken the covenant—
they were unfaithful to me there." *Emphasis added*

NAS Hosea 6:7, "But like **Adam** they have transgressed the covenant;
There they have dealt treacherously against Me." *Emphasis added*

KJV Hosea 6:7, "But they like **men** have transgressed the covenant: there have they
dealt treacherously against me." *Emphasis added*

NKJV Hosea 6:7, "But like **men** they transgressed the covenant;
There they dealt treacherously with Me." *Emphasis added*

What we notice from these verses is Adam, which means men, break covenant. Men are unfaithful sinners. The Hebrew word for 'man' is 'adam.' So the NIV and NAS which are from one set of ancient manuscripts translates the Hebrew word 'adam' as Adam and the NKJV and the KJV which are from a different set of manuscripts translates the Hebrew word 'adam' as men. When the context of Hosea is taken into consideration, this passage is clearly referring to men who break covenant. The verse cannot be isolated from its context. The Bible nowhere teaches a covenant between God and Adam which Adam broke. The context of Hosea reveals how God laments the lack of loyalty of

His people Israel toward Him. The context is Israel who was clearly in covenant with God. To stretch the meaning of this verse to justify an Adamic 'covenant of works' when God created Adam is to spiritualize the text, loosening its intent in order to teach the presupposition that Adam broke covenant with God. This can't be supported by the rest of scripture.

Quotes

- **Quote** - "Man's relationship to God in creation was based on works. What Adam failed to achieve, Christ, the second Adam, succeeded in achieving. Ultimately the only way one can be justified is by works" Source Cited: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covenant_Theology, citing; R C Sproul: *Getting the Gospel Right*, Baker Books, 1999, page 160.
- **Quote** - So what is that unified message of the Bible? How does one go about relating all of its various styles and books into a mutually-interpretive volume? Bible scholars have suggested a variety of methods for structuring the unfolding story of special revelation, and have come up with numerous ideas for a central theme or themes which bind everything together. Perhaps the most compelling of these attempts, and the idea which most rigorously allows the Bible itself to indicate its own major emphases and underlying structural elements, is commonly called Covenant Theology. http://www.reformationtheology.com/2006/12/what_is_covenant_theology.php
- **Quote** - COVENANT THEOLOGY systematizes the biblical information concerning the manner in which God saves sinners through Jesus Christ. It places the Bible into a covenantal framework that makes biblical sense. The Bible speaks of salvation in terms of "covenant." God is a covenant God who saves His people through covenants. The three main theological covenants of the Bible are the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. These are theological terms that are packed with biblical information dealing with the way God saves sinners. When someone asks, "How does God save people?" the answer lies within the framework of Covenant Theology. Source Cited: <http://www.puritanpublications.com/Books/SimpleOverview.htm>, citing; Dr. C. Matthew McMahon A Simple Overview of Covenant Theology

What is Calvinism?

The Gospel of Covenant Theology

Few Christians realize that Calvinism is the gospel of Reformed Theology. Reformed theology is an umbrella term that includes Calvinism and [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#). [Reformed Theology pg. 49](#) is the overall framework of the Bible with its various attending doctrines. Covenant theology specifically refers to the theology of the three covenants not found in the Bible, while the TULIP doctrines refer to how someone is saved in the scheme of Reformed Theology. Many Bible believing Christians do not realize this is the system they are entering into when they acknowledge one or more points of Calvinism's TULIP.

Calvinism, though being the gospel of Reformed theology, is also adopted by many in [Dispensationalism pg. 39](#). Hence there are Reformed Calvinists and Dispensational Calvinists. Most Reformed Calvinists are five point, adopting Covenant theology. Most Dispensational Calvinists are four point, adopting Dispensationalism, which is the theology of the Bible.

Reformed theology believes the church is comprised of the elect, extends back to Adam, received the promises of Abraham, received the Law through the Jewish OT members of the 'church,' believes the tribulation occurred in 70 A.D., has replaced Israel, and has received the kingdom offered by Jesus so that we're in the kingdom age now. All of this is intellectually possible through allegorical interpretation which spiritualizes the Bible. Spiritualizing the Bible is to assign impressions to the words of scripture, whether personal or popularly accepted.

Dispensational theology believes the church and Israel are separate and distinct programs of God. Therefore, Israel received the Abrahamic promises, the Mosaic Law, prophecies concerning Messiah, the future tribulation and the future millennial kingdom. The church was born on Pentecost and is grafted into the promises made to Israel, being adopted into the family of God. Dispensationalists take a literal interpretation of scripture striving to take the words at face value, unless context dictates otherwise.

Confusion over the interpretation of election and total depravity cause many dispensationalists to adopt one or more points of Calvinism, not realizing Calvinism is the gospel of Reformed or Covenant theology. Calvinism, brought forward to our day through the Protestant Reformation of Roman Catholicism, can be traced back to the Roman Catholic, neo-Platonist, Bishop of Hippo; [Augustine pg. 68](#).

The terms *Calvinism*, *TULIP*, and *The Doctrines of Grace* are all synonymous. They are considered by Reformed theologians to be the most consistent, logical and fullest expression of the gospel.^[1] Notice they call this system the fullest expression of the *gospel*. This clearly tells us they understand the TULIP model to be the gospel of Reformed theology! '*Doctrines of Grace*' sounds biblical, but again we see semantics at work. What reformed men mean by '*doctrines of grace*' and what the Bible means by '*grace*' are two different things which will be discussed in detail later in this manuscript. The *Doctrines of Grace* for the Calvinist largely means the doctrines that accompany *Irresistible Grace*. *Irresistible Grace* is imparted to the elect before hearing the gospel, applies the atonement of Christ before hearing the gospel, causes the elect to be regenerated (born again) before hearing the gospel and brings the gift of faith before hearing the gospel to enable belief in the gospel. Biblical grace will be discussed further under the chapter titled [Irresistible Grace](#).

Calvinism is basically the TULIP model which promotes salvation by election and irresistible grace rather than by personal faith. The Bible teaches that personal faith prompts the flow of the God's grace for salvation toward the believing sinner. Calvinism teaches that a person is born again before hearing the gospel. The Bible teaches that the sinner is born again after believing the gospel. As we shall see, the TULIP gospel is different from and bears no resemblance to the Biblical gospel.

The TULIP model is also referred to as the 'Five Points of Calvinism' because the term 'TULIP' is an acronym of these five points. The five points are [Total Depravity pg. 73](#), [Unconditional Election pg. 82](#), [Limited Atonement pg. 98](#), [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#), and [Perseverance of the Saints pg. 123](#). The crux of the system is God's sovereign predestination of the elect to salvation in the *Covenant of Redemption*. Many Christians see the words 'predestination' and 'elect' in the Bible and assume the Calvinistic definition of these must be true because these words are used in the Bible. The type of predestination and election the Bible speaks about have different definitions than those deduced from the intellectual reasonings of Calvinism. We have to read the Bible through the lens of God's character. Most believe that if the Bible says it, or seems to say it, then it must be true, not realizing that the meaning behind the words is different. They don't realize that the content of the word 'election' has been replaced with a different definition and substance. It is not from the Spirit of God. As we read the Bible, we have to keep in mind and consider all we know about the character of God and what we know from the whole counsel of scripture.

Basically the **TULIP** model is explained as follows:

- Total Depravity - Man is completely dead in his sins and can't choose to believe. His free choice always chooses against God.
- Unconditional Election - Therefore God sovereignly decided to choose some to be saved.
- Limited Atonement - He will atone for only the elect.
- Irresistible Grace - He will apply that atonement to the person without their knowledge before belief, but also give faith as a gift so the gospel can be believed when heard.
- Perseverance of the Saints - The grace of God supplies and enables the ability to persevere in faith and good works until the elect person dies.

Some adopt what's called 'four point' or 'soft Calvinism,' which is an inconsistent and partial view of Calvinism. Many adopt four point Calvinism because confusion takes place in interpreting verses that seem to teach total depravity and unconditional election. Unfortunately, this confusion begins to imbed a wrong interpretation of verses which leads the unsuspecting believer deeper into a Calvinistic approach to study. If a person adopts even one point of Calvinism, they've entered into that system and that system's way of thinking. They have begun to come under the control, so-to-speak, of the mindset of Calvinism, and ultimately under the control of the power behind Calvinism, all the while thinking they are in full control of their own reasonings. They tend to argue against anyone who challenges their understanding of scriptures. After all, they believe the Bible to be teaching Calvinism and they'll defend the Bible with all their strength.

Because the five points are a consistent system, the unsuspecting disciple who adopts even one point, can easily be led to the others. Most stop at four point Calvinism by rejecting *Limited Atonement*, because they know the Bible clearly teaches that Christ died for all men. To be a four point Calvinist, is however, to hold contradictory beliefs and be logically inconsistent. Even if a person holds to only one or two points, they will begin thinking and behaving like a five point Calvinist without realizing they are doing so. They'll even deny they're Calvinists though they're acting just like one! I know this from personal experience. This is how the mind control of a false belief system works. They've been taken captive by a man made philosophy that's begun to build a stronghold and construct an idol that will be vehemently defended. This is the danger of deception. This theology is extremely destructive to the Christian faith. One needs only look at Calvin's Geneva to see the outworking of this theology. If election were so true, then why did Calvin have to use such force to control 'saints' who were gifted for perseverance?

If Calvinism's interpretation of the Bible is true, then God becomes the source of sin and evil. God also then becomes an unjust judge who fixes the impending verdict of men's final judgment. In the scheme of Calvinism, the Holy Spirit must precede repentance (believing gospel), men have no will of their own, proselytizing or evangelizing is unnecessary (can't believe from the heart or manipulate others into belief), there's no common grace...only the elect receive grace, only Calvinists are

Christians, all men are obligated to believe but not all are equipped to do so, and there is an emphasis on adherence to Law keeping.

The Four and Five Point Calvinism

Much confusion arises from the terms four point and five point Calvinists. Actually, there are even one, two and three point Calvinists, though if someone claims only one or two points, they are usually labeled an Arminian. An Arminian is generally understood to refer to a person who thinks a believer can lose their salvation, which was a point of contention by Jacob Arminius made by his followers in the Remonstrance of 1618. These distinctions are just as confusing as trying to explain how the terms Protestant, Covenant and Reformed theology are used in everyday communication.

The four point Calvinist holds to **T**, **U**, **I**, and **P** of **TULIP**, while the five point Calvinist holds to all the points of TULIP. The four point Calvinist rejects *Limited Atonement*, but also redefines the other points of Calvinism to accommodate what he knows to be true of scripture. So there is a mixing of ideas going on. It's been said that if you talk to ten Mormons, you'll have 15 different types of Mormonism. The same can be true of Calvinists. They redefine the points to fit their understanding of scripture rather than fitting the classical understanding of Calvinism.

For instance, the four pointer believes the Bible strongly teaches election and total depravity. But he also knows that other verses say that man has a choice. He can't reconcile election, depravity and choice in his mind because he is holding the wrong definition for election and depravity. He thinks God chooses before belief, but the Bible teaches God chooses because of belief. He thinks all men are totally unable while the Bible teaches that men are totally depraved. To reconcile these differences and contradictions, he begins hedging on his definition for irresistible grace. This point is where he begins to create some wiggle room for blending his view of depravity and election with choice.

This is an important point to keep in mind when gently confronting those in Calvinism. The four pointer departs from five point Calvinism in his understanding of God's grace. The four pointer reasons that God somehow makes the truth of scripture so real to the elect, that they of course respond to the gospel in full belief. This is how they reconcile free choice with election. He reasons that the outpouring of this *irresistible grace* takes place in the seconds before belief in the heart of the elect. He's not exactly sure how this works, so he relegates the mechanics of this to the mystery of God's sovereign will. The four pointer views grace as God's intervention to bring the elect to faith.

The five pointer however, sees grace very differently. In fact, he calls God's grace '*The Doctrines of Grace*.' He contends that God's grace is given to the elect at conception or baptism to regenerate the elect before belief by applying the blood of Christ's atonement to them, all without their knowledge or involvement. Hence, salvation can be said to be '*all of God*.' This grace also brings the gift of faith so that when the gospel is heard or the truth is encountered, the elect who have been regenerated, will direct this gifted faith to the life *and* death of Christ. The blood has been applied before belief and Christ's obedient righteousness enables them to persevere in good works after belief.

So you can see that the four and five pointers differ in their definition of irresistible grace. The four pointer rejects limited atonement. So in a sense, the four pointer has no idea that he is on the 5 point Calvinist road, which is why he often rejects the label of 'Calvinist.' To accuse him of being a Calvinist will offend him to the point where he won't listen to well meaning attempts to help him. He vehemently holds to election and total depravity. He redefines irresistible grace because if God has elected some to salvation, and all men are totally depraved but have a choice to believe, then how do the elect come to faith? He reasons that irresistible grace must be operating on some level.

Now that we've looked at the redefining of irresistible grace, it will be easier for us to see how *Perseverance of the Saints* is also defined differently by the four and five pointers. The 4 pointer believes the believer will persevere in belief or in faith, while the five pointer asserts that the believer must prove he is saved by good deeds. Sadly, while rejecting the five pointer's definition of

Perseverance of the Saints, the four pointer will eventually be put under a heavy burden of legalism and the questioning of his own salvation. This subject will be discussed later in this study under the heading *Perseverance of the Saints*. But for now, it is important to know that the four and five pointers define this last point of Calvinism differently.

The Order of Divine Decrees

Some readers may wonder why hyper and strict Calvinists are distinguished from one another if they both hold to all five points. Ostensibly, they appear the same. However, their differences are based in what's known as the Order of Divine Decrees.

The Order of Divine Decrees essentially defines the relationship between unconditional election, the creation of man and man's fall into sin. Did God decide to create man before, concurrent or after electing man? And once that was decided, when did God decree to permit the fall of man? (See chart titled, [TULIP Comparison Chart pg. 274](#). Exactly which order did God make these decrees?

Hyper Calvinism (five points) says that the very first thing that happens is the sovereign God, who predetermines the minutest detail, first decided to create man, secondly elect some and reprobate the rest of mankind, thirdly permit the fall, fourthly atone only for the sins of the elect only, and fifthly decreed to regenerate, enable faith and enable perseverance in good works through irresistible grace. The view of the hyper Calvinist is double predestination.

Strict Calvinists (five points) have a slightly different order where God first decided to create man, secondly permit the fall, thirdly elect only some leaving the rest to choose against God bringing their own condemnation, fourthly atone for the sins of the elect only, and fifthly decreed to regenerate, enable faith and enable perseverance in good works through irresistible grace. The view of the strict Calvinist is single predestination.

Moderate Calvinists, (four points) believe that God first decided to create man, secondly permit the fall, thirdly atone for all mankind's sins, fourthly elect only some leaving the rest to choose against God bringing their own condemnation, and fifthly decreed to enable faith and enable perseverance in good works through irresistible grace. The view of the moderate Calvinist is single predestination.

Remembering that Calvinism is a philosophy of man, it is no wonder that men guess at the order in which God supposedly decided to make decrees. These assumptions cannot be found in the Bible with chapter and verse, but instead are intellectually deduced using rationalized arguments to defend the presupposition of unconditional election.

<u>Order of Divine Decrees</u>			
	Hyper Calvinist	Strict Calvinist	Moderate Calvinist
	<u>Supralapsarian</u> <i>(Before Fall)</i>	<u>Infralapsarian</u> <i>(Inside Fall)</i>	<u>Sublapsarian</u> <i>(After the Fall)</i>
1	Create Man	Create Man	Create Man
2	Election and Reprobation (Double Predestination)	Permit Fall	Permit Fall
3	Permit Fall	Elects some leaves non elect to just condemnation	Atonement for all men
4	Atonement for Elect only securing only their redemption	Atonement for Elect only securing only their redemption	Elects some to receive grace to believe and leaves non elect in just condemnation
5	Gift of Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify (enabling perseverance)	Gift of Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify (enabling perseverance)	Gift of Holy Spirit to sanctify (enabling perseverance)

* *supra* meaning above, *infra* meaning within, *sub* meaning below, *laps* meaning fall, and *Arian* meaning man.

Quotes

- **Quote** - Predestination seems to cast a shadow on the very heart of human freedom. If God has decided our destinies from all eternity, (unconditionally) that strongly suggests that our free choices are but charades, empty exercises in predetermined placating. It is as though God wrote the script for us in concrete and we are merely carrying out His scenario. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, citing; R.C. Sproul, Chosen by God, 51.

- **Quote** - It was certainly loving of God to predestine the salvation of His people, those the Bible calls the 'elect or chosen ones.' It is the non-elect that are the problem. If some people are not elected unto salvation then it would seem that God is not all that loving toward them. For them it seems that it would have been more loving of God not to have allowed them to be born. That may indeed be the case. Source Cited: <http://anti-calvinism.blogspot.com/2008/05/quotes.html>, citing; R.C. Sproul, Chosen by God, 32.

- **Quote** - "And what is the heresy of Arminianism but the addition of something to the work of the Redeemer? Every heresy, if brought to the touchstone, will discover itself here. I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else" Source Cited: <http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/spurgeon.htm>, citing; The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon, Curts & Jennings, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, 1898, Vol. I, pg. 172

- **Quote** - Sometimes it would be easier not to be a Calvinist. An intellectual price tag comes with any conceptual scheme, but the one that comes with Calvinism seems beyond the resources of human intelligence to pay. Calvinists hold views that appear at very least counterintuitive. This is especially so with respect to Calvinists accounts of God's sovereign control in relation to human freedom and moral responsibility for evil.

If Calvinists are right about divine sovereignty, there seems to be little room for human freedom. If freedom goes, so does human moral responsibility for sin. Worst of all, if Calvinists are right, it appears that God decides that there will be sin and evil in our world, maybe even brings it about that there is such evil, and yet, according to Calvinists, not morally responsible for any of it. We are.

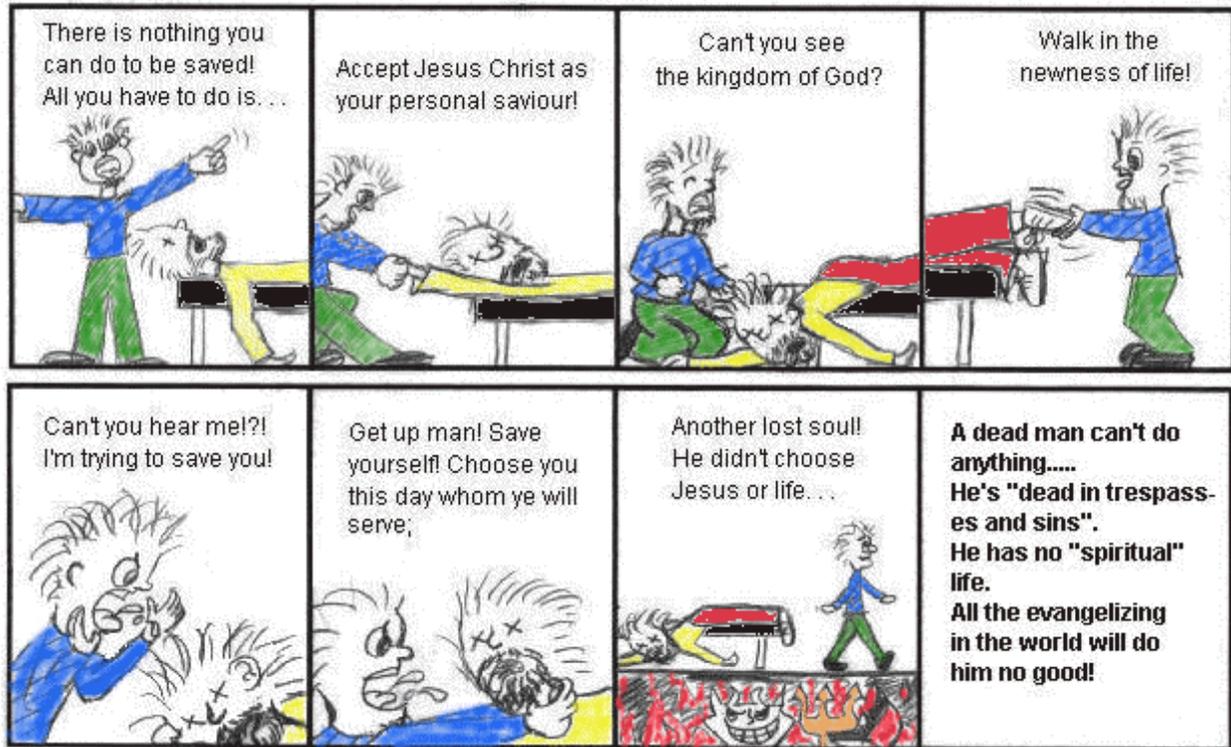
If this is Calvinism's God, Calvinism seems not only intellectually bankrupt but also religiously bankrupt. Who could worship this God? Moreover, if atheists understand this portrait of God as paradigmatic of traditional Christianity, no wonder they are repulsed by Christianity. Although committed atheists will not likely abandon their atheism for any concept of God, at least the Arminian portrayal of God seems more attractive than the Calvinist portrayal. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, citing John Feinberg, Edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will, Vol. 2, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, Chapter 20, by John S. Fienberg, page 459.

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[1] Lorraine Boettner, *What is the Gospel*, <http://www.graceonlinelibrary.org/articles/full.asp?id=31||41>

CALVINISM AND EVANGELISM

Mocking the non Calvinist for Witnessing to the 'Dead'



- Source unknown

The Protestant Reformers

The Reformed Magisterium

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Martin Luther is a bit of an enigmatic character with both admiration and controversy surrounding his life. He is famous for changing the complexion of history by sparking the Protestant Reformation. Raised in Eisleben, Germany he studied law until he promised St Anne that if she rescued him from a terrible lightning storm, he would become a monk. He survived the storm and entered the Augustinian monastery in 1505 at the age of 21. Luther's efforts to please God through dedication only increased his awareness of sin. In deep spiritual despair, he thought he had lost hold of Christ the Savior making Him instead a hangman over his soul. In the Augustinian monastery and unable to eradicate his guilt, Luther was given a teaching position and awarded his Doctor of Theology in 1512. He was made '*Doctor of Bible*' at the University of Wittenberg where he spent the rest of his career.

He became convinced that the church had lost sight of Christian truths, the most important of which for Luther, was the doctrine of justification — God's act of declaring a sinner righteous — by faith alone. Remembering that Luther was an Augustinian monk, he taught that salvation or redemption is a gift of God's grace, attainable only through faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Luther understood justification as entirely the work of God. Against the teaching of his day, that the righteous acts of believers are performed in cooperation with God, Luther wrote that Christians receive the needed righteousness entirely from outside themselves; that righteousness not only comes from Christ, it actually is the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us through faith. "That is why faith alone makes someone just and fulfills the law," he wrote. "Faith is that which brings the Holy Spirit through the merits of Christ." Faith, for Luther, was a gift from God. He explained his concept of "justification" in the Smalcald Articles.

Johann Tetzel, a Dominican Friar, sold indulgences in Germany to raise funds for St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. His famous slogan that grated Luther was "*As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, another soul from purgatory springs.*" Martin Luther's objection to the sale of indulgences was made public by the nailing of his 95 theses, or points of objection, on the Wittenberg Gate. Martin Luther was 33 at the time. This controversy was the first in history to be fanned by the printing press which spread the news of Luther's protest throughout Europe.

At first Pope Leo X dismissed Luther as "a drunken German" who "when sober will change his mind," but when students flocked to Wittenberg to hear him speak, Luther was warned in a papal bull to recant his position. Luther's response to these directives was publicly burning the bull and decretals in 1520 and for which he was excommunicated shortly thereafter.

Luther was called before the Diet of Worms in 1521 to answer for his writings. His famous response was, "Unless I shall be convinced by the testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear reason ... I neither can nor will make any retraction, since it is neither safe nor honorable to act against conscience." "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." Because of this, Luther was declared a notorious heretic, an outlaw, his literature was banned and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was to be punished as a heretic. Instead of being arrested, Frederick III, Elector of Saxony had Luther intercepted and placed in hiding in the Wartburg Castle for eleven months where Luther translated the New Testament from Greek into German and wrote prolifically. From there he wrote to his friend Philip Melancthon the following;

.....let your sins be strong, but let your trust in Christ be stronger, and rejoice in Christ who is the victor over sin, death, and the world. We will commit sins while we are here, for this life is not a place where justice resides. ^[1]

Luther was involved in several controversies other than against the Roman Catholic Papacy. He squelched the Peasants War that some say he helped to incite, advocated a polygamous marriage for his good friend Phillip of Hesse, had a volatile temper his whole life which was reflected in his tirades and drank profusely.

He argued with the authenticity of books in the Bible, amended the Bible to say "we are saved by grace alone", and demonstrated intolerance for anyone who dared to challenge that belief...including intolerance for the book of James. He accused the Biblical writers of mistakes. Luther regarded the Bible as too long and so created the Shorter Catechism. He also challenged the authenticity of Hebrews, Jude and Esther, books that dealt with the Jews. Four centuries later, the Nazis used Luther's impassioned anti-Semitic writings to help fuel and justify the Holocaust.

In the pamphlet, "On the Jews and Their Lies" purportedly written shortly before his death, He argued that the Jews were no longer the chosen people, but were "the devil's people." He wrote, they were "base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth."^[2] He advocated setting synagogues on fire, destroying Jewish prayer books, forbidding rabbis from preaching, seizing Jews' property and money, smashing up their homes, and ensuring that these "poisonous envenomed worms" be forced into labor or expelled "for all time." He also seemed to sanction their murder, writing "We are at fault in not slaying them."^[3]

As an Augustinian monk, he was obviously greatly influenced by Augustine. Throughout his whole life, he maintained that the 'just shall live by faith alone.'

Beliefs of Luther

- Predestination
- Denial of free will (Bondage of the Will)
- Faith as a Gift
- Righteousness of Christ for justification
- Coined the phrase 'antinomianism,' (*which conflicted with 'just shall live by faith'*)
- Transubstantiation, Real presence in communion
- Baptismal regeneration
- Faith in Christ's presence in the waters of baptism
- Spiritual development, regeneration and Spirit indwelling begins with infant baptism
- Absolution of sins by believer priests through confession
- Same order of the 10 Commandments as the Roman Catholic Church (omits #2, splits #10)
- Hints of Mariology - see item #75 in his 95 Theses

Quotes of Luther

On Luther

"Whoever obeys me not, despises not me, but Christ." ^[4]

"Whoever rejects my doctrine cannot be saved." ^[5]

"Not for a thousand years has God bestowed such great gifts on any bishop, such as those He bestowed on me!" ^[6]

"Not even St. Augustine or St. Ambrosius can compare with me!" ^[7]

"What I teach and write remains true even though the whole world should fall to pieces over it." ^[8]

On Sin

"Be a sinner and sin boldly!" ^[9]

"No sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day!" [10]

"It is more important to guard against good works than against sin." [11]

"Your sin can not cast you into hell." [12]

"If you are a preacher of grace, then preach a true grace and not a fictitious grace; if grace is true, you must bear a true and not a fictitious sin. God does not save people who are only fictitious sinners. Be a sinner and sin boldly. [13]

On Alcohol

"Whenever the devil harasses you, seek company of men or drink more, or joke or talk nonsense or do some other merry thing. Sometimes we must drink more, play sports, entertain ourselves, and even sin a little to spite the devil ... so when the devil says to you, 'Do not drink,' answer him, 'I will drink and right freely, just because you tell me not to.'" [14]

"We eat and drink to kill ourselves; we eat and drink up to our last farthing." [15]

"God must count drunkenness as a minor sin, a small daily sin. We can really not stop it." [16]

On Marriage

"I confess that I cannot forbid a person to marry several wives, for it does not contradict the Scripture. If a man wishes to marry more than one wife he should be asked whether he is satisfied in his conscience that he may do so in accordance with the Word of God. In such a case the civil authority has nothing to do in the matter." [17]

"Let it be known that marriage is an outward material thing like any other secular business. The body has nothing to do with God. In this respect one can never sin against God, but only against one's neighbor." [18]

On Predestination

"You must say my sins are not mine; they are not in me at all; they are the sins of another, they are Christ's and are none of my business." [19]

"With God and everything that bears on salvation or damnation. Here one is a captive, prisoner and bond slave, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan." [20]

On the Jews

"Jews are truly stupid, fools"; "blind"; "thieves and robbers who daily eat no morsel and wear no thread of clothing which they have not stolen and pilfered from us by means of their accursed robbery"; "lazy rogues"; "and they should be eject[ed] forever from this country"; "the government should 'first, set fire to their synagogues and schools"; "their house [should be] razed and destroyed"; "their prayer books and Talmudic writings ...taken from them"; "their rabbis....forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb"; "safe conduct...on the highways abolished...for the Jews"; and their "cash and treasure...taken from them." [21]

"If I had to baptize a Jew, I would take him to the river Elbe, hang a stone around his neck and push him over with the words 'I baptize thee in the name of Abraham.'" [22]

On the Bible

"The book of Esther I toss into the Elbe. I am such an enemy to the book of Esther that I wish it did not exist, for it Judaizes too much and has in it a great deal of heathen foolishness." [23]

"If nonsense is spoken anywhere, this is the very place. I pass over the fact that many have maintained, with much probability, that this epistle was not written by the Apostle James, and is not worthy of the spirit of the Apostle." [24]

On Mary

"Luther could declare, "Thus, Mary is the mother of Jesus, and the mother of us all. If Christ is ours, we must be where he is; and where he is we must be also, and all that he has must be ours, and his mother is therefore ours." [25]

Mary was the Mother of God. "She is rightly called not only the mother of man but also the Mother of God....It is certain that Mary is the mother of the real and true God." "It is an article of faith that Mary is the Mother of the Lord and still a Virgin." "The veneration of Mary is inscribed on the very depths of the human heart," [26]

"Whoever possesses a good faith, says the 'Hail Mary' without danger." [27]

In his last sermon at Wittenberg in January of 1546, Luther affirmed: "Is Christ only to be adored? Or is the Holy Mother of God rather not to be honored? This is the woman who crushed the Serpent's head. Hear us. For your Son denies you nothing." [28]

On Anabaptists

"...they [the Anabaptists] are not only blasphemous but also seditious men, let the sword exercise its right over them. For it is the will of God, that he shall have judgment who resisteth the power." [29]

"The Anabaptists themselves had bodies and souls before they were re-baptized; but because they were not godly, therefore they had not true bodies and true souls. Also their parents were not lawfully married (as they grant themselves,) because they are not re-baptized; therefore the Anabaptists themselves are all bastards, and their parents were all adulterers, and whoremongers; and yet they do inherit their parents' lands and goods, although they grant themselves to be bastards, and unlawful heirs. Who seeth not here, in the Anabaptists, men not possessed with devils, but even devils themselves possessed with worse devils?" [30]

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[11] *The Facts about Luther*, By Patrick F. O'Hare, Published by F. Pustet & co. [c1916], 1916, Original from Harvard University, Digitized Oct 23, 2007, 367 pages, Quote found on

Pg. 128. See also: http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Lutherans/truth_about_martin_luther.htm

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490 pages, Quote on Page 324 See also: <http://www.sullivan-county.com/identity/reformers.htm>

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[17] *The Facts about Luther*, By Patrick F. O'Hare, Published by F. Pustet & co. [c1916], 1916, Original from Harvard University, Digitized Oct 23, 2007, 367 pages

Quote found on Pg 334.

[18] <http://www.tentmaker.org/books/MartinLuther-HitlersSpiritualAncestor.html>

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[27] http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Lutherans/martin_loser.htm

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John Calvin (1509 - 1564)

For more complete background on Calvin and his conversion, see <http://carylmatrisciana.com/x2/>

John Calvin was born to devout Catholic parents in 1509. His father was the procurator at Noyon and an attorney with a good reputation. Calvin also became an attorney and left the Catholic Church to join the reformation of Catholicism when his brother and father fell out of favor with the church. At school, he became acquainted with humanist and classical philosophical writings. He applied his sharp mind and legal training to the reformational view of faith. He wasn't original in his doctrine, but being a great logician, he systematized the Reformation movement and teachings into what would eventually be known as 'Calvinism.' At the age of twenty-six, Calvin published his famous Institutes of the Christian Religion which was expanded in following years. The Institutes of the Christian Religion is a seminal work in Christian circles that has altered the course of Western history as much as any other Reformation writing and is still read by theology students today. Calvin studied and was very familiar with the voluminous writings of the early Church Fathers, including Augustine, as well as the great medieval schoolmen, and was also indebted to earlier Reformers.

He finished school in 1532, and settled in Geneva in 1536 from where he was also expelled in 1538. The city council refused to adopt Calvin's creed, catechism, confession of faith and insistence that all citizens must submit to these. In 1538 he was denied the power to excommunicate, as well as being involved in a Eucharist controversy, and was asked to leave Geneva. In 1540, after a number of Calvin's supporters won election to the Geneva city council, he was invited back. The city council then gave him the power he had previously insisted on. Ironically, the city council member most instrumental in his return eventually led a failed revolt against him years later.

In Geneva, Calvin ruled like a despot. Many were executed for disagreeing with his Institutes or on suspicion of witchcraft or for crossing Calvin. Calvin was called the 'Genevese Dictator' or the 'Protestant Pope.' The Consistory was an ecclesiastical court consisting of the elders and pastors who were charged with maintaining strict order among the church's officers and members. Critics often look to the Consistory as the emblem of Calvin's theocratic rule. Offenses ranged from propounding false doctrine to moral infractions, such as wild dancing and bawdy singing.

To regulate lay conduct a system of domiciliary visits was established...and questioned the occupants on all phases of their life...The allowable color and quantity of clothing, and the number of dishes permissible at a meal, were specified by law. Jewelry and lace were frowned upon. A woman was jailed for arranging her hair to an immoral height....

Censorship of the press was taken over from Catholic and secular precedents and enlarged: booksof immoral tendency were banned....To speak disrespectfully of Calvin or the clergy was a crime. A first violation of these ordinances was punished with a reprimand, further violation with fines, persistent violation with imprisonment or banishment. Fornication was to be punished with exile or drowning; adultery, blasphemy, or idolatry, with death...a child was beheaded for striking its parents. In the years 1558-59 there were 414 prosecutions for moral offenses; between 1542 and 1564 there were seventy-six banishments and 58 executions; the total population of Geneva was then about 20,000. ^[1]

Some allege that Calvin was not above using the Consistory to further his own political aims and maintain his sway over civil and religious life in Geneva, and it is argued, he responded harshly to any challenge to his authority. In 1545, twenty-three people were burned to death in Geneva under charges of practicing witchcraft and attempting to spread the plague over a three-year period.

The most famous and embarrassing example of Calvin's misuse of power was the Michael Servetus burning at the stake, at the request of Calvin, for the crime of differing religious opinions. Calvin asked for beheading which was punishment for a civil crime but the punishment for Servetus' religious crime was burning at the stake. Other reformers of his day praised Calvin for the Servetus execution.

Servetus was a Unitarian who denounced the Trinity and infant baptism. History has certainly judged Calvin to be in the wrong on this issue, and modern Calvinists do not often defend his actions against Servetus.

Calvin's admirers generally picture him as a man who sinned and failed to transcend the ethics of his time, but who is still deserving of honor because of his contributions elsewhere. Calvin's detractors picture him as a man who craved power above all else, who could not tolerate the slightest dissent and who is unworthy of the respect that is commonly given to him.

John Calvin differed very little from the other magisterial reformers of Catholicism regarding the doctrines of the absolute sovereignty and holiness of God. He, along with the Catholic reformers strongly held to infant baptism and Eucharistic grace. While the five points of Calvinism bear his name and are a reflection of his thinking, they were not articulated by him, but were actually a product of the Synod of Dort, which issued its judgments in response to five specific objections that arose after Calvin's time. Today, the legacy of John Calvin continues through his view of salvation by God's unconditional election. When the reformers wanted to reform Catholicism, they returned to one of the four doctors of the Roman Church; Augustine.

Beliefs of Calvin

- Allegorical interpretation
- Total sovereignty of God (*where God predetermines everything*)
- Total depravity
- Unconditional election
- Reprobation
- Predestination
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of the saints
- Sacramentalism
- Infant baptism
- Eucharist said to provide continual divine guidance

Quotes

- **Quote** - "It is suggested therefore that all that can properly be said is that the Reformation, conceived as a movement of its time, represented that part of the general revulsion from the corruptions of the day -the whole of which looked back toward Augustine for guidance and strength - which, because it was distinctively religious in its motives and aspirations, laid hold purely of the Augustinian doctrines of sin and grace, and built exclusively on them in its re adjustments to life."

Source Cited: http://www.lgmarshall.org/Warfield/warfield_theolreformation.html, citing; B. B. Warfield, Reprinted from *The Biblical Review*, ii. 1917, pp. 490-512; published by The Biblical Seminary in New York

- **Quote** - "Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings." Source Cited: *What Love is This*, Dave Hunt, Loyal Publishing, Inc. Sister, OR, 2002, pg.46, citing; **John Calvin**, *A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God*.

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Source Cited: Dave Hunt's "What Love Is This?", 2002, Pg. 63.

The Augustinian Influence

John Calvin studied the voluminous writings of Saint Augustine, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Hippo (354-430 AD), much more so than those of Martin Luther, his contemporary. Calvin continually praised Augustine's work in his writings citing numerous references and quotations from Augustine. Therefore it is helpful to understand a little more about Augustine and his beliefs.

Augustine, in his early life, was a member of the Gnostic Manichean cult. The Manicheans, a Persian dualistic philosophy proclaimed by Mani (216-276? AD) in southern Babylonia (Iraq), was a blend of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity. The Manicheans were divided into two groups; the 'elect' and the 'hearers.' They taught the doctrine of total depravity, election, and a type of perseverance of the elect. Being part of the 'elect' required living an ascetic lifestyle of celibacy that Augustine was unable to observe. He left the cult when Manichaeism was persecuted by the Roman government. Augustine turned to skepticism but was later attracted to the philosophy of Neo-Platonism.

He found a form of Platonism in the relatively newly formed Roman Catholic Church. It has been said that Augustine baptized Plato.^[1] Augustine was persuaded by a Roman Catholic Bishop named Ambrose (387 A. D.) to join the Roman Church that was created by Constantine in 325 A. D. This Roman Catholic Church was a blend of Christianity and Roman paganism. Greatly influencing the pagan element in this Roman Catholic Church was Neo-Platonic thinking, in which Ambrose was well steeped. Neo-Platonism is similar to Gnosticism. Gnostics believed that mankind was wholly evil and the gods were wholly good, which sounds like *Total Depravity*. Gnosticism also included the ideas of election, predestination where the gods predetermined all events of life (fate), rituals to change the will of the gods, ingesting the gods through communion (see ancient Osiris worship), and spiritualizing the events and meaning of life as a reflection of the heavenly beings. Augustine, upon introduction to the Bible, objected to the "God" of the Old Testament. Ambrose convinced him that any difficult passage could be made palatable by spiritualizing or allegorizing the text. Consequently, Augustine who had separated from one strain of Gnosticism, found himself initiated into another form of worldly thinking. Augustine's theology blends Gnosticism and neo-Platonism with Christian teachings.

Augustine is largely responsible for shaping the early theology of this relatively young Roman Catholic Church. He is attributed with introducing the doctrines of predestination, total depravity, election, reprobation, views of [irresistible] 'grace', allegorical interpretation, replacement theology, amillennialism, spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist, infant baptism as sign and seal of the covenant, baptism washes away original sin, baptismal regeneration, the union of Church and State, and the 'just war' concept of using force (death) to compel correct doctrine in order to save people from hell, salvation through the church, the New Covenant was the continuation of the Old Covenant.

Augustine's prolific writings were more strongly biased by his previously obtained theology than on his detailed study of the Christian Scriptures. More than one source reports he had trouble reading Greek.^[2] With his allegorical approach to scripture, the words and phrases of the Bible could be adapted to match his theology. He used scripture out of context. Augustine's teachings were, in turn, passed on to the Reformers; Luther was an Augustinian Monk and John Calvin thoroughly identified with Augustine's writings saying,

"Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings."^[3]

The Reformers wanted to reform the Catholic Church. What better way to do so than to return to the writings of one of the Catholic fathers....Augustine!

"The Reformation was essentially a revival of Augustinianism."^[4]

It is very easy to follow the trail of John Calvin's theology back to Augustine and from there back to Gnostic paganism to neo-Platonism and to the Manichean influences of his early years. This helps

explain the distortion of the God's Word that we see in Calvinism and Reformed theology. Calvin's beliefs came primarily from Augustine.

Beliefs

- Predestination
- Election
- Reprobation
- Total Depravity
- Irresistible Grace
- Just War to compel correct doctrine
- Spiritual Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Infant Baptism - sign and seal of covenant, washes away original sin, baptismal regeneration
- Allegorical Interpretation
- New Covenant continuation of Old Covenant
- Replacement Theology
- Amillennialism
- Union of Church and State
- Salvation through the Church

Quotes

- **Quote** - "Augustine may be regarded as the father of the soteriological system [called] 'Calvinism.'" Source Cited: Dave Hunt, *What Love is This*, 2006, pg. 49., citing; **Kenneth H. Good**, *Are Baptist Calvinists?* (Rochester, NY: Backus Book Publishers, 1988)

- **Quote** - "Augustinianism is presently called Calvinism or Reformed Theology." Source Cited: *Debating Calvinism*, James White and Dave Hunt, Multnomah Publishers, Inc, 2004, pg. 126., Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *The Holiness of God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 1993 ed), 273.

- **Quote** - 'Our fathers at Dordrecht knew well that these truths set forth in the Canons could not only be traced back to the Calvin Reformation; they could be traced back to the theology of St. Augustine...For it was Augustine who had originally define these truths.' Source Cited; Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism*, Pensacola, FL: Vance Publication, re. ed., 1999, pgs. 158-59, quoting; **Herman Hanko**.

- **Quote** - "Custance insists that the Five Points were "formulated implicitly by Augustine." Source Cited; Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publication, re. ed., 1999) 158-59. Citing; **Arthur C. Custance**, *The Sovereignty of Grace* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 71.

- **Quote** - "John Calvin was part of a long line of thinkers who based their doctrine of predestination on the Augustinian interpretation of St. Paul." Source Cited: <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/calvin.pdf>, citing; **Richard A. Muller**, *Christ and the Decree* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), pg. 22.

- **Quote** - "There is hardly a doctrine of Calvin that does not bear the marks of Augustine's influence." Source Cited: http://www.inplainsite.org/html/calvins_catholic_connection.html, citing; **Alvin L. Baker**, *Berkouwer's Doctrine of Election: Balance or Imbalance?* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1981), p. 25.

- **Quote** - "The main features of Calvin's theology are found the writings of St. Augustine to such an extent that many theologians regard Calvinism as a more fully developed form of Augustinianism." Source Cited; Laurence M. Vance, *The Other Side of Calvinism* (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publication, re. ed., 1999) p. 38., citing; Gregg Singer, *JOHN CALVIN: His Roots and Fruits*, Atlanta; A Press, 1989, pg. vii.

- **Quote** - We likewise affirm that we are Augustinians in our doctrine of man and in our doctrine of salvation. This is because we believe that Augustine and his successors, including the Reformers, faithfully reflect the Bible's teaching regarding the total spiritual inability of fallen man to respond to God, God the Father's gracious unconditional election of a people to be saved, the design of the incarnate Son's atoning work as intended surely and certainly to secure the salvation of that people, the monergistic grace of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and the perseverance of the elect. Accordingly, we also reject all forms of synergism or Semi-Pelagianism in which man is accorded a cooperative role in his regeneration, e.g. Arminianism. We reject equally any softening of Augustinian soteriology.

Source Cited: <http://web.archive.org/web/20040311190511/www.allreform.co.uk/LonDec2000.htm>, Citing; *The London Declaration 2000 of the Alliance of Reformation Christians*.

- **Quote** - "The system of doctrine taught by Calvin is just the Augustinianism common to the whole body of the Reformers." Source Cited; Laurence M. Vance *The Other Side of Calvinism*, (Pensacola, FL: Vance Publication, re. ed., 1999) p. 38., Citing; **Benjamin B. Warfield**, *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. Samuel G Craig, p.49

- **Quote** - "The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach today, or else be false to my conscience and my God" (p. 167). Source Cited: <http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/spurgeon.htm>, Citing; *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon*, Curts & Jennings, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, 1898, Vol. I, p. 167.

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- [1] *Augustine*, <http://latter-rain.com/eccle/august.htm>
- [2] <http://www.gospeltruth.net/aug/sinsofaug.htm>
<http://www.nd.edu/~wwillia5/aug&plat.pdf>
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See also:

- Augustine: Confessions Newly translated and edited by Albert C. Outler, Ph.D., D.D.
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- Vision, Spring 2003, *Augustine's Poisoned Chalice*, <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/printerfriendly.aspx?id=714>
- The Gospel Truth, The Sins of Augustine by Chuck Fisher, <http://www.gospeltruth.net/aug/sinsofaug.htm>
- Apostolic Christian Church Info Center, Augustine's Legacy: Churches Full of Heresy, Parts 1 & 2
<http://www.apostolicchristianchurch.org/Pages/Library-Augustine%201.htm>
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- Augustine the African by James J. O'Donnell, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/twayne/aug1.html>
- Christianity Today, Theology for an Age of Terror, Timothy George 9/01/2006,
http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/article_print.html?id=38490
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- Phil Porvaznik, The Church Fathers on Purgatory, <http://www.bringyou.to/apologetics/a105.htm>
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Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531)

Zwingli was the leader of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland and was the founder of the Swiss Reformed churches. He was independent from Luther but arrived at similar conclusions. He was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church as a young adult. He began to question Roman Catholic Church dogma and rejected the practice of indulgences. Two years after Luther's 95 theses, in 1520, Zwingli renounced his papal pension, attacked the Catholic mercenary system which he at one time been a leader in, and convinced the Zurich canton (city) to oppose the Roman Catholic Church.

From 1522 on Zwingli reformed the Swiss church and the Christian faith. He declared the Bible alone as sole authority and rejected oral traditions. He removed the images and pictures out of the church, changed the liturgy, simplified the Mass and mostly silenced music in the churches. The mass stood more or less unaltered until the people were prepared to accept the Lord's Supper in 1525. He differed from the Reformers in teaching that there was no real presence in the bread and wine. His Bible translation was printed between 1524 and 1531.

Zurich was a theocracy where Zwingli was mayor, secretary, council and the commanding personality in all ecclesiastical and political affairs. He put the Bible in the hands of the people including the Anabaptists, which moved the Anabaptists to reject infant baptism and the joining of Zwingli's church. He was known for attacking the Anabaptists and other followers of Christ who maintained a nonresistant stance because he was in favor of marching against the Roman Catholic Church. Zwingli thus persecuted them mercilessly with imprisonment, torture, banishment, drowning and death. The war against the Anabaptists was more serious for Zwingli than that against Rome!

To compel the Roman Catholic cantons (cities) to accept new Protestant doctrines, Zwingli urged civil war and even drew plans of war against the Roman Catholic territories. Zwingli tried to rally Protestant cantons against the Roman Catholic Church cantons, but failed when they preferred economic sanctions instead. The Roman Catholic Church cantons allied with Charles V and marched against Zurich. Zwingli marched out with the first soldiers and was killed in 1531. He was succeeded by Heinrich Bullinger who never achieved the theocracy in Zurich that Zwingli had.

Zwingli disagreed with Luther over several points. Zwingli believed that God's covenants were spiritually binding contracts that when broken by man, released God from obligation to them. Luther called the sacraments a covenantal seal with baptism being a royal seal and secondarily a pledge of obedience. Zwingli viewed the sacraments as a covenant sign which remains in effect only if obedience was maintained. Zwingli taught that God's grace plus man's work was necessary for salvation thereby defining baptism as a covenant between God and man. It involved two parties, if one party didn't comply then the other party was released of all responsibilities detailed in the covenant. He was known for his belief that the Christian sacrament was like a military oath or pledge, in order to demonstrate an individual's willingness to listen and obey the written Word of God.

Zwingli also denied the real presence in the Eucharist whereas Luther believed that the body and blood of Christ are really present in the bread and the wine of this sacrament. Zwingli thought the sacrament to be purely symbolic and memorial in character.

Beliefs and Practices

- Salvation by grace and works
- Covenants depend on obedience
- Sacramentalism as a covenant
- Rejection of music - except a cappella, choral singing, vernacular psalms, no instruments

REFORMED

TEACHINGS

TULIP

Total Depravity

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement

Irresistible Grace

Perseverance of the Saints

Faith as a Gift

Regeneration Precedes Faith

Regeneration and the Preaching of the Gospel

Putting Believers under the Law

One Nature vs. Two Natures of the Believer

Vicarious Law Keeping

Atonement before the Cross

Five Solas of the Reformation

Baptismal Regeneration

Communion vs. the Lord's Supper

Total Depravity

Confusing Spiritual Death with Physical Death

The term *Total Depravity* creates confusion in the minds of many Christians. Can man in his fallen state believe the gospel? Is man's depravity such that he cannot consider the things of God? Can man's mind function normally in life but fail to comprehend the existence of God? Are sinners so dead in sins that he cannot reason through the gospel? Is Total Depravity synonymous with total inability? Questions such as these will be addressed in this chapter.

Can Sinners Believe?

What exactly is meant by the term, '*Total Depravity?*' Total Depravity is the theory that man is so dead in his sins he is completely unable to believe the gospel unless enabled by God to do so. That unless God intervenes with *irresistible grace* and *gifted faith*, which enables the sinner to believe, he will always choose against God and against the truth. Never mind that God requires men to place faith in Jesus Christ. Calvinists teach that man, in his fallen sinful condition, has no choice other than to obey his lusts and is in bondage to his will of continual sin. His conscience is dead, as well as his ability to spiritually reason and make spiritually moral decisions.

Various kinds of Calvinists analyze the subject of *Total Depravity* differently. For example, many four point Calvinists stop short in reasoning *Total Depravity* to its logical conclusion which is; 'If you're too dead to believe, then God has to quicken the elect. If God quickens or makes the elect alive, then this quickening must be regeneration. If regeneration is necessary before belief, then *Limited Atonement* must be true. Interestingly, many four pointers soften Calvinism and redefine it to accommodate what they think the Bible is teaching concerning man's deadness and God's election. They ostensibly separate themselves from the stricter Calvinist positions, not realizing they've already entered that system's way of thinking and interpreting the Bible. On the other hand, five point Calvinists fully admit, without apology, that a sinner must be regenerated by *irresistible grace* prior to belief because the sinner is totally dead and unable to understand spiritual things or come to faith without God's intervention. By *irresistible grace*, they mean the Spirit is indwelling them before belief.

Soft Calvinists or four point Calvinists instead say the sinner is totally depraved, unable to believe, and must be quickened by God's Spirit to hear and receive the gospel. But to them this quickening isn't regeneration before belief. They'll say that God has to do a 'work' in the chosen's heart before the elect person can believe. This work of the Spirit isn't fully defined and can't be backed up with scripture. To them, it's a thought that must be true in order to make sense of TULIP. Four pointers know a sinner isn't born again before belief so redefines this 'work of grace' differently than five point or strict Calvinists do. Hence, four point Calvinists are offended when labeled 'Calvinist' and often distance from the moniker. It's very difficult to explain they've stepped on to the Calvinist road. They believe they're different from true Calvinists because they reject limited atonement. Without their knowledge, they've already been taken captive by this Calvinistic philosophy.

While it is true man in his fallen condition is separated from God and is totally sinful, man is not so dead in his sins that he is unable to reason or make decisions. When the mind ceases to reason, the person is physically dead or in a vegetative state. When Calvinists speak of total depravity as if it's total inability, they are confusing spiritual death with physical death. Throughout the whole Bible, God is presenting principles of truth before sinful, fallen men and imploring them to choose life in Christ rather than death, which is the result of rejecting truth. He asks that man reason the truths of the Bible together with Him (Isaiah 1:19). God requires that man believe the truth of the gospel during their lifetime in order to be saved and equips them with everything they need to make that choice. God withholds from no man the necessary tools to make this choice. Men are fully able to make a personal choice for Christ and will be held accountable for the decision they make. If God doesn't fully equip man, how can He require from him the decision he is unable to make?

Here the importance of remembering the character of God is seen. Since God is a just Judge, He will judge men according to their deeds. God doesn't hold men responsible for the decisions He makes. They, not He, must choose salvation. Yet Calvinism insists that God will judge men for the decision that He makes. If God withholds the ability to believe, yet holds man accountable for that decision, then God would be an unjust Judge, which we know is incongruent with His character. Yet Calvinists assert this very thing...that God withholds from the non-elect what they need in order to believe, yet judges them in the end for the decision He made!

For instance, a parent will warn a child, perhaps several times, before discipline is dispensed. A parent would never discipline a child for what he is unable to do. It would be unjust. And the same is true for God. He fully warns man to make the one decision his eternity hangs on. God's warnings presuppose man is able to respond. Otherwise the warnings would be a charade indicating God wasn't forthright. His ways would then be, in a sense, perverted.

But let's say for a moment that man is too dead to choose and that man is so totally depraved that he is unable to reason. Yet God requires man to believe the gospel. Then how can that belief possibly happen? In that scenario, God would have to intervene in order for anyone to be saved. And if not all men believe, then God would have intervened by helping some, yet holds the rest accountable. God in essence would have been tinkering with the outcome. Some would be enabled to believe and others would not. Yet God holds all accountable. If He uses partiality to enable some, yet judges all, then He becomes in essence an unjust Judge. But scripture informs us that God is not a respecter of persons, meaning that He doesn't play favorites in His decisions (Acts 10:34).

It would be like another parent telling his two severely handicapped children to clean their rooms or else be punished. If the parent helped one clean their room and not the other, but judged both by the standard of whether their rooms were finally clean, this would be unfair judgment. The parent would have fixed the outcome. This is exactly what Calvinism claims God is doing by enabling some but not all. He has chosen to enable some but not all, and ignored others who are too dead in their sins to believe on their own.

No One Seeks God

The Calvinist defends *Total Depravity* because in his eyes the Bible seems to teach this. The primary proof text for this assumption comes from Romans 3:11.

[Romans 3:11 NIV](#)

"There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God."

This verse has virtually become the sole basis for Calvinism's doctrine of *Total Depravity*. Calvinists say this verse proves man is totally spiritually dead and unable to believe unless God intervenes with a special grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace bestows gifted faith to the elect. Does this verse really say that? The verse says that 'no one...understands' meaning that men choose not to understand, not that men are unable to understand. And while it says that 'no one seeks God', it doesn't say that men are unable to seek God. Romans 3:11 is quoted from Psalm 14:1-3 and Psalm 53:1-3 which will help shed light on this troubling passage.

[Romans 3:11-18 NASB](#)

⁹What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

¹⁰as it is written,

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

¹¹THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

¹²ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

- ¹³"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"
"THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
¹⁴"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";
¹⁵"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
¹⁶DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
¹⁷AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."
¹⁸"THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

Psalm 14:1-3 NASB *Emphasis added*

- ¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.
²The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men
To see if there are any who understand,
Who seek after God.
³They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalm 53:1-3 NASB *Emphasis added*

- ¹The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"
They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;
There is no one who does good.
²God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men
To see if there is anyone who understands,
Who seeks after God.
³Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.

Hebrews 11:6 NASB

- ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

In breaking these verses down, we see that God tells us *the fool* says, 'There is no God.' If a person says there is no God, we know there is no way for that person to be saved because he denies God's existence right out of the gate. Hebrews 11:6 says that a person must believe that '...He is.' But in verse Psalm 14:2, God is looking to see if any understand or seek God. He's looking for those who are looking for Him. And while the passage says that 'all have turned aside and no one does good,' it doesn't say it's impossible for man to turn to God. And when the verse says that 'they are all corrupt,' we agree that all men are sinners. Being corrupt doesn't mean one can't believe. There are too many passages in scripture telling man that he must believe in order to be saved. We know that God promises that any who look for Him with all their heart will find Him (Deuteronomy 4:29, 1 Chronicles 28:9, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 7:7-8, Luke 11:9-10). While it is true that all men have turned aside, are corrupt, and don't do the good they should, it is only the fool (atheist) or those not seeking God who can't come to faith. This explanation of these verses preserves the character of God who has given men the choice to seek and find Him and be saved.

These above verses make clear that Romans 3:11 means those who don't seek or understand are the fools. It can't apply to all men. However, it is interesting that Calvinists will conveniently claim 'all' doesn't mean 'all', and 'world' doesn't mean 'all men' when it suits their position. Yet in this case they claim, 'no one' must mean 'not one single person.' It appears expedient for them to redefine terms all inclusively in one argument but not in another. More to the point, how would we balance this one single verse against other verses that implore men to come to God?

Isaiah 1:18 NASB

- ¹⁸"Come now, and let us reason together,"
Says the LORD,
"Though your sins are as scarlet,

They will be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They will be like wool.

John 20:31 NASB

³¹but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Romans 10:14 NASB

¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

1 John 3:23 NASB

²³This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

Calvinism says that man is totally depraved and unable to choose. It claims man is unable to choose when actually man is unwilling to choose. It says total depravity really means total inability. Reading this text through the lens of election supports a reformed view of the Bible. Reading the text through the lens of God's character preserves man's choice to believe.

Monergism vs. Synergism

Another issue couched within the *Total Depravity* debate is the Reformed idea of '*monergism*.' Monergism is a term with roots that mean '*single energy or work*.' Monergism is used to convey the idea that God acts independently in the work of regeneration, apart from human choice. This word is commonly used in Protestant circles to emphasize the Calvinistic belief that God alone does all the work in salvation and that man contributes nothing to salvation. It is set against '*synergism*' whose roots mean '*combined energy or work*.' This term is used by Calvinists to accuse anyone who personally believes the gospel from their heart of contributing to or '*working*' for their salvation. At the heart of this debate is the question of whether faith that believes is gifted from the Holy Spirit or whether faith is a response from the human heart. The Calvinist argues that the sinner is totally depraved, spiritually dead and unable to believe. Therefore, they declare God must intervene making salvation all of God from start to finish. If a person believes from their heart or apart from the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, then that person isn't considered saved because human '*work*' was added to faith. They agree that faith brings justification, but the faith in view must be gifted faith, otherwise it's considered a work. Calvinists would very much agree with the verse below, but explain it in Reformed terms;

Romans 3:28 NASB

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law

We fully agree that salvation is all of God. No man can cause himself to be born again. It is God's grace that saves, but in order for that salvation to be enacted by God, the sinner has to personally believe. Jesus Himself encouraged this type of '*work*' in John 6:29.

John 6:29 NASB

²⁸Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

Therefore, the accusation that personal faith is an unacceptable work for salvation is refuted by our Lord Himself. This nullifies the attack against synergism, which is their term devised to impugn personal belief.

Another aspect of monergism that needs to be considered is the subject of predestination. Predestination is the belief that God has predetermined everything that comes to pass. If that is so, then man can't have free will to decide anything in life. Life becomes a cosmic drama whose script has been written before time began. God must determine everything that happens, including faith.

Another idiom, 'God alone is sovereign' is used to convey the Calvinistic message that God alone initiates and completes all phases of salvation without any involvement of men.

Confusing Physical Death with Spiritual Death

Calvinists point to the Biblical account of Jesus raising Lazarus from physical death to illustrate His sovereign work in raising spiritually dead men to spiritual life. They conclude this story is proof positive that Jesus raises dead men, who can't hear, think or respond to anything other than His voice. They reason that if a person is spiritually dead, then they can't spiritually respond. This analogy suggests a person has to be brought to new life, or born again, before they can respond in belief to the gospel. The conclusion is made that only the power of God can effectually *call* a person up from the spiritual death of total inability. This special call is able to resurrect the elect in new life which can hear, think and respond to the gospel.

Man spiritually died when sin entered the world through Adam. Man's spiritual deadness was a separation from God rather than an inability to consider the existence of God. God invites sinners to reason with Him over the truth of the gospel. At physical death, rather than spiritual death, the mind is unable to reason.

On one level, it is absolutely true that Jesus raises sinners who are dead in their sins to new life. But this doesn't happen *before* hearing the gospel in order to equip them to believe; new life happens *after* they believe the gospel. And Lazarus was raised to physical life, not spiritual life. The scripture implies he was already a believer. Believers are raised physically when they get their new, incorruptible bodies at the rapture. Jesus raised Lazarus from death to prove He was the long expected Messiah, the Son of God, who had power over death. The Jews believed that the Messiah would be able to do three Messianic miracles; curing leprosy, giving sight to a person born blind and raising a person from death. Jesus performed all three. He was validating that He indeed was Messiah.

What Did Calvin Teach?

The Calvinist will also defend *Total Depravity* because this doctrine was taught by John Calvin himself and is an integral part of Covenant theology. Calvinism's TULIP model is the gospel of Reformed theology. The TULIP model wasn't fully developed by Calvin but was codified by the outcome of the Remonstrance, which was a defense of Calvin's doctrines by his followers against the Arminians. Following the death of Arminius (1560-1609), his followers set forth a Remonstrance (published in 1610) in five articles formulating their points of departure from the stricter Calvinism of the Belgic Confession. The Canons of Dort, or Canons of Dordrecht, formally titled '*The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands*,' is the judgment of the National Synod held in the Dutch city of Dordrecht in 1618 - 1619. The Canons were not intended to be a comprehensive explanation of Reformed doctrine, but only an exposition on the five points of doctrine in dispute. These Canons set forth what is often referred to as the Five Points of Calvinism. The Canons are the judgment of the Synod against this Remonstrance.

So the question becomes, where did Calvin learn about the doctrine of *Total Depravity*? The answer is; Augustine. Calvin was wholly devoted to the teachings of Augustine. Remembering that the reformers wanted to reform the Catholic Church, they went back to one of the fathers of the Catholic Church, Augustine. It is quite likely that Augustine was influenced toward *Total Depravity* by the Manichaeans and Platonists of his day. The idea of Gnostic dualism was found in Manichaeism and also in Platonism where only the gods are totally good and men are totally bad. The Gnostics considered anything of the flesh totally corrupted. While many Calvinists would balk at the idea, Calvinism smacks of a sophisticated form of ancient Gnostic dualism. Man is totally depraved while the gods are totally good. The Reformed idiom, 'God alone is good' would be used to herald this belief. While we wholeheartedly agree that God is totally holy and perfect and that nothing good resides in man's flesh, this doesn't mean that man has no ability in his fallen state to choose to

believe. God demonstrates His goodness by equipping man to make a choice to believe or reject the truth of the gospel. God demonstrates His justice for condemning men who willfully choose to reject Jesus Christ and His work on the cross for salvation.

Verses Used to Support Total Depravity Explained

John 1:12-13 NIV

¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Calvinists use this verse to prove that man is so depraved that God has to regenerate them, making them born of God before being able to believe the gospel. While it is true that man can't regenerate himself, they claim that man's belief has no part in prompting God's regeneration. Man is said to be too dead to believe on his own.

John 3:5 NKJV

³Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

They claim the sinner must be born again before he can even perceive the things of the kingdom of God, meaning they must be born again or regenerated before understanding the gospel or who God is.

John 5:21 NIV

²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

They say God is pleased to give life to the elect, the ones He has chosen in eternity past, before hearing or responding to the gospel. They say that this life is given to whom the Son pleases. They say the Son is pleased to give regenerating life to the elect before belief. But the Bible teaches that God is pleased to give life to the one who believes. If the sinner, who is dead in sin, believes the gospel, then Jesus is pleased to give resurrection life to that believer. He is then elect.

John 6:44-45 NIV

⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

They say that because man is too dead in sins to believe, the Father has to draw men if any men are to believe at all. But Jesus said He will draw all men to Himself when He was lifted up on the cross.

John 6:63-65 NIV

⁶³"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.
⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. ⁶⁵He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

They say if only the Spirit counts, then belief from the flesh, which includes belief from the heart, doesn't count for salvation. A person has to be chosen in eternity past in order to be gifted with the grace to believe. Personal choice, they say, could be a false conversion. Another point made with this verse is no one can come to Jesus apart from the enabling of the Father. Notice that Jesus says that the words He was speaking were spirit and life. These words, which are from the Father and spoken by Jesus, are the means by which the Father is drawing all men! He is enabling all who truly hear, but it is the listener who has the choice to believe or reject these life giving words! Romans 10:14-18 describes how someone calls on the Lord...they have to believe the good news carried by preachers. And John 12:32 says that when Jesus is lifted up from the earth, He will draw all men to Himself. Hence, the Father enables everyone, but man does the choosing in his heart.

1 Corinthians 1:30 NIV

³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption

They say the elect are in Christ because God has decided to elect some and not others. They say that the elect have been placed in Christ before belief because the atonement has been applied before belief. Hence, they say, it is because of God's intervention in the life of the elect,

that they are spiritually raised before belief. It is important to note no man can place himself in Christ. Man can believe, but it is the Spirit that places the believer in Christ because God has promised to do so. Christ in us, the body of Christ, is one of the mysteries of the Bible. But the Calvinist would say that the mystery is election.

[1 Corinthians 2:14](#) NIV

¹⁴The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

They say those without the Spirit will reject the truths of God. Those without the Spirit are the non elect. This verse is actually teaching that the one who hasn't believed the gospel can't accept things beyond the gospel. This doesn't mean that the gospel can't be understood by sinful man, but rather that the deeper truths of God can't be understood without the Spirit. Even Jesus mentions in [John 3:12](#) "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" The unbeliever is responsible to understand the earthly death, burial and resurrection of Jesus before God confides heavenly things in him. Ps 25:14

[Ephesians 2:1](#) NIV

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

They claim men are too dead in sins to believe at all! They say that men need the indwelling Spirit of God, before belief, in order to understand the gospel. They claim that the Spirit in the elect quickens them to spiritual life and gives gifted faith to believe in Christ. While it is true that we are dead in our trespasses and sin, this doesn't mean that we can't choose to believe. The Bible is replete with verses where God is telling all men everywhere to repent. God is telling man that he must believe. Repenting is a change of mind toward Jesus and the things of God.

[Ephesians 2:4](#) NIV

⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

They claim we were made alive in Christ while we were dead in sins without our awareness that this event took place. They say that this quickening happened at conception or baptism. They say that the being made alive together with Christ is the reality of the blood of Christ being applied only to the elect before they even hear the gospel. This means the elect are spiritually clean before hearing the gospel. However this verse says we were made alive with Christ when we were filthy sinners, not when we were already clean.

[Ephesians 2:8-9](#) NIV

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not for works, so that no one can boast.

They rightly say that men are saved by faith. However 'faith' is redefined as being the gift of God, rather than salvation being the gift of God. So if faith is the gift, then this gift must be sought to enable belief. Faith then becomes 'faith in gifted faith' rather than 'faith in the cross.' This will be discussed in more detail in the section titled, [Faith As A Gift](#).

[Philippians 1:29](#) NIV

²⁹For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,

*They say this verse means faith is gifted because the person is too dead in sins to believe without it. Therefore they read this verse to say that it has been granted to the elect to believe the gospel. But in context, this verse refers to the walk of faith after belief. It has been granted to believers to walk after Christ by His Spirit. It has been granted to believers to trust on Christ, to believe on Christ, to continue to place faith in Christ. Notice the whole passage: (Php 1:27-30)
²⁷Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ²⁸without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

[Philippians 1:6](#) NIV

⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

They claim the good work of God is initiating the work of salvation by raising the person to new life before belief. And if He has done this, then the elect will be enabled to live a life of faith and obedience after being raised to new life because the Spirit in him does this work as well. The total depravity of the flesh cannot do anything. And if God has predestined everything that happens, then your obedience is because of God too. However, here the Bible teaches the believer who has placed faith in Christ, knows he's found the truth, listens to the Spirit who has taken up residency in him and will willingly lays his life down so that Christ might live through him.

Colossians 2:13 NIV

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

They claim this verse clearly teaches that God regenerated our depraved flesh by His will alone apart from believing faith. Man is said to be too dead to believe. They place this quickening at conception or baptism rather than at belief. Since they believe sinful flesh can't believe, they claim that God has to do the regenerating apart from man's involvement. They say that we are born again and forgiven before belief. This verse is teaching that the sinner is made alive with Christ. The Bible teaches that the sinner is made alive at belief, Acts 16:31. So the sinner is dead before belief, not alive. But Calvinism claims the elect are alive before belief!

1 Peter 1:3 NIV

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The Calvinists say that this verse proves that God has mercifully chosen some to be saved out of the vast number of lost humanity. His mercy is in choosing some. He is under no obligation to choose or enable all. Therefore, He must spiritually resurrect the totally depraved sinner from his condition of deadness. Once he is born again, he can then choose to place faith in Christ. In their view, this protects salvation as being 'all of God, and none of man.' But the mercy that God has promised to all believers is causing them to be born again to a living hope. Believers cannot possibly regenerate themselves! Only God can do that and He does so in response to His promises. But He implores sinful man to believe so that He can pour His mercy out on them. Once born again, the hope of salvation is never truly lost.

Quotes

- **Quote** - "A man is like a pillar of salt, he's like Lot's wife." "He's like a log, he's like a stone, he's like a lifeless statue which has neither eyes, nor ears, nor mouth, neither senses or heart unless he is enlightened, converted and regenerated by the Holy Spirit." Source Cited: Grace To You, John MacArthur, <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Print/transcripts/3270>, *The Doctrine of Total Inability*, (90-276A) quoting; **Martin Luther**, <http://www.gty.org/resources.php?section=transcripts&aid=233754>,

- **Quote** -...Our nature is not only utterly devoid of goodness, but so prolific in all kinds of evil, that it can never be idle. Those who term it concupiscence use a word not very inappropriate, provided it were added, (this, however, many will by no means concede), that everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, is defiled and pervaded with this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, that the whole man is in himself nothing else but concupiscence. Source Cited: <http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111cal.html>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 2, chap. 1, sec. 8 Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., [reprinted] 1993), 218.

- **Quote** - Unregenerate man is fully capable of understanding the facts of the gospel: he is simply incapable, due to his corruption and enmity, to submit himself to that gospel.... Source Cited: <http://vintage.aomin.org/DHOpenLetter.html>, citing; **James White**, *The Potter's Freedom*, (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), Pg. 101.

- **Quote** - Total Depravity is a very misleading term. The concept of Total Depravity is often confused with the idea of utter depravity... Total Depravity is not utter depravity. Utter depravity would mean that we are as sinful as we can possibly be. We know that is not the case. No matter how much each of us has sinned, we are able to think of worse sins that we could have committed. Even Adolf Hitler refrained from murdering his mother. Source Cited: <http://www.calvinistchurch.com/>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 103-104.

- **Quote** - Calvinism assumes that without the intervention (i.e., regeneration) of God no one will ever want Christ. Left to themselves (i.e., unelected, unregenerate, etc.), no one will ever choose Christ. Source Cited; George Bryson, *The Five Points of Calvinism Weighed and Found Wanting*, , http://evangelicalarminians.org/files/Bryson.%20THE%20FIVE%20POINTS%20OF%20CALVINISM_%20WEIGHED%20AND%20FOUND%20WANTING.pdf, Word For Today, Costa Mesa, pg. 25 Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 34.
- **Quote** - "A doctrine of total depravity that excludes the possibility of faith must also exclude the possibilities of 'hearing the Word,' 'giving serious application to divine truth,' and 'praying for the Holy Spirit for conviction and regeneration.' *The extreme Calvinist deals with a rather lively spiritual corpse after all.*" **Roy L. Aldrich's** article *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1965, *The Gift of God*, pages 248–253. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger03.htm>,
- **Quote** - When Calvin and the fathers of Dort insisted that depravity was total, they knew what words mean. And they knew that "total" means precisely that. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, citing; **H. Hanko and H. C. Hoeksema and J. Van Baren**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg.18.
- **Quote** - This doctrine of Total Inability... does not mean that all men are equally bad, nor that any man is as bad as he could be, nor that anyone is entirely destitute of virtue... His corruption is extensive but not necessarily intensive. Source Cited: http://www.the-highway.com/depravity_Boettner.html, **Lorraine Boettner**, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 61.
- **Quote** - Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not - indeed he cannot - choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ - it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation - it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God. Source Cited: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/arminianism.html>, Citing; **David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg. 16.
- **Quote** - As a result of Adam's transgression, men are born in sin and by nature are spiritually dead; therefore, if they are to become God's children and enter His Kingdom, they must be born anew of the Spirit. **David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg. 25. http://books.google.com/books?id=hMomllivjPEC&pg=PA25&lpg=PA25&dq=As+a+result+of+Adam's+transgression,+men+are+born+in+sin+and+by+nature+are+spiritually+dead%3B&source=web&ots=iyxQ2p0zqK&sig=01GtUtvag0cs1tYS_XgRrF893P0&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=res ult#PPA25,M1
- **Quote** - Fallen man is still free to choose what he desires, but because his desires are only wicked he lacks the moral ability to come to Christ. As long as he remains... unregenerate, he will never choose Christ. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 75.
- **Quote** - Man left in his spiritually dead state is unable of himself to repent, to believe the gospel, or come to Christ. He has no power within himself to change his own nature or to prepare himself for salvation. <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=6>
- **Quote** - If it is taught that man has the moral ability to come to Christ on his own and he takes the first step, then, not only is the scriptural teaching concerning man's sin denied, but the grace of God in salvation is diminished and a false view of salvation is held. <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=23>

Unconditional Election

Predestining who goes to heaven and hell

Christians and scholars have debated over the subject of election for hundreds of years. It has caused thankfulness to soar for some and untold despair to magnify for others. The subject of election is a confusing one which some Christians never fully wrestle with. They usually stop short of resolving the *supposed* contradictions between what they know to be true about God's character and what they are told they are reading in their Bible. Many assume that the word '*election*,' found numerous times in the scriptures, means God has chosen or elected some to be saved apart from the condition of faith in the gospel. Instead, they've been taught election means God has elected some to salvation apart from the condition of faith. Many Christians reason that since God is good and His Word is true, then any apparent contradiction about election indicates human limitations to understanding. Since God's ways are not man's ways, His will is beyond human comprehension. This dilemma is generally dismissed as 'mystery' which will be resolved in heaven. The saying, "Whosoever will, may come; yet chosen from before the foundations of the world" is the common expression used to explain away this supposed paradox. While both of these phrases are true, one camp starts with the foreknowledge of God while the other starts with the predetermined choice of God.

In the Reformed system of theology, *Unconditional Election* means God chose some men to be saved before meeting the condition of faith in the gospel. *Unconditional Election* means that God chose some men, but not all, to be saved. Only some men will be chosen for heaven, effectively consigning the rest to the lake of fire. Only those predestined and elected will be enabled to respond to the gospel by means of *Irresistible Grace*. It is reasoned that mankind is too dead in sins to choose to believe the gospel; therefore the Holy Spirit must, through irresistible grace, grant faith to the elect for them to believe. Irresistible grace not only brings the gift of faith, but it also applies the blood of Christ before faith so that the elect are said to be born again before belief. *Irresistible Grace* brings both regeneration and gifted faith. Grace to apply the blood of Christ before belief and faith employed at belief for justification. [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270](#).

The Reformed justify their doctrine of election by claiming that inside the Godhead, an inter-Trinitarian covenant was made before time began called the 'Covenant of Redemption.' In this covenant, which cannot be found in the Bible but is instead deduced by intellectual and spiritualized reasoning, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit made a covenant within the Trinity before the foundations of the world. This covenant is called the 'Covenant of Redemption' and determined that God would create and choose an elect people for Himself, permit the fall of man, provide atonement for and redeem the elect only. God the Son would die an atoning death for this special elect people and live a perfect life to give them His perfect law-keeping righteousness. God the Holy Spirit would give the elect *Irresistible Grace* that would apply the work of the cross and save them before hearing the gospel, give faith as a gift to enable a response to the gospel, justify them by the earthly law-keeping righteousness of Christ, and enable perseverance in good works and obedience throughout the elect's life. This quick overview of the Reformed gospel is predicated upon this Covenant of Redemption [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#), [Timeline of Covenants pg. 272](#). The Covenant of Redemption, not found in the Bible with chapter and verse, is one of three pre-time covenants which form the basis of Covenant Theology.

Confusion occurs when students of the Bible read scriptures that *seem* to teach God that predestines faith. Misunderstanding arises with verses which *seem* to say man can't come to God unless uniquely and specially drawn....verses such *Romans 9:13*, "*Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED"* are used to imply God has chosen Jacob but not Esau. The list goes on endlessly it seems. Upon cursory observation or when studied out of context, many of these verses do indeed seem to suggest that God chooses some, but not all. Add to the mix the high view most Christians have of the scriptures and the momentum for the deception of Calvinism is ready to be set in motion. The entry point for Calvinism is almost always a confused understanding of election.

Election

The Biblical view of election is what's called Conditional Election. The Bible teaches God chooses or elects men who meet the condition of faith in the gospel. Election is conditioned upon belief. Men are elected based on the foreknowledge God (1 Peter 1:1-2). All men are required to obey this command in order to be saved. "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son," 1 John 3:23a. God's righteous character doesn't command man to do what he is unable to do. All men are expected to consider the existence of God from creation. From creation all men can conclude that God exists. And for those who believe that God is Creator, He is able to bring whatever needed biblical revelation they require to know His Son, Jesus Christ. No one can be saved apart from believing in the Son as Lord and Savior. We clearly know that Jesus is the narrow gate that all must pass through for there is salvation in no one else.

Romans 1:19-20 NIV

¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

John 8:24 NASB

²⁴Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.

1 Peter 1:1-2 NASB

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

From the vantage point of earthly time, men who believe the gospel are then elected to salvation. But from the vantage point of eternity, God elects the believer based on His foreknowledge. God knows everything before it happens. So election for believers is in time (whosoever may come) and election by God happens from eternity (chosen from before the foundations of the world).

Think about the politician whom the public elects. The public doesn't arbitrarily choose a candidate but chooses and elects a candidate based on what is known about him. The word election is in voting because information is disclosed that makes the candidate desirable. God also elects believers to salvation based on what He knows about them. As 1 Peter 1:1-2 says, God elects based on foreknowledge. Foreknowledge simply means to know before, although the Calvinist will redefine the word foreknowledge as foreordained. This reinterpreted definition supports his theology. God, in His omniscience, sees the future perfectly. Therefore, He knows who will exercise faith and believe that Jesus is God who died for mankind's sins. This is the faith that God chooses to save. The believing person has met the condition for election, which is why the correct view is called 'Conditional Election' while the opposing view is called 'Unconditional Election.' For the Calvinist, *Unconditional Election* is election not conditioned on belief, but rather on being elected.

As an added note of clarification for those interested, there appear to be four types of election; (1) double predestination (Hyper Calvinism), (2) single predestination (Strict Calvinism and Moderate Calvinism. Moderate Calvinism is also called 4 point Calvinism), (3) election based on foreknowledge (Biblical election), and (4) election where a person believes apart from God's foreknowledge (the heresy of Open Theism where God can't know the future). See the chart titled, [TULIP Comparison Chart pg. 274](#) for more clarification.

Foreknowledge

The word 'foreknowledge' holds different meanings for those inside of Christendom. Some say that God sees the future, others say He determines the future and still others say He intimately knew the future. The correct view recognizes that since God knows the future, He knows who will believe and who will reject the gospel. This view of foreknowledge preserves an earnest opportunity for man to believe.

While the subject of determining the future will be discussed in the heading 'Sovereignty' below, the Calvinist more commonly explains foreknowledge as the intimacy of a husband knowing his wife. They point to Genesis 4:1a, which says, *'...Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived'* to prove the word foreknowledge must be the intimate foreknowing of God toward the elect. In this view of foreknowledge, much more than merely prior knowledge is involved.

While we would agree God thoroughly knows the details of life omnisciently, we hesitate to say He knows them intimately by relationship. Adam knowing Eve implies a conjugal joining of two fleshs in a physical marriage covenant. The analogy breaks down when applied to God intimately foreknowing man. First, there is no prior covenant between God and man that joins man to God before belief. Also, man did not physically pre-exist in order for Adam and Eve to be used as a type of intimacy that occurred with God foreknowing the elect. Rather, intimacy between God and man occurs after belief, not before. Also consider that if a pre-time covenant existed, as in the Covenant of Redemption, blood would have to be present. Covenant is always cut and ratified by the shedding of blood. There was no shedding of blood in the Trinity for '*cutting*' a pre-time Covenant of Redemption because the members of the Godhead had no blood. Only when Jesus incarnated, for the purpose of becoming a sin sacrifice for the New Covenant, did any member of the Trinity possess blood.

However, the Adam and Eve analogy of intimacy does support a Covenant view of theology. The Reformed strongly hold to a Covenant of Redemption because it supports their claim that this is when the elect were chosen. And since they believe that man is regenerated before belief, they would say an intimacy between God and man did exist, although man would be unaware of it until gospel presentation or Bible reading (which some reformed men believe is sufficient for quickening).

Consider Jeremiah 1:5 which is considered by many Calvinists to be the pars excel lance verse that proves their view of *Unconditional Election*. Let's look carefully at this verse.

Jeremiah 1:5 NIV

⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, Before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

If this verse were put in order of events, it would look like this:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,

1. Knew
2. Formed

Before you were born I set you apart;

3. Set Apart
4. Born

I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

5. Appointed

This view of election preserves the attributes of God by insisting that God's foreknowledge of man's belief is the basis for election. In this scenario man is totally free to choose, while God in His foreknowledge is totally sovereign. Salvation cannot be unconditionally based on predetermining to elect some and reprobating others. This causes God's attributes to be out of balance, makes Him unloving toward all men, destroying assurance of salvation, and making God unjust by condemning man for what he is unable to do.

The Greek

Looking at the Greek words for election, foreknowledge and predestine, we see more clearly what the Bible is teaching. These are definitions are taken from Nelson's, The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, 1995.^[1]

Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is the Greek word **#4268** Proginosis or **#4267** Proginosko

#4268 - Proginosis - forethought, foreknowledge

Derived from **#4207**

#4207 - Porrhothen - advance, from far or at a distance, afar off.

Derived from **#4206**

#4206 - Porrho - forwards, at a distance far, a great way off

Derived from **#4253**

#4253 - Pro - in front of prior to, above, ago, before, or ever

#4267 - Proginosko - to know beforehand, to foreknow

Derived from **#1097** and **#4253**,

#1097 - Ginosko - to know, to allow, to be aware of, to feel, to know,
to perceive, to be resolved, can speak, be sure, understand

#4253 - Pro - in front of, above, ago. before, prior

*We learn from the Greek words for 'foreknowledge' that these merely mean knowing something ahead of time. They don't imply any determinative action.

Election

Election in the NT almost always **#1588** Eklektos or **#1589** Ekloge

#1588 - Eklektos - select, chosen, elect, favorite

Derived from **#1586**

#1586 - Eklegomai -make choice, choose out, chosen

Derived from **#1537** and **#3004**

#1537 - Ek - denotes motion, because of, by reason
(so it would be the picking out of for a reason)

#3004 - Lego - to lay forth or relate, by implication to ask,
bid, call, boast, describe, give out, name,
put forth, say, shew, speak, tell, utter.

#1589 - Ekloge - selection, chosen, election

Election is also translated from the Greek word:

#4899 - Suneklektos - to drive together, exhort, to set at one again

*We learn from these Greek words, that 'election' is an action to choose, take and relate together whatever it is that is chosen.

Predestination

Predestination is the Greek word Proorizo

#4309 - Proorizo - to limit in advance, ordain, determine before

Derived from **#4253** and **#3708**

#4253 - Pro - a primary prep.; 'fore', in front of, prior (fig. superior) to: -- above,
ago, before, or ever, advance, from far or at a distance, afar off.

#3708 - Horao - to stare at, discern clearly (physically or mentally); to attend to;
experience; appear, behold, perceive, see, take heed.

* We learn from the Greek words for 'predestination' that God has beforehand limited that which He clearly discerns or beholds in advance.

So, if these three words are understood together, we understand that God in His foreknowledge has foreseen who will believe. He has chosen these foreknown believers (1 Peter 1:2) to be elected and related together in one body, the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30). These elect, who make up the body of Christ, are predestined to be conformed into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

The Calvinists give an alternative explanation for these three words. They say that God has intimately foreknown and chosen those He wants to save without regard for belief. Additionally, He has elected and predetermined those chosen to be saved, while those not chosen are reprobated (rejected).

Comparing Foreknowledge, Election and Predestination

	<u>Calvinist Explanation</u>	<u>Biblical Explanation</u>
<u>Foreknowledge</u>	God knows all things in His omniscience. He also intimately foreknows the elect like Adam knew Eve.	God knows all things in His omniscience and therefore knows who will believe of their own choice.
<u>Election</u>	God decides, according to His own good pleasure, who will be saved and who will be reprobated. Salvation is not conditioned on faith, but on election.	God chooses or elects those who believe the gospel. Believers are elected to salvation. Unbelievers will not be elected or saved because they choose not to believe.
<u>Predestination</u>	"The doctrine that all events have been determined by God. John Calvin interpreted predestination to mean that God willed eternal damnation for some people and salvation for others." [2]	God predestines that believers in Christ Jesus are to be conformed to Christ's image (Ro 8:29) and are to receive an inheritance in Him (Eph 1:11).

Regeneration before Belief

When is the sinner regenerated, otherwise known as being born again? The Bible teaches the sinner who hears the gospel is born again when believes, not before he believes. When the sinner believes, then he is justified, saved, and regenerated. God, who is outside of time, knows all of man's choices from eternity past. God in His omniscience and foreknowledge sees all of time and history at once, sees when belief occurs, and chooses the man who will believe by faith. This is consistent with 1 Peter 1:1-2 which says that God elects according to foreknowledge. God is able to see men in all stages of life; birth, childhood, adulthood. He knows precisely when a person will believe by faith. God doesn't predetermine faith, but pre-knows it.

Because the Reformed believe in *Total Depravity*, they say that a man must be born again, or regenerated, in order to believe at all. They say that the person who is to be saved must be chosen, born again and enabled with the gracious gift of faith to believe the gospel when it's presented. No one, they say, can believe unless these things have been accomplished in them by the Spirit through *Irresistible Grace* before hearing the gospel. This *Irresistible Grace* from the Spirit that regenerates the elect and gifts them with the ability to believe by faith.

Reprobation

The word reprobate indicates, "A person rejected by God and beyond hope of salvation, to disapprove of, to condemn, or censure and to exclude from the number of the elect or to exclude from salvation." The hyper Calvinist believes in a kind of reprobation which is commonly known as double predestination. See [TULIP Comparison Chart pg. 274](#). The hyper Calvinist believes God deliberately choose to save some and deliberately choose to exclude others from salvation, not based on anything in the person, but based solely on God's divine and sovereign will. The Calvinist loses the definition of the word 'will' to accommodate more than one meaning for God's will.

Calvinists talk about two wills of God; a determinative will and a will of desire. When they talk about "the will of God," they are referring to either of these two wills. They'll say that God desires all men to be saved in His will of desire, but in His determinative will He only saves some. God's 'will' has been effectively split in two and thereby rendered inconsistent. Conveniently they say God's will is to save all men while concurrently believing His will is not to save all men. This play on words ostensibly makes *Unconditional Election* plausible. However, this double talk doesn't keep the character of God in tact. His attributes of love, justice, impartiality and sovereignty in this scenario are not working together in balance. Therefore the 'god' of reprobation isn't the God of the Bible because this 'god' has a different character than the God of the Bible.

Strict and Moderate Calvinists realize God's character is impugned in double predestination and so explain election in slightly different terms. They say that God elects some, not based on anything in them (meaning not based in foreknowing personal faith), but chooses to unconditionally elect some leaving the non-elect to reap the consequences of their own decision. Remembering that all Calvinists consider total depravity to be total inability, any man left to his own choice means he will always choose against God and reap condemnation.

For the strict or moderate Calvinist to say God chooses some and leaves the rest to their own decision is the same as saying God is choosing some for heaven and the rest will end up in hell by their own depraved choice. They portray God as unconcerned with any but the elect. The end result of their single predestination is the same as hyper Calvinism's double predestination, but the wording of their position affords cover for their view to hide behind. In other words, God looks better in the Strict or Moderate Calvinist positions than in the hyper Calvinist position. These are merely word games, providing a fig leaf covering for shamefully distorting the character of God.

To refute this charge leveled against the character of God, consider God's treatment of Cain when Cain was undeserving of God's mercy. Cain brought God a bloodless sacrifice to God (Gen 4). God rejected the sacrifice, but not Cain. In fact, He encourages Cain to bring the right sacrifice so that He will be accepted! God is contending with Cain for his good. God hasn't rejected Cain. Rather it is Cain's who has rejected God. This account of the mercy of God disproves Calvinism's claim that God is unconcerned with the non-elect. God earnestly pursues the unbeliever in love for the sake of saving him from his sin. For God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 33:11) and He isn't willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). From these verses we learn that it is not God's will to reprobate anyone to destruction.

Sovereignty

The Bible clearly teaches that God is the Sovereign over the universe. He speaks creation into existence, is completely omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. God is clearly in control of the events of the universe. He demonstrates His sovereignty by ordering the course of the universe, by demonstrating power over the forces of evil, by His resurrection power of life over death, by executing judgment, and by foretelling and fulfilling prophecy. God is clearly in control indicating He is indeed sovereign.

However, sovereignty is interpreted differently by the Calvinist and Dispensationalist. In Calvinism, God has planned every single event in the universe to the minutest detail. As R. C. Sproul has been said,

*"If there is one maverick molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign.
And if God is not sovereign, He is not God."*^[3]

In the Reformed view, God has predetermined every move of every particle and every action of every human being throughout time. History is described as a play which God has sovereignly and divinely foreordained which man is acting out. What He has willed is exactly what happens. God brings the evil and the good. This view of sovereignty is explained as a divine mystery in God's determinative will for His unknowable divine purposes. He is said to work everything together for His good purposes. When He foreordains some to be saved and others to be passed over, Calvinists direct attention away from the horror of this thought to thankfulness that God would even save some. To be sure, the elect can be thankful but how can we reconcile this with the character of God in the Bible? God loves and desires all men to come to truth. The Bible doesn't say the elect are to be thankful they were chosen while others were not. How can we marvel at the goodness of God in this?

The outworking of this view of sovereignty idolizes the person of God in a surprising way. Not that this is done deliberately, but consider that when His name is used, a different character has been assigned to it. He is no longer a loving, personal and responsive God because everything has been predetermined. The Christian under this thinking worships God's holiness and trusts Him His predestined plan trying to please Him in obedience, but secretly fears he can do nothing to change God's mind about his circumstances. God becomes as impersonal and cold as an idol that is prayed to with no hope of response. If God is sovereign, then he sovereignly brought the difficult circumstances about in the first place. What's the point of praying and hoping for a different result if God has predetermined everything? Where's the relationship in that? A strange fatalism begins to emerge that plagues the Calvinist, though he rarely admits it. He would not dare to question the purposes of God. In the Calvinist scheme, men are pawns in the plan of life and therefore it is secretly feared by those under its control, that nothing he thinks or feels matters.

The Bible, on the other hand, does teach that God is sovereign. He is sovereign in a personal, loving and responsive way toward man. He sovereignly works all things together for the good of those who love Him yet has the sovereign power to condemn the unbeliever to the Lake of Fire. His warnings are earnest and true. While God does know everything, He hasn't foreordained everything apart from considering human choices. He allows real events and real desires in life so the Christian really prays and really interacts with Him in full trust that He will work all things together for their good. He is relational and gives mankind the real choice to depend on Him continually. The result is full assurance of salvation, fruitfulness, answered prayer and growth in a meaningful way and deeper personal trust with Him. Sovereignty in this context evokes true worship, adoration and marvel at the ability and mystery of God to use man's free choices to bring His will to pass. This kind of sovereignty is more magnificent and awesome than if He set everything in motion without variables. This type of sovereignty also preserves His character of love for all men.

Order of Salvation

The order of salvation is quite different between Calvinism and the Scriptures. Below is a chart to help make these differences in the order of salvation apparent. Notice the position of faith relative to the position of regeneration in each view and compare this to verses in the Bible that say a man is born again because he has believed the gospel, rather than saying he believes the gospel because he is born again..

Order of Salvation

<u>Calvinism</u>		<u>Biblical</u>	
Foreknowledge	<i>Intimately foreknown and chosen (elected) by the Father before time began.</i>	Foreknowledge	<i>God foreknows who will believe and who will not. 1 Peter 1:2</i>
Predestinated	<i>God predetermined every event in history, including human belief. Those who would be saved were predestinated in a covenant made by the Godhead before time began.</i>	Predestinated	<i>God predestines that those who believe will be conformed to the image of Christ and share in His inheritance.</i>
Calling	<i>Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel. [3]</i>	Calling	<i>The calling of God is the presentation of the gospel.</i>
Regeneration	<i>The Spirit applies the blood of Christ and gives gifted faith to the elect. They are born again before hearing or believing the gospel.</i>	Repentance	<i>The sinner's heart realizes that God loves mankind and sent His Son Jesus, who is God, to die for the sins of all mankind.</i>
Faith	<i>Gifted faith is given by and is of the Spirit who indwells the elect. The elect hear the gospel and place faith in the life as well as the death of Jesus.</i>	Faith	<i>The sinner exercises faith in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, and trusts that God loves him and will save him by faith in the shed blood of Jesus on the cross.</i>
Repentance	<i>The elect believe that Jesus has died for the elect only and is willing to live a life of obedience.</i>	Regeneration	<i>God responds to the faith of the believing sinner by forgiving and washing away his sins. At this point, God indwells the believer and places him in the body of Christ. He is said to be born again or regenerated.</i>
Justification	<i>The elect are given the Law keeping righteousness of Christ for the sake of obedience to the Law.</i>	Justification	<i>The believer is given the righteousness of God by the righteousness of faith for the sake of persevering in faith.</i>
Adoption	<i>Included in the family of God at the moment of justification</i>	Adoption	<i>Adoption is described as "the redemption of our body." This is the final and future redemption which will be fulfilled when Christ comes for His church.</i>
Sanctification	<i>Following the pattern set forth by the Law [5]</i>	Sanctification	<i>Trusting the Spirit by faith not the pattern of the Law</i>
Perseverance	<i>The elect will persevere in faith and good works to prove their faith.</i>	Perseverance	<i>The believer will persevere in faith.</i>
Glorification	<i>The attainment of the goal to which the elect of God were predestinated in the eternal purpose of the Father and it involves the consummation of the redemption secured and procured by the vicarious work of Christ [6]</i>	Glorification	<i>The future event when the believer will be sinless, like Christ, in a sinless body dwelling with Christ. It is the end result of salvation.</i>

Origin of Election

Another problem with Calvinism's version of election is its origin. Again, Calvin drew this doctrine of *Unconditional Election* from Augustine. Few consider where Augustine learned it himself. In his early life, Augustine was a member of the Gnostic Manichean cult and would have believed in election. In Manichaeism, two groups existed, the elect and the hearers. The elect were the ones who denied the flesh to live the ascetic and celibate lifestyle proving their election. Augustine left the cult after years of involvement when it began to be persecuted by the Roman Empire. His conversion to Christianity (see [Augustine pg. 68](#)) came after exposure to the gifted rhetorical skills of the neo-Platonist Roman Bishop Ambrose. Bishop Ambrose also taught allegorical interpretation of the scriptures to Augustine. Augustine converted to Roman Catholicism and is today considered one of the four revered doctors of Roman Catholic Church.

Augustine, widely known today as a '*Christian*' neo-Platonist, combined Gnostic Manichaeism, neo-Platonism and allegory together with the Bible in his many writings. Both Luther and Calvin were deeply indoctrinated with Augustinianism. Therefore, when the reformers wanted to reform the Catholic Church, they returned to Augustine for 'pure' doctrine. Hence, through the reformation of Catholicism, Augustine's unconditional election was brought forward.

Neo-Platonism held to predestination as did Platonism where the gods determined all that would happen. The Greeks performed plays in a type of alchemy to change the minds of the gods. They credited the 'will of the gods' for all that happened in life. Considering the alchemic statement, '*As above, so below / As below, so above,*' the roots of this predestination begin to emerge. Alchemy would say that God has determined in heaven whatever happens here below on earth. Hence predestination smacks of alchemic thinking. Biblical predestination is God's good plan to conform all who believe to the image of Christ and who will gladly give them an inheritance in Christ. Calvin's predestination is said to be God's election to save some before belief to receive the inheritance of Christ. Again the Bible teaches predestination to be conformity to and inheritance in Christ, not belief. Realizing the profound influence of Augustine on the Reformation, could it be that Calvinism is just a sophisticated and refined form of this Gnostic duality?

Types of Election

As if comparing unconditional election with conditional election weren't confusing enough, the Reformed go further in distinguishing different types of election further splintering the Reformed camp into the more and less extreme Reformed Calvinist. Two types of election being debated among them today are the '*decreed*' elect and the '*covenantal*' elect. The '*decreed*' elect are those God has chosen to be elect through the Covenant of Redemption. The number of the '*decreed*' elect is fixed and cannot be changed. The '*covenantal*' elect are those who come into the church, baptized and predetermined to be a follower of Christ and receive blessings, but who are also predetermined to fall away to perdition. Notice the following quote by Rich Lusk, parts of which are found in the Summary Statement of AAPC's (Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church) Position on the Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation (Revised);

God has decreed from the foundation of the world all that comes to pass, including who would be saved and lost for all eternity. Included in his decree, however, is that some persons, not destined for final salvation, would be drawn to Christ and to his people for a time. These people, for a season, enjoy real blessings, purchased for them by Christ's cross and applied to them by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. (Reformed theologian John Murray makes it clear that whatever blessings reprobate experience in this life flow from Christ's work and the Spirit's work.) They may be said to be reconciled to God, adopted, granted new life, etc. But in the end, they fail to persevere, and because they fall away, they go to hell.^[7]

It is little wonder that this teaching is found in reformation circles since John Calvin taught this himself;

“... Experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect that even in their own judgment there is no difference between them. Hence, it is not strange, that by the Apostle a taste of heavenly gifts, and by Christ himself a temporary faith is ascribed to them. Not that they truly perceive the power of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith; but the Lord, the better to convict them, and leave them without excuse, instills into their minds such a sense of goodness as can be felt without the Spirit of adoption there is a great resemblance and affinity between the elect of God and those who are impressed for a time with a fading faith Still it is correctly said, that the reprobate believe God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation, though confusedly and without due discernment; not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God; but because, under a covering of hypocrisy they seem to have a principle of faith in common with them. Nor do I even deny that God illumines their mind to this extent.... there is nothing inconsistent in this with the fact of his enlightening some with a present sense of grace, which afterwards proves evanescent.”^[8] *Emphasis added*

It is no wonder these ideas are debated today, when John Calvin himself held to a form of this same predestination of false faith.

Verses Used to Support Unconditional Election Explained

John 1:11-13 NIV

¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

They say that the Jews rejected Jesus and therefore lost the promises of God. Never mind that the Jews freely chose to reject Him. They also say that the children born to God were not born again through any decision made on their own, but that true salvation has to come through the special gifting of God, otherwise, belief is considered a human work and a false conversion. Only God can cause a person to be born again. And this regeneration is before belief to insure that 'salvation is all of God.' The believer is then said to have been 'born of God.'

But the Biblical explanation for this verse is that God's children cannot make themselves be reborn. Of course God has to do the regenerating. Man cannot regenerate himself. But the regeneration that God performs is the fulfillment of His promise to save those who place faith in Jesus as their God who died on the cross for all of mankind's sins. God promises to save believers! Believers aren't born by natural descent (lineage), or by their decision to be saved (apart from faith), or by a husband's decision (producing offspring who are automatically saved). It is God who regenerates the believer!

John 6:44 NASB

⁴⁴"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵"It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. ⁴⁶"Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. ⁴⁷"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

They say that only the elect are the ones who are specially drawn to Christ. They say that only the elect have the Spirit's unique gifting of grace to listen to the Father.

Therefore, they say that all who listen (only the enabled elect), will come to Jesus. They say the ones who hear, come, and believe are the ones who already have eternal life in them.

But notice verse 47. Belief is the key to eternal life...eternal life isn't the key to belief! God nestles the truth to refute Calvinism in this verse. Sinners believe to be saved. They're not saved in order to believe.

John 6:64-65 NASB

⁶⁴"But there are some of you who do not believe "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. ⁶⁵And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

The Calvinist would say that Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray Him and that this betrayer, whom we know to be Judas Iscariot, had no choice but to hand Jesus over to the authorities. Although they might hesitate a bit, they would reason that it was God's predetermined plan that Judas would commit this deed because it hadn't been granted to Judas to come to Jesus in faith. Judas was not elected. They would say that the Father did not grant or elect Judas to come to Jesus.

But the passage indicates that those 'some' who do not believe, cannot come to Jesus because the Father grants this privilege to believers. Any who hear Jesus can freely come to Him, if they believe. Judas demonstrated his unbelief by betrayal, and therefore the Father did not grant that he come to Jesus.

Acts 13:48 NASB

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

The Calvinist thinks this verse means that those who had been predestined to eternal life believed because they were enabled to believe by Irresistible Grace and Gifted Faith. Notice that this verse doesn't say that they were preordained. It just says 'appointed.' The correct understanding of this verse is that those who believed were appointed to eternal life after they believed. They were not foreordained to believe.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 NASB

³⁰But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

The Calvinist says that it is only God who can cause us to be in Christ and therefore our boasting should only be in the Lord. By this they mean that God does all the work that leads to salvation. This means giving faith to the elect so they can believe. The faith has to come from God by way of Irresistible Grace; otherwise man contributed his faith which then implies that salvation is not all of God. Human work has been added. If a sinner believes by personal faith from his heart, then he has contributed human work to salvation and can boast in himself. They say that he caused himself to be saved. By this they mean that the elect are given the merits of Christ (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption) before believing. Salvation for the Calvinist has to be all of God with no human involvement because man is too depraved to contribute faith.

Biblically speaking, no one can place themselves in Christ. Only God can regenerate and save a person which He promises to do for those who place their faith in Christ. Once a person believes, it is God who places the believer in Christ. And then the merits of Christ (wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption) flow to the believer.

And this passage (1 Cor 1:18-31) is speaking of boasting in the wisdom of the message of the cross which is the power of God for salvation. The message of the cross seems like foolishness to the wise, the debater, the scribe, and to those looking for wisdom or a sign. Our boasting is in the humility and simplicity of the gospel by which God is pleased to save those who believe. We aren't boasting in God's saving some and not others. We shouldn't boast in complex interpretations of the gospel or of truth which have the appearance of wisdom, but which God calls foolishness.

[Romans 8:29-30](#) NIV

²⁹For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

The Calvinist interprets this verse to mean that God foreknew (predetermined) who He would save. By saving some, by default, He reprobates others. These foreknown elect are predestined to receive the Irresistible Grace that enables a believing response to the call of the gospel so they can then be justified and glorified.

Some Calvinists have actually expanded the order of events in this verse to include: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. It is interesting to note that the addition of these words, which are not in the text, strengthen the Calvinistic interpretation of salvation. Each word is redefined in a Calvinistic theological context.

If we were to expand this list Biblically, it would read differently. It would read: foreknowledge, predestinate, call, repentance, faith, regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance and glorification. The reader should note the differences in the order and keep in mind that most of these words are defined differently by the two systems.

[Romans 9:13](#) NIV

¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹²not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger."¹³Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

The Calvinist would say that God elected without reference to anything the twins had done or would do. They protect God's sovereign choice in election by explaining that His election is based in His own good pleasure and in His own determinative will. Therefore, they would say that God's choice of Jacob over Esau is not based on anything we can know. God has just decided to place His love on some, and not on others. This is how they explain that He loved Jacob and hated Esau.

The Bible teaches in 1 Peter 1:2, that God has chosen based on foreknowledge. God's omniscience allows Him to foreknow who will believe and who will not. God chooses to elect those who will believe. With this in mind, the passage becomes easy...Jacob wanted the blessing of God so badly he deceived to receive it. Esau on the other hand cared little about the blessing of God and sold it to Jacob for a pot of stew. Jacob displayed faith while Esau did not. Therefore the choosing or election of God, based on the foreknowledge of faith, is clearly seen.

[Romans 9:16](#) NIV

¹⁶It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

The Calvinist says that man can have no part in his salvation. The Calvinist denies that personal faith brings the salvation of God. They say that man cannot prompt salvation by faith. He is totally at the mercy of God's predetermined will. He can only hope that he has been chosen by God in eternity past. They say that when a person desires to be saved, that is his own effort and does not prompt the salvation of God.

But the Bible says that God has promised to have mercy on believers by saving them. Man of course can't will himself to be a part of the family of God by just desiring it, nor can man save himself by regenerating his own spirit. Both regeneration and salvation have to be performed by God. He has promised to do these things in response to faith.

Romans 9:18 NASB

¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

The Calvinist says this verse proves that God has, in His determinative will, elected some by mercy and has determined by default to reprobate (damn) others by hardening them. When this limited mercy is questioned, they say that God is not at fault for saving only some because it's gracious of Him to save any sinners at all. When God hardens or reprobates others, He is just to do so because He is under no obligation to save any sinners...all deserve damnation. Hence, God is not at fault for saving only some.

But the Bible says that God is merciful and gracious to save all who call on Him. Therefore, the mercy He desires to show is mercy toward those who have faith in His Name and His work.

Ephesians 1:4 NIV

⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

The Calvinist says that God has predestined who would be elected to adoption as sons before the creation of the world by the good pleasure and will of God. They reason that since God's will is always done, then those who believe were the ones who were predestined to believe. Some were predestined to believe and others were not. And if the elect were chosen to be holy and blameless, then serious sin in life casts doubt on whether a person was truly saved. He may have responded to the gospel, but could have been a false conversion since serious sin exists.

But the Bible teaches that those who God foreknew would believe of their own free will, were chosen to be seen as holy and blameless in His sight because the blood of Christ would cleanse them of all sin. God predestined the plan that for those who believe of their own free will, these would be chosen to be adopted as sons. This plan is what is predestined for the believer, rather than the believer being predestined to believe.

Ephesians 1:13 NIV

¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

The Calvinists believe that we are included in Christ before hearing the Word of truth. They say that the Spirit indwells the believer before the sinner believes. They claim that the Spirit is indwelling the elect before having heard or having believed. Some claim that the Spirit indwells the elect at conception or baptism.

This verse clearly teaches that the sinner has to believe the gospel before he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

The Calvinist teaches that the gift of God is faith. See more on this in the section titled, Faith As A Gift. If faith is the gift, then the sinner has to place faith in the election of God. But this verse and several verses following teach that the gift is the salvation of God by

grace. Faith is then placed in God's gracious gift of salvation purchased by Christ on the cross.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 NASB

⁴knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; ⁵for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

The Calvinist believes that God has chosen believers before time began. The proof that election has occurred, is the belief of the gospel by the gifted faith of God. They say that only the elect have received the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to be convicted of the truth of the gospel when they hear it.

But the Bible teaches that the sinner has to believe by faith and is then chosen or elected by God to receive salvation. The sinner, who believes, not only hears the Word, but lets that Word penetrate his heart in full conviction. And in this case, the reality of the truth of the message preached was backed up by the lives of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 KJV

¹³But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth

The Calvinist says this verse proves that believers were chosen or elected before time began. They say that God, before time began, set His love on some whom He would save. They also say that these elect would be set apart or sanctified by bestowing of Irresistible Grace by the Spirit. Therefore all those chosen by God are thankful for one another.

But this verse teaches that those who believe the truth are beloved by God, chosen to salvation through that belief of the truth and chosen to salvation through sanctification (meaning being set apart) by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Spirit indwells those who have believed (Eph 1:13). Therefore the indwelling of the Spirit cannot occur before belief of the truth. And this verse teaches that believers are thankful for believers.

2 Timothy 1:9 NASB

⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

The Calvinist says this verse describes how God grants grace and a holy calling to the elect individual, who will then be called in time according to God's plan for that individual's life.

But this verse says that His own purpose and grace, granted in Christ from all eternity, is corresponds to the holy calling by which men are saved. We know that the gospel is the holy calling. We know that Christ was slain from before the foundation of the world. So, the purpose and grace granted from all eternity was God's plan to save men by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ for all who respond to the call. This verse does not argue against personal faith, but rather upholds it.

Hebrews 12:2 NASB

²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Calvinist believes that God has authored the faith of those who have or will believe. But the Bible teaches that God authors the plan of salvation for those who have faith and perfects that faith through the sanctification process.

Quotes

- **Quote** - Many professing a desire to defend the Deity from an invidious charge admit the doctrine of election, but deny that any one is reprobated... This they do ignorantly and childishly, since there could be no election without its opposite reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts for salvation. It were most absurd to say, that he admits others fortuitously, or that they by their industry acquire what election alone confers on a few. Those therefore whom God passes by he reprobates, and that for no other cause than he is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children. Source Cited: Google Book Search, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, **John Calvin**, Published by Hayes Barton Press, ISBN 1593775059, 9781593775056, Pg 853.
- **Quote** - By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which He determined with Himself whatever He wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of those ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or death. Source Cited: Lutheranism: *The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings*, By Eric W. Gritsch, Robert W. Jenson, Published by Fortress Press, 1976, ISBN 0800612469, 9780800612467, pg 155., Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 3, chap 21, sec 5, 206.
- **Quote** - We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by His eternal and immutable counsel determined once and for all those whom it was His pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was His pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that His counsel, as regard the elect, is founded on His free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom He dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment. Source Cited; <http://www.reformed.org/books/institutes/books/book3/bk3ch21.html>; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 3, chap 21, sec 7, 210-211.
- **Quote** - Ultimately, God's choices are determined by His sovereign, eternal purpose, not His desires. **John MacArthur**, Author and General Editor, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997, 1862, Note 1 Timothy 2:4.
- **Quote** - Augustine accounts for the fact that some men are renewed and some are not, by the unconditional decree (decretum absolutum), according to which God determines to select from the fallen mass of mankind (massa perditionis), the whole of whom are alike guilty and under condemnation, a portion upon whom he bestows renewing grace, and to leave the remainder to their own self-will and the operation of law and justice. **R. C. Sproul**, *The Holiness of God*, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993 ed., pg. 273.
- **Quote** - The Reformed view of predestination teaches that before a person can choose Christ his heart must be changed. He must be born again...one does not first believe, then become reborn Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **R.C.Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 72.
- **Quote** - If there is one maverick molecule in all the universe, then God is not sovereign. And if God is not sovereign, He is not God. <http://www.christiansincontext.org/2008/03/top-10-r-c-sproul-quotes.html>; Quoting; **R. C. Sproul**.
- **Quote** - The Reformed Faith has held to the existence of an eternal, divine decree which, antecedently to any difference or desert in men themselves separates the human race into two portions and ordains one to everlasting life and the other to everlasting death... Thus predestined and foreordained...their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or decreased. Source Cited; <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **Lorraine Boettner**, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, (Philipsburg NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1932, 83-84.

- **Quote** - The Reformed view teaches that God positively or actively intervenes in the lives of the elect to insure their salvation. The rest of mankind He leaves to themselves. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, pgs. 142-143.
- **Quote** - God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response or obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected... These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Thus, God's choice of the sinner, and not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 6-7.
- **Quote** - Predestination seems to cast a shadow on the very heart of human freedom. If God has decided our destinies from all eternity, (unconditionally) that strongly suggests that our free choices are but charades, empty exercises in predetermined placating. It is as though God wrote the script for us in concrete and we are merely carrying out His scenario Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 51.
- **Quote** - Most Christian's solute the sovereignty of God but believe in the sovereignty of man. Source Cited; <http://www.christiansincontext.org/2008/03/top-10-r-c-sproul-quotes.html>, Citing; R. C. Sproul.
- **Quote** - "God wills all things that comes to pass..." Source Cited: <http://anti-calvinism.blogspot.com/search/label/Spurgeon>, Citing; **R. C. Sproul**, *Almighty All Over* pg.54.

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- [2] <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=predestination&r=66#5down>
- [3] <http://www.christiansincontext.org/2008/03/top-10-r-c-sproul-quotes.html>
- [4] <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=19>
Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 31
- [5] <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/category.php?categoryid=2>
- [6] <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=7>
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- [7] <http://www.hornes.org/theologia/rich-lusk/covenant-election-faqs>
- [8] *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, translated by Henry Beveridge.3.2.11 Cited from: <http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/spurgeon.htm>

Limited Atonement

Did Christ Die Only for the Elect?

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Limited Atonement is the term given to the Reformed position that states that Christ died only for elect men rather than for all men who have ever lived. They say Christ died only for those ordained to believe and elected to be saved. While *Limited Atonement* comprises the 'L' of TULIP, it is commonly called the fifth point of Calvinism. To be a Four Point Calvinist is to reject *Limited Atonement*. To be a Five Point Calvinist is to accept *Limited Atonement*. Many Christians call themselves four point Calvinists because they know for certain, by the scriptures, that Christ died for all men (1John 2:2). Therefore, they reject this fifth point of Calvinism.

Unfortunately, four point Calvinists, also known as moderate Calvinists, don't realize that in adopting the other four points of TULIP, they've come under this system's way of thinking. Even though they reject *Limited Atonement*, they still **reason** like a Calvinist. Four pointers usually begin their entrance into Calvinism through Total Depravity and Unconditional Election, and then modify the interpretation of Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints. These last two points are understood through their own reasoning because they've rejected Limited Atonement. Questions usually arise with the last two points that send the four pointers searching for answers. Once confusion is clarified and thinking begins to align more with pure Calvinism, it is a short walk from four point Calvinism to five point Calvinism. The issue is election. Once unconditional election is held, the other points naturally follow.

Five Point Calvinism is a gospel different from the gospel of faith in the cross that Paul speaks of, although Calvinists would disagree. Four Point Calvinism comes very close to being a different gospel as well. The Bible teaches that '*...God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life, John 3:16.* The invitation is open to all men to trust the Lord for salvation. However, the pure Calvinist arrives at Limited Atonement by interpreting various verses with the presupposition of unconditional election in mind. They claim the Christ died on the cross only for the elect and that He would never waste His blood on the reprobate. They say that the cross 'actually' transacted salvation rather than making salvation possible. They say a potential salvation procured for all men implies universalism and double payment for sin's penalty. Calvinism not only changes the gospel of personal faith from the heart to a gospel of faith in election, but as we shall see, it also teaches that one is born again before even trusting Christ. See [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270.](#)

It is helpful to identify the terms used to imply Limited Atonement so this teaching can be recognized. *Limited Atonement* is referred to by the terms, 'definite atonement,' 'particular atonement' or 'actual atonement.' For instance, Particular Baptists would hold to believer's baptism, yet hold to limited atonement. If 'particular' is used, it is immediately clear that five point Calvinism is in the background. The word 'grace' can also imply five point Calvinism because TULIP is often referred to as the 'Doctrines of Grace' meaning God's gracious choice in election. The various terms move in and out of usage, but generally any word that indicates individual atonement probably points to *Limited Atonement*.

Substitutionary Atonement

Surprisingly, there are many different interpretations for the atonement of Christ. The heart of the gospel is the atonement. In order to understand *Limited Atonement*, we need to understand the atonement views called 'Vicarious Substitution' and 'Penal Substitution'. While Penal Substitution is more easily defined, the words 'vicarious' and 'substitution' can mean different things to different

people. What exactly is meant by vicarious, substitute and penal? The redefining of terms in semantics confuses the issue of the atonement.

Substitutionary Atonement argues that Christ was our substitute when He atoned for men's sins. But what did He stand in our place for? The term 'Substitutionary Atonement' is generally accepted and widely used to refer to Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Most people use this verbiage not knowing what it actually means and how various groups use it. The Reformed use the words 'Substitutionary Atonement' and 'Penal Substitution' to define the atonement in a way that fits their theology.

To sort out these various atonement views, we must understand the word "vicarious." Vicarious means to stand in the place of. So we must define what Christ stood in our place for. Did He stand in our place for our "death?" Or did He stand in our place for "wrath?" Did He stand in our place for both? How we define Jesus Christ's death will determine which group identified with; Calvinist or non-Calvinist.

Calvinistic explanation: *The view of Christ's death presented here has frequently been called the theory of "penal substitution." Christ's death was "penal" in that he bore a penalty when he died. His death was also a "substitution" in that he was a substitute for us when he died. This has been the orthodox understanding of the atonement held by evangelical theologians, in contrast to other views that attempt to explain the atonement part from the idea of the wrath of God or payment of the penalty for sin. This view of the atonement is sometimes called the theory of vicarious atonement. A "vicar" is someone who stands in the place of another or who represents another. Christ's death was therefore "vicarious" because he stood in our place and represented us. As our representative, he took the penalty that we deserve.*
^[1] [sic]

The Calvinist believes that when Christ died on the cross, He paid not only the penalty of death required by the Law, but also the payment of wrath for the elect.

Biblical explanation: *The atonement is substitutionary in that it is objectively directed toward God and the propitiation of His holy character and demands upon the sinner. It is vicarious in the sense that Christ is the substitute who bears the punishment rightly due sinners, their guilt being imputed to Him in such a way that He representatively bore their punishment.*^[2]

Notice the key word, 'representatively' is used rather than the term 'for us,' which is preferred by the Calvinist. Christ paid the penalty of death for all men, but that payment is a ransom which has to be acted upon by faith in order for it to be of benefit.

Penal Substitution argues that the death of Christ included the wrath of God the Father poured out on His Son.

The theory of penal substitution is the heart and soul of an evangelical view of the atonement. I am not claiming that it is the only truth about the atonement taught in the scriptures. Nor am I claiming that penal substitution is emphasized in every piece of literature, or that every author articulates clearly penal substitution. I am claiming that penal substitution functions as the anchor and foundation for all other dimensions of the atonement when the scriptures are considered as a canonical whole. I define penal substitution as follows: The Father, because of his love for human beings, sent his Son (who offered himself willingly and gladly) to satisfy his justice, so that Christ took the place of sinners. The punishment and penalty we deserved was laid on Jesus Christ instead of us, so that in the cross both God's holiness and love are manifested. The riches of what God has accomplished in Christ for his people are not exhausted by penal substitution. The multifaceted character of the atonement must be recognized to do justice the canonical witness. God's people are impoverished if Christ's triumph over evil powers at the cross is slighted, or Christ's exemplary love is shoved to the side, or the healing bestowed on believers by Christ's cross and resurrection is downplayed.

While not denying the wide-ranging character of Christ's atonement, I am arguing that penal substitution is foundational and the heart of the atonement.^[3]

When the Calvinist uses the word "penalty," he means Jesus suffered the wrath of God while on the cross. When they say wrath, they mean Jesus suffered the punishment the sinner would experience if he were in hell.

The atonement was a payment for all men's sins, whereas Penal Substitution means that Christ is punished (penalized) in the place of sinners individually (substitution), thus satisfying the demands of justice and wrath so God can justly forgive the sins.^[5] Penal Substitution is associated with the Reformed tradition for the reason that it promotes a two component aspect to the atonement which Reformed theology adopts in their two step salvation process.

The first step in the reformed scheme of salvation is applying the atonement to the elect before belief through irresistible grace. This application of the blood of Christ causes the elect to be regenerated before and without exercising faith. In fact, they can't exercise faith unless they are born again first because their "will" needs to be freed to do so. This regeneration is said to occur either at conception or infant baptism. The elect receives the benefits of the cross directly, by grace before belief, without their participation or awareness and apart from their personal will. God has sovereignly chosen the elect for salvation and has also sovereignly applied the work of the cross to them without their involvement.

For the Reformed, this means that Christ completely atoned for sins and set the sinner free apart from belief. It is Christ's death that sets the sinner free before belief rather than after belief. They reason that if Christ paid the penalty of wrath as a *substitute*, then those for whom He died will never go to the Lake of Fire. They deduce that if anyone, for whom He died ends up in the Lake of Fire, then His death was impotent. They reason that if Christ paid the penalty for their sins at the cross, and they end up in the Lake of Fire, then their sins would be paid for twice and be a kind of double indemnity. They reason that because sins cannot be paid for twice, Christ must have died only for the elect. Christ is said to have actually descended into hell to take the punishment of the elect for them in his 'active obedience.'

"Calvin and others define that descent as the spiritual reality of Jesus' soul while he hung rejected and condemned by his Father on the cross. To be forsaken, to be cut off by God, brings with it the full torment of hell.

The New Testament is as clear as is Isaiah 53 that Jesus did take on himself the Christian's earned spot in hell. He accomplished the active obedience and punitive suffering necessary to secure redemption of all who believe and confess. All was finished by Jesus, the Suffering Servant of Israel."^[6]

The Bible teaches Jesus descended into Sheol after His death to preach victory to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago in the days of Noah, 1 Peter 3:18-19.

Calvinism indirectly implies the reprobate pays for sins in hell, which of course can never happen because sinful man cannot pay for sins in this life or in eternity. The Lake of Fire will never expiate sins and their suffering will never cease.

The second step of the reformed salvation scheme is the impartation of gifted faith through irresistible grace. When the gospel is presented to the elect, this supernaturally gifted faith responds in belief. This is when the second salvation transaction is complete. Regeneration (born again) takes place before belief and justification occurs after belief. Believing with gifted faith causes the elect to be credited with Jesus' earthly, Law keeping righteousness which brings their justification. Unknown to many in the church, this righteousness satisfies the demands of Covenant theology's "Covenant of Works" God supposedly made with Adam where obedience secures salvation. Christ's death is the sin payment and Christ's life purchases righteousness. Both are salvific. Thus the Reformed reason the cross has two sides to it. Both phases are said to complete the transaction of true salvation.

Grace takes the sinner from a negative standing with God to zero...and justification takes them from zero to positive righteousness. Thus the earthly Law keeping righteousness of Christ is what finally saves.

This 'Penal Substitutionary' view of the atonement, which requires Christ's death and wrath (penal) was *"first formulated by the 16th century Reformers as an extension of Anselm's Satisfaction theory. This Reformed view says simply that Christ died for man, in man's place, taking his sins and bearing them for him. The bearing of man's sins takes the punishment for them and sets the believer free from the penal demands of the law: The righteousness of the law and the holiness of God are satisfied by this substitution."* ^[7] Payment and satisfaction are made. Death and wrath are the payment and righteousness becomes the satisfaction. Therefore, any for whom Christ died are considered saved. The Reformed consider any atonement view, other than Penal Substitution, to be an impotent and incorrect atonement.

However, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ's death was a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, 1 Timothy 2:6) and an acceptable sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:5-9). His death on the cross takes away sin (Romans 11:27), He died for sins (1 Corinthians 15:3), He was made sin on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21), He made purification for sins (Hebrews 1:3), He made propitiation for sins (Hebrews 2:17), He mediates the New Covenant in His blood (Hebrews 9:14-16), and He bore our sins (1 Peter 2:24).

Using the word 'ransom' (not to be confused with the erroneous 'Ransom Theory') clears up confusion about the atonement. 'Ransom' implies sin is paid for, but preserves the sinner's choice to accept that payment and be set free. *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,"* Mark 10:45. The sinner is responsible to believe the gospel which afterward brings God's promise to apply the blood payment to his account.

The word 'substitute' is a word commonly used to describe a person or thing acting or serving in place of another. The word 'substitute' or 'vicarious' is used by the Reformed to provide room for accommodating penal substitution which leads to a limited view of the atonement. Furthermore, several Bible versions don't even use the word 'substitute' in the NT and sparsely use it in the OT while 'ransom' is used frequently.

The penalty of the Law is death, which Jesus paid for all men. All who trust His payment by personal faith are justified. This willingness to put self to death is righteousness apart from the Law spoken of in Romans 3:21, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed."* God's righteousness was manifested through the cross (Romans 3:21-25). This perfect righteousness was His willingness to lay His life down to be the sin offering by death on the cross. This sacrifice was witnessed (written about) through the Law and the Prophets (Romans 3:21). The Law required sacrifices for sin and the Prophets prophesied concerning the coming sacrifice of Messiah. His righteous death on the cross demonstrated Him to be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith (Romans 3:26). God declares that those who believe by faith in Jesus' blood atonement are justified (Romans 5:9). Justification comes by faith in the cross. The righteousness of God is His willingness to shed His blood, by reason of His death, to demonstrate His great love and desire to save all men. Only those who trust His atonement will be saved. Even the OT sacrifices had to be mixed with faith. The sinner must believe from his heart so that his faith can be credited to him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). All who trust His death by faith are saved.

Most five point Calvinists hold this two part salvation process of regeneration before belief and justification at belief. Four point Calvinists define Irresistible Grace somewhat differently saying they that *Irresistible Grace* gives the elect faith to believe moments before hearing the gospel but that regeneration happens at belief, not before. They have synthesized election with choice. They believe the Bible teaches both.

Verses that Show the Righteousness by Faith

Genesis 15:6 NASB

⁶Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Romans 3:21-26 NASB

²¹But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 4:3 NASB

³For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Romans 4:5 NASB

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Romans 4:9 NASB

⁹Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Romans 4:11 NASB

¹¹and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of *the* righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

Romans 4:13 NASB

¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 5:9 NASB

⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Romans 9:30 NASB

³⁰What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;

Galatians 3:6 NASB

⁶Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

James 2:23 NASB

²³and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God.

God has Reconciled Sinners to Himself

A major flaw in the reformed view of the atonement is the nature of God's reconciliation through the cross. The Bible teaches God has reconciled all sinners to Himself by the blood of the cross. To be reconciled means to make peace with; to win over to friendliness; cause to become amicable; to bring into agreement or harmony; make compatible; to restore to communion; ^[8] God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). God was reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing our trespasses to us (2 Corinthians 5:19). God reconciled us to Himself while we were enemies of His. How will He not freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)? The good news is that God has done everything possible to extend Himself in love toward mankind. His great compassion toward mankind's lost condition is seen in the sacrifice of His cherished Son. God desires every man to be saved and fully accepts any who come to Him by faith in His Son. When believers place their faith in

Christ, the payment of Christ is applied to them. God has made peace with man through the cross and man makes peace with God by faith in the cross.

Although human analogies are far from perfect, we might consider the scenario of a man who sees a woman from afar whom he desires to court. The man will do everything possible to set the stage for that woman to come to him in love. When she first hears of him or meets him, she doesn't automatically agree to marry him merely because he set his affections on her. She learns about him and evaluates who he is before she loves him. Once she commits to him, her expressions of loyalty reveal the internal worth and trust she has for him. Her faith now joins his expressions of love toward her.

But the Protestant view of reconciliation is that God only loves some and reconciled only the elect to Him at the cross. Not only do they claim He loves only some, but they also say that He actually saved them at the cross. They say that this reconciliation was *actual*, meaning that it was completed at the cross rather than a *potential* reconciliation that occurs with faith. This means that every person for whom Christ died is saved. It's as if His blood saves apart from faith. Even though they say actual salvation occurred at the cross, they also say the elect need to be quickened in life through the gospel or study.

Another twist on reconciliation is the belief that Christ's righteousness is required to complete salvation. While the gift of righteousness is an integral part of the positional salvation experience, it is not what prompts salvation. The prompting of salvation is personal faith on the part of the believer. The Reformed believe salvation begins with election and the cross, and is later completed by faith toward the life of Christ. The life of Christ in no way contributes directly to salvation. Notice how R. C. Sproul states this idea that more is needed than the death of Christ. He is insinuating that the life of Christ is salvific as well, "*The cross alone, however does not justify us.*"^[9] So while the Reformed claim salvation is by Christ alone, they don't mean by His death alone, even though they claim the elect are actually saved by Christ's blood at the cross. This will be discussed later in the section titled, [Vicarious Law Keeping pg. 151](#).

The Bible teaches that the sinner is saved through faith in His blood (Romans 3:25), not through faith in His righteousness and not the blood apart from faith. Righteousness is a gift that comes at salvation but isn't the precondition of salvation.

Verses for Reconciliation

[Romans 5:1 NKJV](#)

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

[Romans 5:8-11 NKJV](#)

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

[Romans 11:13-15 NKJV](#)

¹³For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their being cast away *is* the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?

[2 Corinthians 5:17-21 NKJV](#)

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

[Ephesians 2:11-18 NKJV](#)

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²²in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

[Col 1:18-23 NKJV](#)

¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. ¹⁹For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. ²¹And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²²in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— ²³if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister..

Universalism

The Reformed argue against any atonement view that differs from Vicarious Penal Substitution. Vicarious penal substitution is the idea that Christ took the ***actual*** punishment for each of the elect, rather than a ***potential*** atonement for all sinners. He ***actually*** saved rather than ***potentially*** saved. One of the arguments used against a potential atonement is that if Christ died for all, then all would be saved. Thus they claim that Christ couldn't have died for all men because not all men are saved. They see a potential atonement as universal atonement.

When a person consents to the term 'substitutionary atonement,' the Calvinist will then argue that 'substitution' means that Christ was the substitute for whomever He died for. He, as the substitute, took the punishment for another. They view the atonement as being salvation, rather than faith in the atonement being salvation. If He died for you, then you have had your sin paid for and you aren't in danger of hell. If He died and atoned for all men, then they reason that all men must be saved. They argue that if Christ was man's substitute for sin and if He died for all men, then every single man has had their sin removed by this atonement which implies a universal salvation. They reason since every single man will not be saved and universalism is obviously not true, then Christ's atonement was not substitutionary for all men. Here again we get into semantics, this time for the word 'substitutionary.' The Calvinist uses substitution to mean Christ stood in your place so punishment has already been paid. The Bible teaches that Christ was every man's payment for sin and those who refuse His atonement will be punished in the lake of fire. Christ paid the penalty for sin which was death (Romans 8:4). Every man has had their payment for sin provided. Christ was the ransom for sin. However, not all men choose to receive this payment by faith and have that payment credited to their account. So while the payment was made for all, not all take advantage of the benefits of the cross.

The Reformed reason that not all are saved because Christ did not die for all. The Bible says that not all are saved because not all exercise their free responsibility to believe. The Reformed firmly believe that the work of Christ on the cross is credited directly to the elect apart from and before belief. Therefore the person has no participation in the application of that payment.

Double Payment

The Calvinist also argues that if Christ did pay the payment for all mankind's sin throughout history and then some men end up in the Lake of Fire, then there is a double payment for sin. This argument

doesn't hold up because sinful man can never pay for his own sin. The only payment that is acceptable for sin is a sinless payment which can only be provided by God Himself. The man who dies with his sin still credited to him will suffer the wrath of God in the Lake of Fire forever because he can't expiate (remove or pay for) his sins. For this reason, there is no intermediary state or purgatory. "[I]t is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27. Suffering will never remove or pay for his sin because a sinner can't pay for sin. A sinless payment is the only acceptable payment before God. A payment tainted by sin is unacceptable. Therefore, no double payment for sin occurs for sinners who refuse Jesus' payment for sins. Jesus is the unblemished Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This 'double payment' argument is designed to move a person away from the Biblical position of *Unlimited Atonement* by way of human reasoning and logic.

Wasted Atonement

Another tactic used by Calvinists to prop up *Limited Atonement* is the idea of wasted atonement. For whom did Christ shed His blood? Was some of it wasted if not all were actually saved? The answer is no, Christ's blood was not wasted. If there was only one sinner, all the blood of Christ would have been shed because blood was given by God for atonement by reason of the life (Leviticus 17:11). That means the life had to be given up as the shedding of the blood was made. If only one sinner needed salvation, all of Christ's blood would be shed as He died to make atonement for that single sinner. The judgment and payment for all sins occurred while Jesus hung on the cross. The sins of the whole world past, present and future were laid on Him at that moment. The cost was enormously high to make salvation available to men who would reject Him. God demonstrated His love for all men by providing their payment for sin. But at the judgment throne of God, mankind will know it was they, not He, who did the rejecting. They'll know that He did love them by making salvation for them possible. This is consistent with the character of God and the teaching of the Bible. Therefore Christ's one act of atonement, made on the cross, was not limited to the elect only.

Leviticus 17:11 NASB

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

Classes of Men

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ died for all men, but Calvinism teaches the opposite. They say Christ died only for the elect. The semantics behind the word 'all' affords the Calvinist cover to say Christ died for all men (the elect) without really meaning that He died for all men. We have to define what 'all' means. This example of loading words with hidden meanings and differing definitions allows this theology to flourish without being detected. The simple Christian hears Christian words and naively assumes everyone is on the same page. They will even protect the Calvinist against what they perceive to be unwarranted attacks on "the truth." The tactics of the enemy is to hide a deceiving agenda in Christian words to protect itself from discovery and assault. Evil loves to wrap itself in a garment of good.

The Reformed say that Christ did not die for all men or for those who will end up in the lake of fire. They say that men who end up in the Lake of Fire are proof that Jesus did not die for all men. The Calvinist likes to explain that "*Christ died for all men without distinction but He did not die for all men without exception.*"^[10] What they really mean by the word 'all' is that Christ died for 'all' kinds of people and 'all' classes of people, but He did not die for every single person. They would say that He died for Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, slave, free, male and female but the 'informed Calvinist' understands that He died for only elect Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor, etc. The hyper or strict Calvinist would say that the cross was designed only for the elect and had no purpose for the 'non-elect.'

"The Scriptures teach that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God involved the sin of the world (John 1:29) and that the Savior's work of redemption (1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 2:1), reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19) and propitiation (1 John 2:2) was for *all men* (1 Timothy 4:10). The cross-work of Christ is efficient, effectual and applicable only for those who believe (1 Timothy 4:10; John 3:16). We could

even say it in a simpler way; "Christ's death was *sufficient* for all but only *efficient* for those who believe. The work of Christ on the cross is not limited, but the application of that work on the cross is limited to believers only." [11]

The Terms 'All, Many and World'

The Calvinist makes much of the words 'all, many and world.' They say that when these words are examined throughout the Bible, there are many instances where they are used generally rather than comprehensively. For instance, they would say that even though the gospel went out to the whole world (Romans 1:8), that it really wasn't the whole world but the known world at that time. But with that logic in mind, are we to say that when sin entered the world, it didn't enter the whole world?

The same reasonings are used of the words *all* and *many*. The Calvinist argues that *all* doesn't mean *all*, but *many* does mean *many*. This means that not *all* are saved, but *many* are saved. However, the word *many* is often times contrasted with the word *few*. *Many* are on the broad road to destruction and *few* enter the narrow gate. *Many* are called but *few* are chosen. The word *many*, which the Calvinist claims refers to the elect, is contrasted with the word *few* which Jesus says are the saved. Hence, *many* in the Bible often imply the unsaved, yet Calvinism claims *many* refers to the elect. The Calvinist would certainly want to identify with the *few*, but they cannot be the *many* and the *few* at the same time, which are contrasted against one another.

John Calvin's Words

Credit given to: George Zeller, Middletown Bible Church <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/4whom21.htm>

Some statements made by Calvin seem to indicate that he did hold to some degree of Limited Atonement, but he also made many more statements which seem to better harmonize with an unlimited atonement view. The best indication of his position on this issue, as Norman Duty suggests, should come from his final statement on the matter. Calvin made a statement in his will, drawn up when he was 54, shortly before his death. The year was 1564 and may be regarded as his final judgment concerning the extent of the atonement: "I testify also and profess that I humbly seek from God, that He may so will me to be washed and purified by the great Redeemer's blood, **shed for the sins of the human race**, that it may be permitted me to stand before His tribunal under the covert of the Redeemer Himself." [12]

- On **Isaiah 53:12**--"I approve of the ordinary reading, that He alone bore the punishment of many, because on Him was laid the guilt of the whole world. It is evident from other passages, and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that *many* sometimes denotes *all*."
- On **Mark 14:24** – "The word *many* does not mean a part of the world only, but the whole human race." In other words, Christ's blood was shed for the whole human race.
- On **Matthew 20:28**--"Many' is used, not for a definite number, but for a large number, in that He sets Himself over against all others. And this is its meaning also in Rom. 5:15, where Paul is not talking of a part of mankind but of the whole human race."
- On **John 1:29** – "And when he says *the sin OF THE WORLD*, He extends this favour indiscriminately to the whole human race....all men without exception are guilty of unrighteousness before God and need to be reconciled to Him....Now our duty is, to embrace the benefit which is offered to all, that each of us may be convinced that there is nothing to hinder him from obtaining reconciliation in Christ, provided that he comes to him by...faith."
- On **John 3:16** – "He has employed the universal term *whosoever*, both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers....He shows Himself to be reconciled to the whole world, when He invites all men without exception to the faith of Christ."
- On **Romans 5:18** – "He makes this favor common to all, because it is propoundable to all, and not because it is in reality extended to all (i.e. in the experience); for though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God's benignity indiscriminately to all, yet all do not receive Him."

- On **2 Corinthians 5:19** – God "shows Himself to be reconciled to the whole world" and Calvin goes on to say that the "whole world" means "all men without exception."
- On **Galatians 5:12** – "It is the will of God that we should seek the salvation of all men without exception, as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world."
- On **Colossians 1:15**–"This redemption was procured by the blood of Christ, for by the sacrifice of His death all the sins of the world have been expiated."
- On **Hebrews 5:9**–"He (the writer of Hebrews) has inserted the universal term 'to all' to show that no one is excluded from this salvation who proves to be attentive and obedient to the Gospel of Christ.").

Conclusions

How can we sincerely offer to men what has not been provided for them? How can we offer them a free gift if the gift has not been purchased for them? How can we urge them to drink from the fountain of life if no water has been provided for them? How can we tell them to be saved if Christ provided not for their salvation? How can we say to a person, "Take the medicine and be cured!" if there is no medicine to take and no cure provided? ^[13]

People are not lost to destruction because Christ didn't die for them, but are lost because they rejected the payment for sin that Christ secured for believers.

If the Reformed preacher were really honest, he would need to preach his "gospel" along these lines: ^[14]

- "Perhaps Christ died for you."
- "Maybe God so loved you."
- "Christ shed His blood for you, perhaps."
- "Salvation has been provided for you, maybe."
- "Possibly God commendeth His love toward you."
- "Hopefully He's the propitiation for your sins."
- "There is a possibility that Christ died as your payment for sin."
- "I bring you good news, maybe."
- "It's possible that Christ died for you. If you get saved then we know that He did die for you, but if you continue to reject Him then He did not die for you."
- "Christ died for you only if you believe that Christ died for you (thus proving you are elect), but if you do not believe this and if you continue in your unbelief until the day you die, then Christ did not die for you."

Verses with Reference to Limited Atonement Explained

Isaiah 53:6 NASB

⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all, To fall on Him.

This verse explains that Jesus death is upon all who have gone astray. The whole human race has gone astray. But the Calvinist would say that 'all of us' really means 'some of us.' They say that the iniquity of the elect has fallen on Jesus, meaning that His death was limited in its atonement.

Matthew 1:21 NASB

²¹"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

The Calvinist uses this verse to say that Jesus saved only the elect from their sins, rather than saying that He would save believing Israel or believing Gentiles.

Matthew 20:28 NASB

²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The Reformed commonly refer to Jesus as the Servant of Jehovah who served God by dying on the cross to redeem the elect only. They say that because this verse says 'many' that it cannot mean 'all.' Therefore they say this verse proves limited atonement. But the Bible teaches that God loves the world and Jesus bore the sins of the whole world.

Matthew 26:28 NASB

²⁸for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

Again, for the Calvinist, the word 'many' implies that Jesus' blood was poured out not for all, but for the elect.

John 1:29 NASB

²⁹The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Again, the Reformed redefine world to mean only types or classes of men in the world rather than every individual in the world. But again, the Bible means that Jesus' death on the cross paid for every individual's sins in the world.

John 3:16 NASB

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Again, this verse means only some in the world rather than what the scriptures teach which is Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, Otherwise, an honest invitation to believe and be saved could not be made.

John 10:11 NASB

¹¹"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Again, the Reformed see this verse as meaning that Jesus laid down His life only for the believers or the elect...not for all men everywhere.

Acts 20:28 NASB

²⁸"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

The proponent of Limited Atonement sees this verse as saying that Jesus only paid for the sins of the church. These Reformed men believe the church is made up of all the redeemed in history. History began with Adam and Eve. So they are saying that the church began then. And if only the elect can believe, then only the elect populate this church that goes all the way back in time. The Bible is teaching that overseers are to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. This passage isn't saying that the church is the only historic community that He purchased with His blood. The church began with Pentecost and will end with the Rapture. Pre Israel believers, Israelites, Tribulation saints and Kingdom saints have all been purchased with His blood.

Romans 5:6 NASB

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Notice that Christ died for the ungodly, not merely for the elect! All sinners are ungodly!

Galatians 2:20 NASB

²⁰"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

In this verse, the Calvinist sees that Christ died, not for all, but for me. They see this verse as saying that Christ died personally for the elect rather than for the whole world.

Galatians 3:13 NASB

¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--

The Reformed say that Jesus only redeemed 'us' meaning believers meaning the elect!

Ephesians 5:25 NASB

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

The Calvinist believes that this verse is saying that Christ died only for the church. Since we know that the death of Christ provides atonement for both OT and NT saints, they say this verse proves that the church is made up of all the redeemed in history. And if no one can believe apart from election, then this verse indicates that Christ died only for the elect and supports their view of the limited atonement.

But the Bible clearly teaches that the church was born on Pentecost and that the Holy Spirit was not indwelling believers prior to then. Therefore, when Christ gave Himself up for the church, which He loved, this doesn't exclude other historical faith communities. No one can be saved apart from faith in the shed blood of Christ. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, but Christ's blood completely cleanses sin.

1 Timothy 2:4-6 NASB

⁴[W]ho desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

This verse clearly teaches that Christ gave Himself as a ransom for all not just many! Even though other verses do say many, this verse says all and undermines the arguments of the Calvinist who claim that Christ did not die for all, but only for many! This verse lends support to defining the 'many' as 'all.' This verse also teaches that God desires all men to be saved, not many men to be saved.

1 Timothy 4:10 NASB

¹⁰For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Here the distinction between all men and believers is apparent. Christ died for all men, but His death actually saved believers. This clearly refutes the Calvinistic idea that Christ died only for the elect.

2 Peter 2:1 NASB

¹But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

Here we see that Christ bought the false teachers who will end up in destruction! This verse unmistakably refutes limited atonement.

Hebrews 2:9 NASB

⁹But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

Coupled with 2 Peter 2:1 and 1 Timothy 4:10, we can easily say that Christ paid the penalty of death for every single man, not merely for the elect in the limited atonement scenario.

James 1:18 NASB

¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

Notice that believers are born again by hearing the word of truth. But the Calvinist would explain this to mean that the elect, who have been born again before belief, are brought forward or made manifest through the preaching of the gospel. They would say responding to the word isn't when the elect are born again, but rather when they are revealed!

John 2:2 NASB

²and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Again, a distinction is made between believers and the whole world. So, the two can't be the same entity as the Calvinist argues for. They are different groups and Christ propitiated for both! Therefore, limited atonement cannot be a legitimate doctrine.

1 John 4:10 NASB

¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The Calvinist says this verse means that God loved us, the elect, and sent His Son to propitiate the sins of the elect only. But the Bible teaches that Jesus propitiated the sins of the whole world and that propitiation is effective once the sinner believes.

1 John 4:14 NASB

¹⁴We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

The above verses clarify who the world is. It includes every individual that has ever lived.

Rev 5:9 NASB

⁹And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

The Reformed would say this verse proves that God didn't love all men without exception but loved all men without distinction. All classes are represented here and that there all elect from each category.

Quotes

- **Quote** - But counselors, as Christians, are obligated to present the claims of Christ. They must present the good news that Christ Jesus died on the cross in the place of His own, that He bore the guilt and suffered the penalty for their sins. He died that all whom the Father had given to Him might come unto Him and have life everlasting. As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ Himself who are His elect for whom He died [Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, p. 70] Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger02.htm>

- **Quote** - [If] Jesus died, paying for the sins of all, God cannot legally or justly accuse and condemn anyone...regardless of whether they hear or accept the gospel, sin cannot be justly paid for twice...For God not to pardon a sinner for whom Christ agonized would be a travesty of justice... [Then] Jesus will never..."see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied: (Isaiah 53). Why? Because billions for whom He agonized, travailed and died, bearing their "sins in his own body on the tree," will suffer eternal hell. Jesus paid. They pay again. God is paid twice for one debt. Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Page 311., Citing; William Oosterman, *"Take a Long Look at the Doctrine of Election"*, Ottawa, Canada: The Lord's Library Publication, n.d., 17. Available from Westboro Baptist Church, Ottawa.

- **Quote** - "Not one for whom He [Christ] died can possibly miss heaven" Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/4whom16.htm>, Citing favorable comment by; Dr. John MacArthur in his Tape GC 80-123 on Hebrews 10:5-18.

- **Quote** - The Reformed understanding is that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of all the Christians to which John was writing, and not only them, but for all Christians throughout the world, Jew and Gentile, at all times and in all places. Source Cited: <http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/index.php?itemid=1311>, Citing; James White, *The Potter's Freedom*, Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000, pgs. 273-74

- **Quote** - Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was a substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, thereby guaranteeing their salvation. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 7.

- **Quote** - It was just because God so loved the world of elect sinners that He sent His only begotten Son that the world [i.e., the elect by Calvinist definition] might be saved through Him (John 3:16-17). In this passage, "world" does not mean every single person, reprobate as well as elect, but the whole world in the sense of people [elected] from every tribe and nation... Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Page 300., Citing; **Edwin H. Palmer**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged edition, 20th printing, 1999, 44-45.

- **Quote** - Christ's death so clearly demonstrates God's just abhorrence of sin that he is free to treat the world with mercy without compromising his righteousness. In this sense Christ is the savior of all men. But he is especially the Savior of those who believe. He did not die for all men in the same sense... The death of Christ actually saves from all evil those for whom Christ died "especially." Source Cited: http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/piper/piper_atonement.html, Citing; **John Piper** and Pastoral Staff, *TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff*, (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 14-15.

- **Quote** - Some say that all men are Christ's by purchase. But, beloved, you and I do not believe in a sham redemption which does not redeem. We do not believe in a universal redemption which extends even to those who were in hell before the Savior died, and which includes...unrepentant men. We believe in an effectual redemption, and can never agree with those who would teach us that Christ's blood was shed in vain. Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Page 313., Citing; **Charles H. Spurgeon**, *Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon*, available from Pilgrim Publications, Pasadena TX. N. d., 48:303.

- **Quote** - If it was Christ's intention to save all men, how deplorably has he been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. Citing; **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**, Source: <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3>

- **Quote** - "Christ died for all men, but His death benefits the non-elect only in a temporal sense. Because they aren't instantly destroyed. He did not really pay the penalty for their sins." Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/4whom14.htm>, Citing, **Dr. John MacArthur**, see Tape GC 56-19, *"Saving Grace" - Part 2*, Titus 2:11, distributed by GRACE TO YOU, P.O. Box 4000, Panorama City, CA 91412

- **Quote** - Christ died not for an unordered mass, but for His people, His Bride, His Church. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **Lorraine Boettner**, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 157.

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- [3] http://www.monergism.com/directory/link_category/Atonement/Penal-Substitutionary-Atonement/. Thomas Schreiner
- [4] http://sharktacos.com/God/cross_intro.shtml
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- [7] http://www.theopedia.com/Atonement_of_Christ
- [8] <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reconcile>
- [9] R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone*, pg. 103.
Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>
- [10] <http://middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger02.htm>
- [11] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger02.htm>
- [12] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/4whom21.htm>
- [13] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/4whom18.htm>
- [14] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger02.htm>

Irresistible Grace

Does the Spirit Indwell before Belief?

Ever wonder why one person seems interested in the gospel while others are not? Have you been tempted to think that God influences a person's decision for Christ? Has the subject of God's grace clouded your understanding of choice? In this section, we'll evaluate the difference between the Reformed view of *Irresistible Grace* and the Biblical view of grace.

The term *grace* is understood differently by the Calvinist and non Calvinist camps. The statement, '*Saved by grace alone through faith alone by Christ alone*' has been assigned unique understanding by the Reformed. The unsuspecting Christian fully agrees with this statement, taken from the *Five Solas of the Reformation*, and trusts that Reformed scholars are teaching grace correctly. Semantics can fool the listener into thinking the two camps believe the same things. Grace in the Reformed view is called *Irresistible Grace* which delivers before belief, salvation, gifted faith and persevering grace. Without this *Irresistible Grace*, a sinner has no hope of ever being saved, even if they respond to the gospel from their heart. The Reformed teach that believing from the heart constitutes a work of the flesh. The heart they say is too desperately wicked to believe. A person, they say, is not saved unless they believe out of this *Irresistible Grace*. *Irresistible Grace* is only given to the elect which equips them with the gift of faith and from which they believe and are saved. If they have believed from their own totally depraved heart, it is no longer 'salvation by grace' but rather a human work that results in a false salvation or a false conversion.

The obvious question to ask is how in the world would anyone know the difference between a 'true' conversion by gifted faith and a 'false' conversion by belief from the heart? The answer is, if you've received the grace to believe, then you've also received the grace to obey. If you can't obey and persevere in faith and obedience, then you might not be saved. A person, they say, has to believe out of God's gifted faith so that salvation can be credited as 'all of God' and 'none of man.' This position denies personal faith at the point of hearing the gospel. It turns sinners away from faith in the gospel to faith in gifted faith. It turns sinners away from faith in the gospel to faith in election. This subtle game of semantics is a ploy of the enemy that causes much harm to the gospel. Eventually, it turns the gospel from walking by faith to walking by works to prove election. So we have to define our terms to know what is actually being communicated. What the non Calvinist means by 'grace' and what the Reformed mean by 'grace' are two different things altogether. It also needs to be kept in mind that the Protestant Reformation was a reformation of Roman Catholicism that was heavily influenced by the Catholic doctor Augustine.

When Does Grace Appear?

The Bible teaches the grace of God brings salvation to all who believe. Men have always been saved by grace through faith. The question is when does this grace appear? Does grace appear before belief or after? Does it arrive before the cross or after? What kind of grace is in view? Does this grace bestow gifts to enable belief or to enable conformity to Christ? One thing is certain...the grace for salvation appeared with the person and work of Christ.

The Reformed say that grace first appeared not with the cross but with the implicit Covenant of Grace made with Adam after the fall. See charts titled, [Timeline of Covenants pg. 272](#), [Diagram of Biblical Salvation pg. 268](#) and [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270](#). Remembering the implicit covenants of [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#), the Covenant of Redemption, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, all of which cannot be located in the pages of scripture with chapter and verse, but which are philosophical covenants, we see the basis for Irresistible Grace.

The Covenant of Redemption is said to be the intertrinitarian covenant where the Father elected some men for salvation, the Son agreed to die for those elected, and the Spirit agreed to draw and equip the elect. The last of these covenants, the Covenant of Grace, is when grace first appeared according to the Reformed scheme of theology. The Covenant of Grace promised salvation and eternal blessings to those who trust in the successive promises of God. Of course, only the *elect* comprehend and trust these various covenants. Christ is said to have become the covenantal representative fulfilling the Covenant of Redemption promised within the Godhead and the Covenant of Works which required obedience for salvation and death for disobedience. The Covenant of Grace, said to have been made with Adam after he sinned, becomes the first appearance of grace rather than with the first advent of Jesus Christ.

Verses describing Grace

[John 1:17](#) NASB

¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[Romans 5:2](#) NASB

²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

[Eph 2:8-9](#) NASB

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

Grace appeared on earth with Christ and His crucifixion. Grace for salvation arrives for the sinner when the gospel is believed. So to claim that *Irresistible Grace* first regenerates, bestows gifted faith and provides perseverance before belief is claiming that grace arrives before belief. We know the Holy Spirit regenerates and seals a person for salvation after belief. The Holy Spirit doesn't indwell sinners before faith. This would be like the Spirit of God indwelling an unclean bodily temple that hasn't been cleansed with the blood atonement. Belief brings the application of Jesus' shed blood and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is unbiblical to teach that the Spirit indwells a person before belief. However, if one says that the blood is applied before belief, as in Limited Atonement, then it can be said that the Spirit indwells before belief.

The idea that the Spirit indwells the elect before belief creates another dilemma for the Calvinist. If the church is comprised of the elect, and the elect are those whom God chose for salvation in the Covenant of Redemption, then when did the church begin? The church is identified as those who have been marked by the indwelling Holy Spirit. According to Reformed reasoning, the church would have begun with Adam. But the Bible teaches that the church, the body of Christ, began with Pentecost. This dilemma is created when men try to make grace appear before the first advent of Christ.

The Calvinistic doctrine of election creates this confusion which leads to irresistible grace applying the blood of Christ before belief, which Limited Atonement insists upon. If the church is made up of all the elect in time, then the church must have existed in the OT. This is exactly what the Reformed community teaches. They say the church began with Adam and is made up of all the elect in time. Therefore the church was occupied by various people groups in time. The church was once occupied predominantly by the pre-Israel believers, and then later primarily by the Jews. Therefore, it was the church rather than the Jews who would receive the promises of Abraham, it was the church rather than the Jews who would receive the Law and it was the church rather than the Jews who supposedly spiritually received the Kingdom when Jesus came in the first century.

The Bible teaches the church began with Pentecost, the church and Israel are separate programs of God as Romans 10 teaches, and the promises were indeed made to Israel who is awaiting the future millennial kingdom. Israel in the OT approached God through the blood sacrifice of the blood of bulls

and goats which could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), but the church approaches God through the perfect blood of Christ.

Biblically speaking, grace is offered to the sinner through the true gospel of grace. The gospel is the gracious invitation of God to the sinner to become a child of God. The word *call* means to invite. The gospel is the good news of God's love for mankind that is evidenced through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. At the point of personal faith in the gospel, God sends His grace through personal faith to the believer. The sinner is saved by grace through faith. But Calvinists also insists the elect are saved by grace through faith. However, they mean irresistible grace through gifted faith.

The believer is born again by the Spirit and is saved by God's grace. The believer hasn't saved himself; God's grace has saved him. At the moment of belief, grace flowing through personal faith, brings the indwelling Holy Spirit who is a seal and a deposit guaranteeing the inheritance of the believer. The transaction of salvation takes place in an instant. The Bible is clear that the Holy Spirit and the grace of God for salvation come because of and after personal faith, not before. And the accusation of faith from the heart being a work is answered by Jesus: "*Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."* (John 6:29 emphasis mine)

Can Grace be Resisted?

By definition *Irresistible Grace* can't be resisted. By definition resistible grace can be resisted. The term *Irresistible Grace*, used by the Reformed, introduces another opportunity for the Reformed to reinforce their philosophy. Assuming the term irresistible grace is true, they set up a semantics contradiction in terms against which Calvinists argue. They build their case on the assertion that *Irresistible Grace* can't be resisted. But we're not arguing whether or not *Irresistible Grace* can be resisted. We don't even accept the validity of that premise. The real argument is whether mankind can choose to believe truth or reject truth of his own free will. Can man choose to believe? Does man have a genuine choice? Who ultimately makes the choice? Remember that the Calvinist has been taken captive by the philosophy and the empty deception of the traditions of men (Colossians 2:8) and has a stronghold erected to protect that philosophy (2 Corinthians 10:4). When challenged, they immediately retreat to their places of protection, which are pat arguments and answers that have been frequently and consistently repeated by Reformed teachers through sermons and books. When the Calvinist needs reinforcements, he goes back to the Reformed explanations of the scriptures. They build their disputations using the Bible, but with wrong explanations. Their "answers" to objections only embeds the stronghold further because they have answers that keep them from having to abandon election. Words are in essence symbols which denote meaning. The Calvinist has had the symbols or rather the words of God explained to him erroneously and so understands this heresy using the Word. He doesn't know that he's been taken captive and is trapped, all the while accusing the non Calvinist of being confused and trapped. This is why Paul asks the Galatians, "Who bewitched you?" (Galatians 3:1) and why Jesus warned against nullifying truth for the sake of traditions (Mark 7:13).

The Bible, however, teaches that man is fully able to reject the truth of God and the gospel and therefore is able to refuse the grace that is being offered for salvation. Those who refuse to believe have resisted the grace of God. The Calvinist likes to say that God's favor is unmerited, meaning His grace is unmerited and can't be earned. This is another way to back a person into accepting election. If grace can't be earned, then it can't be merited. This means it can't be worked for, meaning that personal faith can't be exercised in belief. It must be unmerited grace that is granted by irresistible grace.

However, God is presenting to all men the truth of who He is, what He's done and His willingness to save. The only *work* that God has given man to do is to believe in the One whom He has sent (John 6:29). So when the Calvinist blows his whistle on personal faith being a work, we have Jesus on our side. This *work* is sanctioned and required by our Lord Himself! And even when man believes the

gospel from his heart, the grace shown to Him by God is still unmerited. Man in no wise deserves or has earned the salvation that has come by the grace of God. He has just opened the door for it to come in. Those who do not receive the love of the truth will be deluded by lies (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

The Reformed redefine words and reinterpret verses to accommodate the Calvinistic gospel, which they are fully committed to. They read scripture as saying that a person is too dead to believe, and therefore need to be chosen by God to receive the *Irresistible Grace* that brings regeneration and the faith to believe. They say that if a man believes from his heart rather than from gifted faith, then the faith isn't genuine and neither is the conversion. It is a false conversion and a human work. Conversely, if a man doesn't believe, it's not because he had a genuine choice to accept or reject the truth. Rather it's because he wasn't chosen to receive gifted faith by way of *Irresistible Grace*. So salvation comes by election rather than by faith.

God's Revelation

God clearly reveals Himself to all men through the miracle of creation which should prompt men to conclude that a Creator exists...that there is a God. All men are without excuse because what is known about God is clearly seen through what is made.

Romans 1:18-20 NIV

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Our Creator God is further revealed to mankind in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. While creation reveals that God exists, the Word of God reveals who He is. He is Jesus Christ, Messiah, Lord and Savior. The Old Testament prophesied who He would be and the New Testament unveils who He is. The gift of Jesus' payment of sins by His death on the cross is God's grace to mankind. The Bible teaches that the preaching of the gospel is God's gracious call to mankind. Scripture also teaches that faith introduces us to this grace (Romans 5:2). That means there is no special grace given to particular men before faith. Reformed theology teaches that *Irresistible Grace* brings 'faith as a gift' rather than grace as the gift (Ephesians 2:7-9) as a result of personal faith. Gifted faith as a result of a prior, special, selective internal grace violates several passages of scripture which teach that grace is the result of faith, not the cause of faith. (Romans 5:2, Ephesians 2:8-9)

Calling

Again, the calling of God is made through the gospel, not through some mystical, internal empowerment for the elect only. The idea of a mystical empowerment and endowment would be completely unknown by the recipient and apart from their will. Salvation happens to them apart from their knowledge. That's why this grace is called *irresistible*. However, God invites sinners to believe. How genuine is love if it is programmed into the recipient? In the Reformed scenario, the beneficiary of *Irresistible Grace* has no knowledge that any transaction has taken place until they respond to the gospel. If they respond to the gospel, then they must be elect. That is of course until they sin. The Calvinist not only believes that *Irresistible Grace* provides the faith to believe, but also the grace to obey. They have been called to glorify God in belief and obedience. If he fails to obey, then doubt is cast on whether he was given *Irresistible Grace*. This is how a 'true' conversion is distinguished from a 'false' conversion.

But in the Biblical scenario, the sinner who responds to the gospel can confidently say that he believed and can mark the point of his belief by remembering his response to the gospel at some point in time. This beginning point of belief, which began in faith, continues in faith. His faith, not his obedience, helps him in times of despair over sin. He goes back to the cross when he first believed and goes to the cross as he continues to believe. The Calvinist has no such beginning point and no such comfort, for he is depending on election as evidenced through his obedience.

The Just Judge

If God were to ostensibly call all men through creation and the gospel, but especially call the elect through an internal *Irresistible Grace*, then God is tampering with the outcome of believing the gospel. He would be massaging the outcome of belief by enabling the elect. This tampering of belief would corrupt His ability to judge justly. He would in essence become an unjust Judge who fixes the verdict beforehand. This partiality violates His character as revealed in the Bible. It violates the overall message of the Bible...that God is calling all men everywhere to believe (repent) and be saved. It mocks His mercy. God's intention toward mankind would be partial to the elect. It portrays His call to believe as merely a charade that only God and the elect are privy to. It impugns the character of God. And this *Irresistible Grace* is special and secretive. The Bible says that God is not a respecter of persons and He has done nothing in secret. (John 18:20; 2 Chronicles 19:6-8)

In explaining why God ostensibly calls all, yet truly enables some, the Calvinist retreats to his stronghold of ideas and argues that God has two different wills; one being a will of desire and the other a determinative will. This is a fabricated and oft time repeated phrase on the part of the Calvinist to justify the system he's committed to and needs to defend. Calvinism becomes an idolatrous system to be honored and protected.

Avoiding Responsibility

Underneath the doctrine of *Irresistible Grace* is a lack of accountability and responsibility to personally believe the gospel and obey the Great Commission. There is no sense of urgency to offer or preach the gospel to neighbors and loved ones since God has foreordained all things that come to pass and has predetermined who will receive the grace to believe. If God is responsible to bring the elect to faith by irresistible grace, then evangelism isn't a primary concern. We see the evidence of this thinking in many Protestant circles where missions are a low priority.

While Moderate and Strict Calvinists give out the gospel hoping to reveal the elect, the Hyper Calvinist generally refuses and even disdains the preaching of the gospel claiming it's a manipulative technique. He feigns love for others saying he is protecting them from a false conversion. For him, exposure to the Word will reveal those who believe the Word from gifted faith thereby making evangelism unnecessary. They reason that if a person comprehends the Bible, then they must possess the Spirit, which means they must be saved.

Since responding to the gospel isn't a necessity, how does one know he is saved? Since the elect cannot know they are saved by faith, they turn to evidence of salvation in their lives. Rather than look to the cross, they look for evidence that the Spirit is indwelling them. Subtly, faith is seen by how one lives life. Obedience is encouraged. If he perseveres in faith and works throughout his lifetime, then he can have some measure of assurance that he was elected to receive the Spirit. The grace to believe is also the grace to persevere. Again, assurance comes by persevering in works, rather than assurance of faith. Major sin causes all bets to be off about whether the person has truly been elected to receive gifted faith through *Irresistible Grace*. There is no beginning point of salvation.

Among the Calvinists, there can also be a profound lack of love for the lost. The Reformed profess a love for all, like the Calvinist god ostensibly professes love for all, but inwardly they know they don't have to care too much because their god doesn't care enough to make salvation available to all.

Again, the Calvinist begins to act like the god they follow. Reformed adherents have supplanted the true God of the Bible with the idol of Calvinism. Their love and devotion toward God and man becomes distorted.

But the God of the Bible demonstrates His love toward all men in that while they were still sinners, Christ died for them (Romans 5:8). He gave up all in order to save and enter into relationship with sinners (Philippians 2:7). This is the God of the Bible and this is the God who loves sacrificially. The true God is the God of the living and of life. The child of God loves those whom God loves (1 John 3:14), and this love includes all of the unsaved. True love is giving out the gospel so that others can be rescued from death!

What about God's Love?

In spite of this twisted theology, most Christians know that God loves all men, is not a respecter of persons and desires all men to come to repentance (obedience to the gospel). But let's say for a moment that the Calvinist is right, that God *has* only chosen some to receive *Irresistible Grace*. Then what about the rest of humanity? What about the person that hears the gospel but wonders if they're one of the elect? Do they get turned away from believing the gospel to wait for some zap that makes them respond? What about the person who is indifferent to the gospel? Calvinists tell both groups to pray that God would grant them the *Irresistible Grace* to believe, rather than choose to believe in Jesus' death and resurrection at that very moment. Inadvertently, they are turning people away from believing by faith. They are telling people that God may or may not love you and may or may not want you to be saved. They are also teaching that you can't know for sure that you're saved until you can produce the persevering obedience that proves you're one of the elect (covered more in [Perseverance of the Saints pg. 123](#)). If we can't confidently tell all men that God loves them and died for them, then what's the point of turning your life over to such a risky possibility? How does this differ from the cults who demand obedience rather than resting in God's patient love? Sinners, in this scenario can't be sure that God loves them, because it seems that God only loves some. True assurance comes when believers know that God loves all men and wants all men to be saved!

Calvinism's Evanescent Grace

It may surprise some to know that Calvin believed that man was so dead in his sins, that he could not even approximate any semblance of faith. He suggests there are some who seem to believe, but either fall away from faith or live lives without reverence for the God they supposedly represent. Since faith of any kind has to be gifted by God and because God sovereignly predestinates everything that happens, John Calvin reasoned that what appears to be a false faith has also been gifted by God. He called this gift of false faith, *Evanescent Faith*.

“... Experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect that even in their own judgment there is no difference between them. Hence, it is not strange, that by the Apostle a taste of heavenly gifts, and by Christ himself a temporary faith is ascribed to them. Not that they truly perceive the power of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith; but the Lord, the better to convict them, and leave them without excuse, instills into their minds such a sense of goodness as can be felt without the Spirit of adoption there is a great resemblance and affinity between the elect of God and those who are impressed for a time with a fading faith Still it is correctly said, that the reprobate believe God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation, though confusedly and without due discernment; not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God; but because, under a covering of hypocrisy they seem to have a principle of faith in common with them. Nor do I even deny that God

illuminates their mind to this extent.... there is nothing inconsistent in this with the fact of his enlightening some with a present sense of grace, which afterwards proves evanescent." ^[1] *Emphasis mine.*

Various Uses of "Grace"

The following scripture passages illustrate the different ways the word 'grace' is used in the Bible. Grace arrived with Jesus Christ, is the death of Christ, is the payment for sin, is the calling of God through the gospel, comes with the knowledge of the Word, brings salvation through personal faith, justifies the believer, equips for service, is the believer's rule of life, will accompany Christ's return, and can be perverted. Let's take these categories individually and compare how the Reformed explain them.

Grace arrived with Jesus Christ

In Reformation theology, grace arrives in history for the elect either at conception or infant baptism. The Bible says grace arrived with Jesus Christ.

[1 Peter 1:10](#) NASB

¹⁰As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,

[John 1:17](#) NIV

¹⁷For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[Titus 2:11](#) NASB

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

The Gospel is the Grace of God

The calling of God, which is the gospel, is God's grace.

[Acts 20:24](#) NASB

²⁴But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

[Galatians 1:15](#) NASB

¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased...

[Colossians 1:6](#) NASB

⁶which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

[2 Timothy 1:9](#) NASB

⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

[Hebrews 2:9](#) NASB

⁹But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

Grace of God brings the Gift of Salvation

If grace has been defined by the Word to be the gift given through believing faith, then grace can't enter into the person before hearing the gospel.

2 Corinthians 8:9 NASB

⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

Ephesians 2:7-8 NASB *Emphasis mine*

⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Faith introduces us to Saving Grace

If faith introduces us to grace, then grace can't bestow faith.

Romans 5:2 NASB *Emphasis mine*

²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

Ephesians 1:6 NASB

⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:7 NASB

⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Justification comes through Grace

The Reformed say that Irresistible Grace brings regeneration and gifted faith, but the Bible says that grace brings justification. The Reformed place justification way after the grace arrives.

Romans 3:24 NASB

²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Titus 3:7 NASB

⁷so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Grace through the Knowledge of the Word

The Word brings grace.

Acts 20:32 NASB

³²And now I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

2 Peter 1:2 NASB

²Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Peter 3:18 NASB

¹⁸but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Grace of God Gifts Believers for Service

The grace that has come through believing and saving faith keeps flowing into acts of service done through continuing faith.

Romans 1:5 NASB

⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

Romans 12:6 NASB

⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

2Corinthians 9:14 NASB

¹⁴while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

2Corinthians 12:9 NASB

⁹And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Ephesians 3:2 NASB

²if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;

Ephesians 3:7-8 NASB

⁷of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. ⁸To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

Ephesians 4:7 NASB

⁷But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift

Grace is the Believer's Rule of Life

The grace that has come with faith becomes the rule of life for the believer. God keeps pouring out His grace on the believer.

Romans 6:14 NASB

¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Hebrews 4:16 NASB

¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Future Grace

The believer continues to depend on the grace he'll receive when he sees the Lord.

1 Peter 1:13 NASB

¹³Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Perversion of the Gospel

The abundance of grace poured out to the believer can be twisted and perverted into either licentiousness by the person who wants to take advantage of God's grace or legalism by the one who wants to deny God's grace by putting believers under the Law as a rule of life.

Galatians 1:6 NASB

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

Galatians 5:4 NASB

⁴You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Hebrews 10:29 NASB

²⁹How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Jude 1:4 NASB

⁴For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Quotes

- **Quote** - 'man must first...be born of God. Then, with the new nature of God, he immediately receives Christ. The two acts (regeneration and faith) are so closely connected that in experience we cannot distinguish them...new birth is the effect of irresistible grace an act of sovereign creation.' Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Pg. 362. Citing; **John Piper and Pastoral Staff**, *"TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff"*, Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997, 12.
- **Quote** - One, read and hear the divine Word . . . Two, give serious application of the mind, and examination of truth in order to understand and feel its force . . . Three, pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit both as a convicting and regenerating Spirit . . . prayer for regenerating grace is a duty and a privilege for the unregenerate man. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **W. G. T. Shedd**, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol.11, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d., p. 472,512-514.
- **Quote** - Augustine accounts for the fact that some men are renewed and some are not, by the unconditional decree (decretum absolutum), according to which God determines to select from the fallen mass of mankind (massa derditionis), the whole of whom are alike guilty and under condemnation, a portion upon whom he bestows renewing grace, and to leave the remainder to their own self-will and the operation of law and justice. Source Cited: http://www.gospeltruth.net/harris/har_cal_pt1.htm, Citing; **William G.T. Shedd**, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 3rd ed. 1865, 70.
- **Quote** - ...Infants that are to be saved (and that some are saved at this stage is certain) must, without question, be previously regenerated by the Lord. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpcowafw.htm>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 542.
- **Quote** - Therefore I affirm with John 3:16 and 1 Timothy 2:4 that God loves the world with a deep compassion that desires the salvation of all men. Yet I also affirm that God has chosen from before the foundation of the world whom he will save from sin. Since not all people are saved we must choose whether we believe (with the Arminians) that God's will to save all people is restrained by his commitment to human self-determination or whether we believe (with the Calvinists) that God's will to save all people is restrained by his commitment to the glorification of his sovereign grace... Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Pg. 374.; Citing; **John Piper**, *"Are There Two Wills In God?"* In *Still Sovereign*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 120-131.
- **Quote** - "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their will, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and the embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it." *Westminster Confession of Faith* Chapter X; Section I & II.

- **Quote** -, . . . his first duty is to set his 'seal that God is true' . . . His second duty is to cry unto God for enabling power—to ask God in mercy to overcome his enmity, and draw him to Christ; to bestow on him the gifts of faith and repentance. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **A. W. Pink**, *The Sovereignty of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992, p.160.

- **Quote** - ...Independent of age... regeneration... can take place in the smallest of infants. We may even take for granted that in the sphere of the covenant of God He usually regenerates His elect children from infancy. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **H.C.Hoeksema**, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 462-464.

- **Quote** - 'A cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim: "Regeneration precedes faith." Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **R. C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 72.

- **Quote** - We need to rethink our Reformed doctrine of salvation so that every limb and every branch in the tree is coursing with the sap of Augustinian delight. We need to make plain that *total depravity* is not just badness, but blindness...and *unconditional election* means that the completeness of our joy in Jesus was planned for us before we ever existed; and that *limited atonement* is the assurance that indestructible joy in God is infallibly secured for us by the blood of the covenant; and *irresistible grace* is the commitment and power of God's love...the *perseverance of the saints* is the almighty work of God to keep us.... Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Pg. 363, Citing; **John Piper**, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy: God's Triumphant Grace in the Lives of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000, 73.

- **Quote** - In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The external (which is made to all without distinction) can be, and often is, rejected; whereas the internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call, the Spirit irresistibly draws the sinner to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg. 18.

- **Quote** - Fallen man is still free to choose what he desires, but because his desires are only wicked he lacks the moral ability to come to Christ. As long as he remains... unregenerate, he will never choose Christ. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, 75.

References

[1] *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, translated by Henry Beveridge.3.2.11 Cited from: <http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/spurgeon.htm>

Perseverance of the Saints

Lordship Salvation

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted with permission from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger05.htm>

The Bible teaches those who have truly believed that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and have truly trusted in His gracious saving work on the cross are saved. The Bible also teaches that the saved have already crossed from death to life and therefore cannot lose their salvation. The believer is eternally secure. The Bible teaches that while he has a new nature, the Spirit of Christ in him, he still has the old nature in his flesh and can sin grievously like King David, or be in anguish over his sin like the apostle Paul. He is equipped to mortify the flesh and live in the Spirit. In order to live the Christian life, Jesus has given the believer His forgiveness, assurance of salvation, a new nature, His Holy Spirit and His Word to make choices consistent with the new nature by faith.

Lordship Salvation is a controversial doctrine which is easily confused. It means different things to various Christians, but is essentially the teaching that the sinner must, at the point of belief, promise or be willing to be obedient. Obedience then becomes the proof of salvation rather than faith. This becomes an issue because believing the gospel is the only condition for salvation. Adding promises of obedience is adding works to belief, which Paul said nullifies faith.

[Romans 4:5](#) NASB

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

[Romans 4:14](#) NASB

¹⁴For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

[Galatians 3:2](#) NASB

²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

[Galatians 2:21](#) NASB

²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

Certainly the new Christian is so in love with Christ that they are willing to do anything for Christ, but this willingness to serve Christ is not a condition of salvation, but rather a result of salvation.

The Lordship Salvation issue is twofold. The first fallacy is belief by personal faith alone isn't enough to save a person. A promise of commitment to obey Christ must accompany belief. The second fallacy is passing judgment on who is and isn't a believer based on the condition of obedience. The issues are really pretty simple; the true believer is saved by personal faith alone, and no one but God can judge who is and who isn't a believer. But there are men who take the simple truths of scripture and twist them to put people under the bondage of the Law and their Reformed system of interpretation rather than under biblical grace and truth. See [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270](#) and [Diagram of Biblical Salvation pg. 268](#).

What Does 'Lord' Mean?

The Bible teaches that sinners must believe in Jesus as 'Lord' and 'Savior.' Most understand what 'Savior' means, but what does the word 'Lord' imply? The predominant Greek word for used in the NT to speak of Jesus as 'Lord' is '*kurios*' which actually means God Almighty or Supreme in authority. The word '*kurios*' is translated in the Bible as lord(10), Lord(625), Lord of lords(2), Lord's (12), lords(1), Masters(8), master(38), master's(3), masters'(1), owner(6), owners(1), sir(11), sirs(1).

The other Greek word used of Jesus as 'Lord' used (4) four times in the NT is 'despotes' and means binding master, husband or ruler. It seems that 'despotes' implies that God is also the supreme Sovereign who has the power to condemn. So kurios, meaning God Almighty, and despotes, meaning binding ruler, are both used of Jesus. However the imbalance between these two uses is obvious.

Throughout the NT, the word 'Lord', used for Jesus, primarily means that Jesus is the Almighty God (Lord, John 8:24) who died on the cross for sinful man (Savior)! We know that these are two necessary components in the gospel concerning Jesus Christ. We are saved by faith, which could also be defined as a whole-hearted embracing of and agreement with gospel truth! When sinner understands and believes that Jesus is God Almighty who paid the penalty of sin on the cross, he is saved. The Spirit indwells him and testifies with his spirit that he belongs to Christ. Obedience then demonstrates the degree of love, thankfulness and respect for Christ.

The Calvinist, however, primarily uses the word 'Lord' to refer to God as both a binding ruler and 'Master' rather than primarily as God Almighty. So for the Calvinist, believing in Jesus as 'Lord' and 'Savior,' really means believing in Him both as 'Master' to be obeyed because He died for you and as God Almighty. If Jesus is Lord, then His title demands obedience and reverence. Certainly Jesus is due both. But the gospel of Calvinism believes that Jesus as 'Lord' and 'Savior' implies agreeing to obey Him as Master and believing that He died for your sins! There is no reciprocal relationship of love communicated in this, only a purchase of the individual for servitude. Obedience then proves you've been saved.

Verses that Emphasize Jesus as Lord (Kurios) and Savior

[Luke 2:11 NIV](#)

²¹today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

[Philippians 3:20 NIV](#)

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

[2 Peter 1:11 NIV](#)

¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[2 Peter 2:20 NIV](#)

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

[2 Peter 3:18 NIV](#)

¹⁸But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

What Does 'Repentance' Mean?

In trying to make obedience part of salvation, the word *repentance* is also redefined. Repentance is the Greek word '*metanoia*' and means a response of compunction or of guilt that results in a reversal of decision...in other words it means a change of mind. But Calvinists, who are generally Lordship Salvation proponents, imply that repentance includes changed actions as well. While it is true that repentance *should* lead to changed actions, the actual act of repenting is a changed mind. This is why God could repent that He had made man (Genesis 6:6). God changed His mind about having created man, but He didn't destroy man. We also remember that John the Baptist warned the Pharisees to produce fruit in keeping with repentance (Matthew 3:8) which would have reflected their heart attitude toward God. A changed mind should reflect changed behavior, but doesn't always do so.

However the Calvinist, when giving the gospel, includes the condition of promising to obey alongside belief. This promise to obey is why their presentation of the gospel is called 'Lordship Salvation.'

Accept Jesus as the Lord (*despotes*) of your life and you will be saved. They cannot be saved unless they promise they will obey by making Jesus Lord of their life.

While it is true that the believer will, after salvation, desire to please and serve Christ, it is not true that promise of obedience is part of salvation. This description of salvation by the Calvinists will eventually lead to fear when the promised obedience is not achieved. Any sin or lack of persevering in obedience on the part of the saint might indicate they weren't really saved in the first place. A deep and debilitating fear over possibly being a false convert sets in when the saint sins. The nagging questions become, 'Are they a professing believer who had a false conversion?' 'Or are they a true saint who has believed by faith?'

Therefore, the gospel becomes a statement like this, "If you promise to believe and obey for you're entire life, and never fall into grievous sin, then you can be assured that you were saved when you originally believed!" ^[1] Notice the assurance of salvation comes at the end of life but not during life. Notice that assurance is by obedience and service. When lack of assurance comes, the believer is taken to the Law. Remember that the Law's function is to point out sin, bring guilt and condemn the sinner. Anyone who looks to the Law will only feel condemned. Therefore the Calvinist, who so desperately yearns for assurance, has their insecurity exacerbated by the Law as their rule of life. Yet, they gather around themselves teachers, mentors and friends who are also under this deception, who only serve to embed the problem further. The result is feelings of guilt and condemnation rather than thankfulness for the unspeakable gift of Christ.

Verses about Belief and Works

[Acts 13:38-39](#) NKJV

³⁸Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

[Romans 4:4-5](#) NIV

⁴Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

[Philippians 3:9](#) NIV

⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

[Acts 16:31-32](#) NIV

³¹They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." ³²Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

[Romans 10:9](#) NIV

⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Easy Believism

Easy believism is the term used by Lordship Salvation advocates to attack simple, personal belief by faith. The Calvinist believes that a person has to be elected by God, gifted with faith and regenerated before belief in order to be truly saved. They say that not all who 'believe' really believe. A person can be deceived into thinking they truly believed. Even John Calvin held to this belief as in [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#).

Calvinism's Evanescent Grace

John Calvin expressed the idea of a false conversion in terms of Evanescent Grace. To Calvin, this grace was given by God as a temporary faith with the end result of deeper conviction for ultimate condemnation. This faith, supposedly given by God, is a different kind of faith than Irresistible Grace

brings. Since Calvinists hold to the idea that faith must be gifted, then professing faith must be gifted as well. One receives a true and saving gift of faith and others receive a false and damning gift of faith. So in this system, God is the One deciding who will be saved and who will be damned and believers cannot ever know for sure whether they're one of the elect until the end of their lives. There is absolutely no assurance of salvation in Calvinism.

“... Experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect that even in their own judgment there is no difference between them. Hence, it is not strange, that by the Apostle a taste of heavenly gifts, and by Christ himself a temporary faith is ascribed to them. Not that they truly perceive the power of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith; but the Lord, the better to convict them, and leave them without excuse, instills into their minds such a sense of goodness as can be felt without the Spirit of adoption there is a great resemblance and affinity between the elect of God and those who are impressed for a time with a fading faith Still it is correctly said, that the reprobate believe God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation, though confusedly and without due discernment; not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God; but because, under a covering of hypocrisy they seem to have a principle of faith in common with them. Nor do I even deny that God illumines their mind to this extent.... there is nothing inconsistent in this with the fact of his enlightening some with a present sense of grace, which afterwards proves evanescent.” ^[2] *Emphasis mine.*

By this teaching, Calvinists shockingly portray the God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2) as forcing untrue feelings on some people, in order to deceive them! Perhaps God just granted them an *evanescent grace* in which they feel saved but really aren't.^[3] The issue is are sinners free to choose to believe or does God supposedly ordain a false belief?

While it may be true that not all who claim to believe really have believed, God does not exclude sinners by ordaining them to a false belief! While it may be true that not all who claim to believe have truly believed, the Bible teaches that we can't see into their heart or pronounce their condition. God has promised to save those who believe. But the Calvinist uses obedience as evidence of election, gifted faith, bestowed grace and regeneration. If one doesn't obey, then one has likely not been elected. This is what the Calvinist means by the *Perseverance of the Saints*. It can be equated with the term 'Lordship Salvation.'

Most people think *Perseverance of the Saints* means faith will always persevere in belief. The Reformed understand *Perseverance of the Saints* to mean that gifted faith and grace will preserve in faith and works. If someone simply believes but doesn't produce the expected works, then that the person is said to have had a 'false conversion' and wasn't gifted with true faith. To protect against 'false conversions,' they attack evangelistic techniques that say 'just believe in Jesus.' To them, this is 'easy believism.' For them, the gospel presentation has to include a promise of obedience. If obedience can't be wrought, then a false conversion has taken place.

Of course no one is saved by simply saying that they believe anything. Evidence of true Christianity may be very subjective at best. We have to test the spirits to see whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). Professing believers do exist. Obviously, some can appear to be believers in Christ when, in fact, they many not be believers at all. The test is; who and what do they believe? There are many that call themselves Christian who haven't believed in Jesus' deity or atonement. Obedience isn't the test, belief is the test!

In light of this, we should accept that a confessing and professing believer is indeed a believer. If there is something in their walk or belief that violates scripture or concerns us, our responsibility is to give them the truth in love, minister the gospel to them, and follow the warnings of scripture rather than inform them they aren't saved! Jesus warns us not to try and look into the motives of another

man's heart....we simply aren't omniscient. But He has given us His word by which we can test the spirits to see whether they be from God. God forgives all sins except the sin of unbelief!

Verses Illustrating True Belief

[Luke 4:18](#) NASB

¹⁸THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED

[Romans 1:16](#) NASB

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[Romans 10:5-7](#) NASB

⁵For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), ⁷or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."

[1 Corinthians 1:17](#) NASB

¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

[1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#) NASB

¹Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

[Galatians 2:14](#) NASB

¹⁴But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

[Galatians 3:8](#) NASB

⁸The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."

[Ephesians 1:13](#) NASB *Emphasis mine*

¹³In Him, you also, **after** listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise

[Colossians 1:22-23](#) NIV

²²But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

[1 Thessalonians 1:5](#) NASB

⁵for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

[2 Thessalonians 2:14](#) NASB *Emphasis mine*

¹⁴It was for this He **called** you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses Illustrating False Belief

[Matthew 7:22-23](#) NIV

²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

[Matthew 12:31-32](#) NASB

³¹" Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. ³²Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Matthew 13:30 NASB

³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NASB

¹Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 11:4 NASB

⁴For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NIV

¹³For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. ¹⁵It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Galatians 1:6-8 NASB

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; ⁷only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

1 John 2:19 NASB

¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

If You're Not Lordship, Then You Must Be Free Grace!

While Lordship Salvation rightly deserves to be refuted, there are scholars who have gone too far in doing so. They have reasoned, in keeping the gospel free from additional requirements that a sinner need only 'call on the name of the Lord.' They say the only requirement for salvation is belief on His Name. That would be fine if they didn't go on to define believing in His name as being free from also believing in His death, burial and resurrection. Anything added to crying out to the Lord is, in their minds, adding requirements to the gospel.

They claim that the gospel of John is the evangelistic gospel, since John states in John 20:31 that *he has written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.* They reason that this statement of John's is the purest form of the gospel. Never mind that Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 that the gospel is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus according to the scriptures. Therefore, in keeping additional requirements away from the gospel, there is no need at the point of belief, to understand Jesus' deity, virgin birth or death on the cross to be saved. Proponents call this view Free Grace theology...which teaches that the grace for salvation is free from additional requirements which they define to be the content of the gospel. The name of Jesus is all that is needed. Others call it the Crossless Gospel because at the point of belief the cross doesn't have to be acknowledged. But the Reformed call this view *Easy Believism* because man is willing himself to be saved.

This theology has some other bizarre teachings that make it an easy target for the Calvinists to argue against. Just like the Reformed who say, "If you're not a Calvinist, then you're an Arminian," they will also say, "If you're not in agreement with Lordship Salvation, then you must be in Easy Believism." It is also interesting to note that many *Free Gracers* are 1-3 point Calvinists who take issue with Limited Atonement and Perseverance of the Saints, but often hold to election.

A Second Line of Attack

The second line of attack from the Calvinists involve statements such as; "You can't tell me that all you have to do is to believe. The demons believe in Jesus and they're not saved." The proof text for such an assertion is James 2:19 "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." This argument is designed to force the idea that more than belief is needed for salvation, because the demons simply believe and obviously they're not saved. This argument is meant to put the believer under works out of obligation rather than from a heart of love.

Those who truly do believe the gospel and who have placed their faith in Christ's identity and shed blood on the cross alone, *should* naturally demonstrate their faith to back up their profession of belief with the obedience of faith. Promises of obedience don't save. Faith saves. And faith naturally produces fruit. James' point is that when true believers demonstrate their faith, they give proof that they're saved. When true believers walk in disobedience, it rightly causes concern in the hearts of onlookers. But because believers are also sinners, they'll fail to always obey. Even Paul agonized over the wretched sinner he was (Romans 7). James' message is a warning to believers to strive to continually walk by the faith they possess. Otherwise, faith appears dead and might in fact be dead. Lordship Salvation puts the believer under a heavy load of guilt and condemnation fearing they might not be saved. The result is looking at works rather than at Christ.

Sanctification Process

Faith appears dead when a believer is not trusting Christ and isn't walking in the Spirit. This doesn't necessarily mean that faith is non-existent. If you don't exercise your faith, you appear to have the same faith as the unsaved or even the demons....a mere acknowledgment of God!

Examine the passage of James 2:21 in both the NIV and in the NKJV. One says that Abraham was considered **righteous** by his works and the other he was considered **justified** by his works. Even Martin Luther stumbled over this verse which caused him to dismiss James as a canonical book.

James 2:18-24 NIV *Emphasis added*

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.* ²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered **righteous** for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is **justified** by what he does and not by faith alone.

James 2:18-24 NKJV *Emphasis added*

¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹*You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!* ²⁰But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹Was not Abraham our father **justified** by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴You see then that a man is **justified** by works, and not by faith only.

James 2:26 NIV

²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

We know that Abraham was justified for salvation when he believed by faith (Genesis 15:6). It was much later when his faith was tested by sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22). Abraham's willingness to *trust* that God would somehow resurrect Isaac, the child of promise, was a fruit of the righteousness that had been pronounced long before (Hebrews 11:19). Abraham's faith was alive and active rather than

appearing dead or non-active. Every believer is *supposed* to produce evidence of faith but doesn't always do so. Even Abraham didn't display faith when he took Hagar to produce a child (Genesis 16) or when he risked Sarah becoming King Abimelech's wife (Genesis 20).

God has given all believers everything they need to live godly in Christ Jesus. Lordship Salvation proponents make sanctification (walking by faith) the prerequisite for justification, not justification that should be followed by sanctification. When a person believes, he is placed in Christ and fully justified. But God wants the believer to demonstrate and live out the righteousness that He has placed in him. Again, God gives us a choice. God encourages believers through the Word and the Spirit to depend on Christ by faith in order to demonstrate the life of Christ in us. If it weren't a choice on our part, but was gifted to us along with salvation, there would be no need for Paul's teachings in this regard. Faith without deeds is dead. But the death that's in view isn't lack of salvation; it's the quenching of faith and the Spirit. The faith appears dead because it can't be seen. The believer is instructed to put self to death daily, so that Christ might live and be seen through them. True salvation is true faith in Christ as Lord and Savior which brings true justification. True sanctification is living the exchanged life that crucifies self so that Christ might live in the believer. So outward deeds aren't necessarily a proof of faith, but can be, like the example of Abraham when he demonstrated his faith by his deeds, but also tried to use Hagar to bring about God's promised seed.

The Problem of Legalism

Because the Reformed use outward deeds to evaluate themselves and others, a scenario sets up where every action is judged. A deadly legalism sets up which essentially puts faith to death, but superficially looks ethical, moral and faithful. It is God who judges the heart and will test each man's work to see if it's built on the foundation of faith in Christ. The faithfulness of the believer will be brought to light as it is tested by fire (1 Corinthians 3:13) and will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Legalism also sets up in Calvinism because of the Covenant of Works in [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#). The Mosaic Law is a vestige of the Covenant of Works, which can't be found in scripture with chapter and verse. The Covenant of Works supposedly promised salvation for obedience and death for disobedience. The Mosaic Law, as explained by Covenant Theology, was given to the church, rather than to the Jews, and is still morally in force today. Hence, Perseverance of the Saints is the expression given to the Law in the church today.

What the 'Lordship Salvation' Captive Experiences

The Calvinist, who has been put under the Law, feels condemned by the Law which is constantly pointing out his sin. He totally lacks assurance, yet knows on a certain level he must be saved because he believed. He feels conflicted because he is holding two mutually exclusive belief systems....saved by belief and saved by obedience. He's confused and fearful when he sees disobedience in himself or others. The insecurity in him causes him to begin looking at the walk of others to see if other believers are having the same trouble he's having. He is looking for some measure of assurance. He's not looking at the cross; he's looking at his walk. He's been trained to inspect the fruit in his own life so he naturally inspects the fruit in others' lives. He can't help but find fault and condemn for lack of obedience. The more faults he finds with others, the more fault he finds with himself. He's also been taught that the *Irresistible Grace* that brought belief also equips him for obedience. His less than perfect walk causes him to wonder if he's really been chosen and elected by God. And since he doubts his own salvation on one level, he postulates that others might not be saved because they're not obeying that well either. The Calvinist doesn't take pleasure in the thought that others might not be saved, but can find no other way to make sense of his observations that are being misinterpreted through the Calvinistic grid. He reasons that others must have not truly believed or must have had a false conversion because they lack obedience and/or understanding. Don't all

believers have the Spirit and the mind of Christ? Without fully grasping what he's doing or why, he assumes he is saved and the other poor sinner isn't. The Calvinist has redefined the gospel to include both belief and a commitment to follow Christ. And somehow judging others, where he appears more obedient, gives him the measure of assurance he so desperately seeks.

How to Spot 'Lordship Salvation'

The Lordship Salvation gospel can be recognized by such statements as, *'make a commitment to Christ'* or *'be willing to follow Christ'* or *"become a Christ follower."* An unyielding commitment to obey Christ is needed. Also the sinner must fulfill the demands of discipleship or at least be willing to fulfill them in order to have eternal life. The true gospel that sets us free is not *what I do for God*; it is *what God has done for me*.^[4] Salvation is a free gift...not a loan paid back by good works!

Check out this statement that John MacArthur makes in his book, *The Gospel According to Jesus*:

"Thus in a sense we pay the ultimate price for salvation when our sinful self is nailed to a cross. . . . It is an exchange of all that we are for all that Christ is. And it denotes implicit obedience, full surrender to the lordship of Christ. Nothing less can qualify as saving faith." (p. 140.)

Lou Maritneau said it correctly,

"An objective, unbiased reading can lead to just one conclusion: Dr. MacArthur demands a promise of life long obedience in "exchange" for salvation. This is man being told he must "offer" what he will do or become in "exchange" for salvation. This is "works salvation."^[5]

It needs to be kept in mind that Jesus paid for our sins and requires faith for salvation not promises of obedience for salvation. We don't pay anything for our salvation but willing give our lives in thankfulness for salvation.

Understanding Lordship Proof Texts

When Obedience is Believing the Gospel

[Acts 5:32](#) *KJV*

³²And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

[Romans 6:16](#) *KJV*

¹⁶Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

[2 Thessalonians 1:8](#) *KJV*

⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

[Hebrews 5:9](#) *KJV*

⁹And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him

[1 Peter 1:22](#) *KJV*

²²Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

1 Peter 4:17 KJV

¹⁷For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? ¹⁸And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Keeping Commands is Guarding and Protecting**1 John 2:3-4** KJV

³And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Deuteronomy 5:10 KJV

¹⁰And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

Deuteronomy 4:30-31 KJV

³⁰When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, AND SHALT BE OBEDIENT UNTO HIS VOICE; ³¹(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

Quotes Opposing Lordship Salvation

- **Quote** - LORDSHIP SALVATION -- To add to the legal confusion, the Calvinist insists that the sinner must submit to His Lordship in order to accept the Saviour. Law to begin with, law to continue with. Source Cited: <http://www.withchrist.org/Mjs/lordship.htm> Arminius, to Calvin, to Paul; **Miles Stanford**, pg. 13-14

- **Quote** - No one questions that there must be a sincere change of mind, a turning from one's self to the Saviour, but Lordship advocates attempt to make behavior and fruit essential ingredients of, rather than evidence of, saving faith. Scripture teaches that the Savior saves "the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6) in their sin, and believers from their sin (Gal. 5:16). Source Cited: <http://www.withchrist.org/Mjs/lordship.htm>; Citing; MacARTHUR ABERRATIONS: An Open Letter to the Independent Fundamental Churches of America (IFCA)

Quotes Endorsing Lordship Salvation

- **Quote** - "Eternal security is a great spiritual truth, but it should never be presented merely as a matter of being once saved, always saved--with no regard for what you believe or do. The writer of Hebrews 12:14 states frankly that only those who continue living holy lives will enter the Lord's presence. Source Cited: <http://www.e-grace.net/ilsrs.html>, Citing; **John MacArthur**, Kingdom Living Here and Now, p. 150

- **Quote** - "Let us not then take refuge in our sloth or encouragement in our lust from the abused doctrine of the security of the believer. But let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end." Source Cited: <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Articles/9835>, Citing; **John Murray** Redemption - Accomplished and Applied, 155.

- **Quote** - "Endurance in faith is a condition for future salvation. Only those who endure in faith will be saved for eternity." Source Cited: <http://www.e-grace.net/ilsrs.html>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, Grace Unknown, 198.

- **Quote** - The Scriptures repeatedly exhort us to persevere, to 'hang in there.' It is only the one who endures to the end who will be saved." Source Cited: <http://onetruetogod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/> Joseph Kindel; Citing; **Roman Catholic**, What Must I Do To Be Saved?, p. 79.

- **Quote** - "Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining that salvation....therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life 'but he who endures to the end.' Source Cited: <http://www.e-grace.net/ilsrs.html>, Citing; **Roman Catholic** *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, article #161.

- **Quote** - "There is a deadly and damnable heresy being widely propagated today to the effect that, if a sinner truly accepts Christ as his personal Saviour, no matter how he lives afterward, he cannot perish. That is a satanic lie, for it is at direct variance with the teaching of the Word of truth. Something more than believing in Christ is necessary to ensure the soul's reaching heaven." Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>, Citing; **A.W. Pink** as quoted by Iain H. Murray in, *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*, 248-249.

- **Quote** - "We cannot 'earn' our salvation through good works, but our faith in Christ puts us in a special grace-filled relationship with God so that our obedience and love, combined with our faith, will be rewarded with eternal life." Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>, Citing; **Roman Catholic**, *Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth*, 23.

- **Quote** - The chief question in dispute was whether a person can be saved by embracing Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. At issue were the necessary conditions or requirements for justification. The debate did not center on merit and grace, but it did (and continues to) center on faith and works. At the heart of the issue is this question: Does saving faith necessarily produce the works of obedience? Source Cited: <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/2000i/congdon2000b.htm>, Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Faith Alone*, pg. 25.

**Notice that the Protestants sound just like the Roman Catholics!*

More Quotes

- **Quote** - "The visible unity of all professing Christians should be our goal...and evangelicals should join others in the Church of England in working towards full communion with the Roman Catholic Church." Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>, Citing; **John Stott**, To the 1977 National Evangelical Anglican Congress at Nottingham.

- **Quote** - "The document urged that Protestant evangelicals and believing Roman Catholics act together as far as possible both in the societal and the evangelistic tasks of the Christian mission, which is in truth the mission of the Triune God, carried out through God's people." Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>; Citing; **J. I. Packer**, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, 149.

- **Quote** - "Catholics are among the most loyal and virile brothers that evangelicals can find these days." Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>; Citing; **J. I. Packer**, *Christianity Today*, July 15, 1985.

- **Quote** - "Simple assent to the gospel, divorced from a transforming commitment to the living Christ, is by biblical standards less than faith, and less than saving, and to elicit only assent of this kind would be to secure only false conversions." Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>, Citing; **John MacArthur**, *Foreword to The Gospel according to Jesus*, ix.

- **Quote** - "We must also own up to the fact that our final salvation is made contingent upon the subsequent obedience which comes from faith." Source Cited: <http://anticalvinism.blogspot.com/search/label/John%20Piper>, Citing; **John Piper and Pastoral Staff**, *"TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff"*, (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 14-15.

Comparing the Two Views

<u>Correct View</u>	<u>Incorrect View</u>
<p>Salvation comes by personally believing Jesus is God and by trusting in His payment for all of mankind's sins on the cross with full faith from our hearts.</p>	<p>Salvation comes by responding to the gospel through gifted faith in Christ's death along with promises to obey and follow Him. Simply believing isn't enough.</p>
<p>After being saved, the believer submits, obeys and surrenders out of thankfulness, joy and trust for salvation, not in order to gain or pay back for salvation.</p>	<p>After being saved, the believer submits, obeys and surrenders by the irresistible grace given to him, which proves he was chosen for salvation.</p>
<p>The believer has assurance by continually trusting that the saving work of Christ paid in full for his sins past, present and future.</p>	<p>The elect have assurance by persevering in belief and good works throughout their lifetime.</p>
<p>The believer knows he has two natures; the old nature which still sins and the new nature which is lived by faith. The power over the old nature is broken freeing the sinner to walk in faith.</p>	<p>The new nature of Christ enables obedience. The old nature and the power of sin is dead. Since sin only comes out of the old nature, if one sins, they question whether they have the new nature.</p>

References

[1] <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger05.htm>

[2] *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989, translated by Henry Beveridge.3.2.11 Cited from: <http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/spurgeon.htm>

[3] <http://www.evangelicaloutreach.org/spurgeon.htm>

[4] <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger05.htm>

[5] <http://indefenseofthegospel.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2007-11-09T06%3A54%3A00-06%3A00&max-results=8>

Faith as a Gift

Where does faith originate?

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted with permission from [http: www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/godgift.htm](http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/godgift.htm)

Have you ever heard faith described as a gift? Have you wondered why faith is called the gift rather than salvation? In the Calvinistic understanding of the gospel, faith is not a response from the heart to the truth of who Jesus is and His work on the cross. Instead, faith is described as a gift from God that enables the totally depraved sinner to believe the gospel. Without it, there is no hope of salvation. Only faith gifted from the Spirit through Irresistible Grace brings true conversion. Gifted faith is essential to the Protestant view of the gospel. If the totally depraved sinner is to be saved, then he must be elected and given the ability to believe. That's where gifted faith comes in. The elect must have it in order to be enabled to believe.

The Reformed base this doctrine on Ephesians 2:8 where salvation is not the gift, but faith is considered the gift. Since faith is considered to be gifted by God, any other faith is a false faith. The thought of personal faith from the heart, apart from the intervention of God, is absolutely anathema to them. *Total Depravity* is one of the pillars of Calvinism and since they assume it is true, then faith must be gifted in order for the totally depraved sinner to believe. See [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270](#) and [Diagram of Biblical Salvation pg. 268](#).

The Problem

The Reformed teach that saving faith is gifted to the elect at the time of regeneration by *Irresistible Grace*. This gifted faith is given before hearing the gospel to ensure a favorable response when the gospel is heard. The primary verse used to justify this interpretation of faith is Ephesians 2:8, but other verses are used to bolster this assertion as well.

[Ephesians 2:8-9](#) *KJV*

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of god: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast."

[1Corinthians12:9](#) *NIV*

⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

[Romans12:6](#) *NIV*

⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

What exactly is 'the gift' referred to in these verses? This is a key question that must be answered. Since salvation is by grace through faith, it's important that we identify the kind of faith that's in view. Many understand Paul to say that faith is the gift of God in this Ephesians passage. This view is inconsistent with the clear teaching of the Bible where man is the one responsible for choosing to believe or reject the gospel.

For example, John 1:12 does not say: 'As many as have been regenerated, to them gave He the power to believe on His Name, even to those who have become the children of God.' But instead says, "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."

Also John 20:31 says, "believing ye might have life." It does not say, "Having faith ye might believe" (which is what one would expect it to say if faith is the gift). So what is 'the gift of God' in Ephesians 2:8? Is it 'faith' or is it something else?

The teaching that faith is a gift is based on an errant interpretation of Ephesians 2:8 which says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Many Reformed men wrongly conclude that the pronoun 'it' refers to 'faith.' What Paul is really teaching is that salvation is the gift of God. There are those who say that 'faith' is the gift of God and there are others who say that 'salvation' is the gift of God. Let's consider these two ways of interpreting the passage as well as two other views which are variations of these two basic views:

Identifying the Antecedent

#1-Faith is the Gift of God

Says that faith is the gift but faith is not of works.

"For by grace are ye saved through **FAITH**; and **THIS FAITH** is not of yourselves, **this faith** is the **gift of God**, **this faith** is not of works, lest any man should boast" (in this case the antecedent of the pronoun is identified as 'faith'). KJV

#2-Salvation is the Gift of God

Says that salvation is the gift but salvation is not of works.

"For by grace **ARE YE SAVED** through faith; and **THIS SALVATION** is not of yourselves, **this salvation** is the **gift of God**, **this salvation** is not of works, lest any man should boast" (in this case the antecedent of the pronoun is identified as 'salvation' which is the idea of the main verb "are ye saved"). KJV

Variation of View #1

Says that faith is the gift but salvation is not of works

They are correct in saying that salvation is not of works; they are wrong in saying that this passage teaches that faith is the gift of God

Reformed men realize that Paul would never have said that 'faith is not of works' and are therefore forced to place an awkward and unnatural parenthesis in the middle of these verses. If the pronoun really refers to 'faith,' then it seems more consistent to use 'faith' all the way through. The reason for the parenthesis is that men are aware of the difficulty in saying that 'faith is not of works.'

Variation of View #2

Says that salvation and faith is the gift but salvation and faith is not of works

This view confuses the gift with the reception of the gift.

This fourth proposed solution says the entire salvation process, including faith, is the gift of God. The IFCA (Independent Fundamental Churches of America) holds this view; "he [the sinner coming to Christ] realizes that the totality of the salvation process is a gift of God, including the grace of God and his own choice to believe (Ephesians 2:8-9)." John Calvin also held this view. Calvin did not believe that the pronoun referred to 'faith' by itself. He believed it referred to the entire salvation process, 'salvation by grace through faith.' Is salvation the gift of God? This view would answer "yes." Is faith the gift of God? This view would again answer "yes" because faith would be considered part of the totality of the salvation process. Thus, according to this view, not only salvation, but the reception of salvation by faith would be the gift of God.

The Greek Proof

The key to understanding Ephesians 2:8-9 is to correctly identify the antecedent of the pronoun "that" [touto]. Does the pronoun **'that'** (v.8) refer to faith or does it refer to salvation?

Some might argue that 'faith' is the nearest antecedent: "*For by grace are ye saved through **faith** (feminine) and **that** (neuter) not of yourselves" (Eph. 2:8). It is certainly true that 'faith' is the nearest antecedent, but since there are a great number of cases in the New Testament where the nearest antecedent is not the correct one, we should be very careful before applying this 'rule.'*

Here is the correct rule that Greek grammar requires be followed:

***Pronouns agree with their antecedent in gender and number.
Their case is determined by their use in their own clause.***

This rule argues forcefully against the identification of 'faith' as the antecedent because 'faith' does not agree with the pronoun in gender. The pronoun 'that' (verse 8) is **NEUTER** and the word 'faith' (vs. 8) is **FEMININE**. If Paul wanted his readers to understand the pronoun as referring to 'faith,' then there is no reason why he could not have used the feminine form of the pronoun [the Greek word *authi*]. This would have settled it. If Paul had used this feminine pronoun then it would be very clear and obvious that FAITH is the gift of God. Paul did not use the feminine pronoun.

Why then did Paul use the neuter pronoun? What is the antecedent? If Paul had wanted to refer to the idea contained in the main verb (the idea of being SAVED), then it would have been perfectly normal and appropriate for him to use the neuter gender. It would have been very natural for Paul to say, "*For by grace ARE YE SAVED through faith and this thing that I'm talking about, namely salvation, is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God...*" If Paul had wanted the pronoun to refer to the idea contained in the verb, the neuter form would be the one to use.

Praying for Faith

The obvious problem with all this positioning is that simple faith is obscured. Put yourself in the place of the sinner. "*If faith in Christ is itself God's gift, then how do I receive this faith?*" Instead of asking, "What must I do to be saved?" I must now focus on the question "What must I do to believe?" If faith is God's gift, then how do I get this gift? Do I pray to God and ask for the gift of faith? Do I sit back and do nothing and hope that I am one of the chosen ones who will be given this gift? How do I get the gift of saving faith? Do I do nothing and hope that God will sovereignly bestow it upon me? Do I do nothing and hope that I am one of God's elect? Do I cry out to God and pray that He will give me the gift of saving faith? It is all very confusing and takes away from where the proper focus of the sinner ought to be, which is upon Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

It is clear from these considerations that Paul was teaching the Ephesians that salvation is the gift of God, not faith. Faith is the response of the sinner who hears, understands and whole-heartedly embraces the gospel with full assurance and belief alone! Faith is said to be the 'hand of the heart' which fully believes and trusts that the gift which God offers is true and genuine. The grace of God flows to the believer through the believer's faith. Faith is the conduit which gives passage through which grace flows. This grace brings the gift of salvation to the believer. The fact that salvation is the gift of God is taught repeatedly throughout the New Testament.

John MacArthur holds to this second option. He teaches that faith is the gift of God and he recommends that the sinner pray to God in order to obtain it:

"Faith is a gift from God . . . it is permanent . . . the faith that God gives begets obedience . . . God gave it to you and He sustains it . . . May God grant you a true saving faith, a permanent gift that begins in humility and brokenness over sin and ends up in obedience unto righteousness. That's true faith and it's a gift that only God can give, and if you desire it, pray and ask that He would grant it to you."^[2]

Notice carefully what MacArthur is saying. He is telling the sinner not to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31) but to pray and ask God to grant the gift of faith. This perverts the gospel of Christ by making prayer the condition of salvation instead of faith. Sinners are commanded to believe on Christ. They are not commanded to pray for the gift of faith.

The Gift of God

[John 4:10](#) NASB *Emphasis added*

¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the **gift of God**, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

The gift is eternal life, not faith

[Romans 5:15-17](#) NASB *Emphasis added*

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the **gift by the grace** of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the **gift of righteousness** will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

The gift of salvation is for all, not the gift of faith only for the elect

[Romans 6:23](#) NASB *Emphasis added*

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord

Here the gift is eternal life, eliminating faith as the gift.

[Romans 10:17](#) NASB *Emphasis added*

¹⁷So **faith comes from hearing**, and hearing by the Word of Christ.

Faith comes after hearing, not before

Quotes

- **Quote** - A dead man cannot...exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is an activity of spiritual life, and without the life there can be no activity.... If God does not give a man faith, no amount of will power and decision can manufacture it for him. Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Pg 452., Citing; **Gordon H. Clark**, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987), 102; cited in Vance, *Other Side*, 515-16.

- **Quote** - The Calvinist maintains that faith is wholly from God, being one of the effects of regeneration. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **W. G. T. Shedd**, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol.11, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d., p. 472,512-514.

- **Quote** - Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not - indeed he cannot - choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ - it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation - it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God. Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; **David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, pg. 6.

- **Quote** - The Bible never says that we are saved *because* of our faith. That would make faith something good in us that we somehow contribute to the process. But it does say that we are saved *by or through* faith, meaning that God must create it in us before we can be justified. Bible Study Fellowship, Romans Notes, Lesson 16, Pg. 4, 1998.

- **Quote** - "For, as regards justification, *faith is something merely passive*, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God's favor but *receiving from Christ* what we lack. Source Cited: <http://onetruegod.wordpress.com/2008/06/27/john-macarthur-heresy-on-lordship-salvation/>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vols. 20–21, III. xiii. 5.

References

[1] IFCA position paper, November 1990, entitled, *Salvation by Grace Through Faith*, Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/godgift.htm>

[2] Transcribed from John MacArthur's tape GC 90-21, *The Nature of Saving Faith*; <http://www.gty.org/search/shop/90-21+>

Regeneration Precedes Faith

Born Again before Believing

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted with permission from: <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>

Regeneration is the technical term, used by all scholars, which simply means to be 'born again.' If the person is born again, then he is said to be regenerated. While the term 'new birth' doesn't occur in the Bible, Jesus does say that a man must be born again (John 3:3). The term 'regeneration' occurs only twice in the Bible (Titus 3:5, Matthew 19:28), but when its Greek word, 'palengenesia' is broken down, it means 'born-again.' Other terms in the Bible which refer to 'born again' are terms such as 'new creation' and 'new man.' Regeneration is the one time experience of receiving new life in Christ where the work of a new creation is begun and when the process of sanctification is set in motion. The regenerate man is no longer the man he once was. This new nature has its own desires, affections, and interests which are all spiritually rooted in Christ and God-centered. The believer is made 'a partaker of the divine nature...' (2 Peter 1:4).

Calvinists teach that regeneration must precede faith. In other words a person must be born again before he can believe! They say a person must have eternal life before he can believe because without it, according to [Total Depravity pg. 73](#), a person is completely spiritually dead in sins and morally unable to respond in belief. This means that faith is impossible apart from being regenerated first. Regeneration is what enables 'faith as a gift' to be utilized.

When a person has embraced [Unconditional Election pg. 82](#), such teaching may appear rational and logically consistent but it is not biblical. This teaching is propagated to support Calvinism's [Limited Atonement pg. 98](#) and ultimately [Covenant theology pg. 52](#), whose Covenant of Redemption justifies election. The bible clearly teaches that one is born again at belief, not born again before belief. If Covenant theology was true, and the elect are born again before belief, then what's the point of belief? The Bible clearly teaches the opposite; that the sinner must respond to the gospel by personal faith. The message of the bible is 'believe and live.' But the extreme Calvinist says, "Live then believe!"

Notice that John 1:12 does not say: "*But as many as have been regenerated, to them gave He the power to believe on His Name, even to those who have become the children of God.*" Rather John 1:12 says, "¹²*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.*" Notice also that John 20:31 says, "*Believing ye might have life.*" It does not say, "*Having life ye might believe.*" In his helpless and hopeless condition the sinner is told to look to the Lord Jesus Christ and live (John 3:14–16)! We sing the hymn "Look and Live." The extreme Calvinist should change the words to "live and look".

The Reformed View of Regeneration

The debate over regeneration and the order it occurs in has far reaching consequences. What a person believes determines how a person thinks, makes choices, and behaves...in short, how he lives. So what the Christian believes will greatly affect the Christian walk. Therefore it's important to get our theology from the Bible and be biblically correct. If our theology contradicts the Bible, then it's wrong. Our faith is then misplaced and not pleasing to the Lord. Reformed theology teaches that regeneration precedes faith. They say the elect must be born again by [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#), at which time the elect are regenerated.

Regeneration and Infant Salvation

Calvinism also teaches that infants, when still unborn, are regenerated, even though they have no cognitive knowledge of Christ. Calvinists also teach that upon birth, infant baptism is to be practiced as a *sign* that the child is regenerate. Calvinism teaches that a baby is regenerated in the womb, and a person can be regenerated for years before he is saved.

John Calvin believed that all the children of believers were spiritually regenerated in the womb. Hence, all the children of the elect will be saved. Calvin reasoned if only the elect are regenerated and only the regenerated can be saved, is there any way of knowing if children are elect? John Calvin comforted the hearts of many by stating that God had already made provision for that need. He suggested that all the children of the elect will be saved.

What are the spiritual consequences of such speculation? First of all, if this is true, we need not concern ourselves with the spiritual condition of our children and our grandchildren. Why? Because if we are elect, our children are also elect, which means their children are also elect, and so on, until our family line comes to an end. While a Calvinist may find comfort in this view, he needs to flip the coin to see what lies on the other side. If it follows that a 'Calvinist' child is elect and will be saved because of his parents' election, would it not also be true that if that child never believes in Jesus Christ, this proves that the parents were never elect? If a parent proves not to be elect, it would mean that his father could not be elect either. The Calvinist 'election domino' must logically fall in both directions.^[1] Furthermore, Scripture stresses that children are not saved because the parents are saved, but because children themselves possessed faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation (Acts 16:31-32, 2 Tim. 3:14-15).

Regeneration and Justification

If the Calvinist believes a person is regenerated before birth or at infant baptism, isn't that the same as being saved? Doesn't the Bible teach that regeneration happens because of justification? When does salvation happen for the Calvinist? If the elect are already regenerated, then what's the point of faith? Again, their system of theology has to be understood.

For the Calvinist, regeneration (born again) and justification (salvation) can be separated by years. For them, regeneration happens in the womb or at infant baptism and justification happens when the gospel is believed. At regeneration irresistible grace also bestows gifted faith. Then years later the elect can respond to the gospel by this gifted faith and receive the Law keeping righteousness of Christ to be fully saved. Thus they can claim that salvation is 'all of God' and 'none of man.' No human effort or work is involved. It is purely monergistic.

The Reformed say the nature of the righteousness for justification is the earthly, Law-keeping righteousness of Christ. Thus, law keeping righteousness, rather than the blood, is what finally saves. But the Bible teaches that salvation is a one time experience, a one moment event, when faith, belief, justification, salvation and regeneration simultaneously occur. Splitting the salvation experience into two phases, sometimes separated by years, gives the room for the Calvinistic gospel to be legitimized.

Regeneration and Relationship to Christ

Calvinism teaches that God first regenerates the elect, and then later in life placing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Calvinism teaches that a baby is regenerated in the womb, and a person can be regenerated for years before he is saved. However, when the Holy Spirit does His work of regeneration in our lives, He at the same time unites us to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are united with Christ, given gifts for service, given His righteousness and more. However, the Reformed claim to have the Holy Spirit indwelling the person before he's considered righteous. The

Reformed say they are regenerated before belief but at belief they receive the Law keeping righteousness of Christ. Salvation is a two step scenario where the Holy Spirit is indwelling the elect before belief. This means the Holy Spirit is dwelling in an unclean or unrighteous temple. The Old Testament picture is clear. The temple could not be entered by the person or God unless it was clean. The problem of being united with Christ before belief creates the problem of the Holy Spirit dwelling in an unclean temple.

Verses Used by the Calvinist

[Ezekiel 36:26](#) NIV

²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

The Reformed use this passage to justify God regenerating the elect before belief. This passage is not addressing individual believers but rather, the prophetic 'house of Israel.' The requirement for anyone to be saved is faith. This passage doesn't mention faith, but doesn't exclude it. Faith is always the manner in which one is saved. Regeneration of individual unbelievers isn't the context, but rather the nation of Israel.

[Ezekiel 18:31](#) NIV

³¹Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?

Here, the responsibility is placed in the hands of men for a new heart and a new spirit. The gift of a new heart signifies the new birth of the nation of Israel through the New covenant, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. However, Ezekiel also conditions the reception of the new heart upon repentance. Those who use this passage to support the view that regeneration of the elect precedes faith appear to be guilty of stretching scripture to fit a particular theological view.

Verses Used by the Non Calvinist

[Ephesians 1:13](#) NKJV

¹³in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

At faith, the believer receives the sealing of the Holy Spirit. The Calvinist places the sealing of the Spirit before belief.

[John 3:16](#) KJV

¹⁶..that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Again the same truth is emphasized—belief precedes salvation. Notice the verse doesn't say that having eternal life the person then believes.

[Acts 2:40](#) KJV

⁴⁰And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Notice what Peter is telling the crowd on Pentecost! He is telling them to believe and save themselves!

[Acts 16:31](#) KJV

³¹Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.

Belief is first and then salvation follows. Faith is a condition of salvation, rather than salvation being the precondition for belief.

[Romans 5:1](#) NIV

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith is what brings justification, which the Reformed would agree with albeit differently. The difference is in the type of faith they hold to. They hold to a faith that is deposited

into the elect by God years before that faith is exercised. The Bible speaks of personal faith that is justified concurrent with that belief.

Romans 4:5 NASB

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

This verse teaches that God justifies the ungodly, not the godly regenerated elect! The Reformed teach that the elect are godly because they possess the indwelling Holy Spirit before being justified.

I Peter 1:23 KJV

²³Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God;

Faith comes is a response to hearing the preaching of the gospel. This verse says nothing of faith coming years before hearing the gospel through irresistible faith.

Quotes

- **Quote** - But how, they ask, are infants regenerated, when not possessing a knowledge of either good or evil? We answer, that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null. Infants who are to be saved (and that some are saved at this age is certain) must, without question, be regenerated by the Lord. ...Many He certainly has called and endued with true knowledge of Himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing: **John Calvin**, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol.11, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962, pg. 541, 542.
- **Quote** - Our children, before they are born, God declares that He adopts for His own when He promises He will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise their salvation is included. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol.11; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962, p.525.
- **Quote** - The Calvinist maintains that faith is wholly from God, being one of the effects of regeneration. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **W. G. T. Shedd**, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol.11, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d., p. 472,512-514.
- **Quote** - In regeneration, God changes our hearts. He gives us a new disposition, a new inclination. He plants a desire for Christ in our hearts. We can never trust Christ for our salvation unless we first desire Him. This is why we said earlier that regeneration precedes faith. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **R. C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 1986, p. 118.
- **Quote** - Only God can bring life to dead souls to enable them to believe. He does this when and where and how He pleases by His Spirit, who regenerates, or gives life leading to faith...As a reformed Christian, the writer believes that counselors must not tell any unsaved counselee that Christ died for him, for they cannot say that. No man knows except Christ Himself who are His elect for whom He died. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/4whom18.htm>, Citing; **Jay Adams**, *Competent To Counsel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970, p. 70.
- **Quote** - "The Calvinist says that life must precede faith, and is logically the cause of faith. Faith did not cause the new birth, the new birth caused faith." Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>, Citing; **C. D. Cole**.
- **Quote** - "Extreme Calvinists put the new birth before faith, since they believe that spiritually dead humans cannot exercise faith and, therefore, need to be born again before they can believe" Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>, Citing; **C. Gordon Olson**, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, p. 39.

- **Quote** - "A doctrine of total depravity that excludes the possibility of faith must also exclude the possibilities of 'hearing the Word,' 'giving serious application to divine truth,' and 'praying for the Holy Spirit for conviction and regeneration.' *The extreme Calvinist deals with a rather lively spiritual corpse after all.*" Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger03.htm>, Citing; Roy L. Aldrich's article, July, 1965, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, "*The Gift of God*", pages 248–253.

- **Quote** - "Infants can be born again, although the faith that they exercise cannot be as visible as that of adults." When the RSB speaks in the notes of John 3 of "infants being born again," it is speaking of the work of quickening God does in them which inclines their will to Him. In Protestantism, regeneration always precedes faith and if God quickens them, the person will surely come . . . Often, regeneration and our subsequent faith happen apparently simultaneously but logically, regeneration must precede faith. An infant's faith may not come until years after God has worked by His Holy Spirit to regenerate him or her [emphasis ours]. Two Biblical examples of infants who were born again are seen in Psalm 22:9-10 and Luke 1:15. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>, Citing; *The Reformation Study Bible*, (formerly called *The Geneva Study Bible*), page 1664.

- **Quote** - Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." New birth is by the Word of God. That it is a sovereign act of God, by His Spirit, none can question. But this verse forbids us from separating, as has sometimes been done, new birth from faith in the gospel. It has been taught that new birth precedes faith; here we are told that the Word of God is the instrument in new birth. Thus while we can distinguish between faith and new birth, we cannot separate them. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; Samuel Ridout, *Numerical Bible*, Vol.6, (NY : Loizeaux Bro., 1903), p. 148-149.

- **Quote** - 'A cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim: "Regeneration precedes faith." Source Cited: <http://www3.calvarychapel.com/library/bryson-george/books/fpocwafw.htm>, Citing; R.C.Sproul, *Chosen by God*, 72.

- **Quote** - For saving faith and repentance to be present, a prior work of regeneration must take place. Scripture is clear and consistent on the point that, because of man's radical fallenness, God is the divine initiator of salvation. <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=23>

- **Quote** - Why do some people repent and respond by faith in Christ to the divine summons to faith while others do not?By this particular reference to God's begetting activity [John 1:13] John refers to regeneration and clearly suggests by his statement that, while faith is the instrumental precondition to justification and adoption, regeneration is the necessary precondition and efficient cause of faith in Jesus Christ. In short, regeneration causally precedes faith. Source Cited: <http://doctrinesofgrace.net/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=23>, Citing; Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), pg. 708.

- **Quote** - Reformed theologians...place regeneration before faith, pointing out that the Holy Spirit must bring new life before the sinner can by God's enabling exercise faith and accept Jesus Christ. Source Cited: <http://www.calvinistchurch.com/>, Citing; Allan R. Killan, "*Regeneration*," *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia* , vol. 2, 1449.

References

[1] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>

Regeneration and the Preaching of the Gospel

Evangelizing the Elect

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
 Excerpted from: <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>

Calvinism believes gospel preaching and evangelism is designed to manifest the faith of the elect. It believes no one can respond to the gospel unless one has been unconditionally elected to receive the *Irresistible Grace* which brings regeneration and the gifted faith. Without these they say it is impossible for any sinner to believe. Only gifted faith, not personal faith, given through irresistible grace allows true faith to be placed in Christ. The Calvinist defends salvation as being 'all of God.' God is totally holy and man is totally depraved. Therefore no human effort or 'work' can be involved in the elect's salvation. This is why they claim that the totally depraved sinner must be elected to receive the work of the cross directly from God for regeneration and later exercise gifted faith when the gospel is presented. At the point of 'believing' the gospel, the elect receive the Law keeping righteousness of Christ that He procured while living on earth. This [Law Keeping Righteousness pg. 151](#) is the last requirement to complete salvation. Hence, the salvation of the elect is wholly of God monergistically, meaning salvation is all God's work from start to finish. Sinful man has no part whatsoever in his salvation. He is completely swept up in the mysterious purposes of God. God foreordained who would be saved and performs everything necessary to bring that salvation about. Man is an inactive recipient of his salvation, exercising no personal responsibility to believe. Therefore the preaching of the gospel is said to be only for the purpose of revealing the elect. See [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270](#) and [Diagram of Biblical Salvation pg. 268](#).

But the Bible clearly teaches that the preaching of the gospel is the means by which God calls and invite sinners into relationship with Him. The gospel is the power of God for everyone who believes. According to the Bible, sinners can't believe and be saved until they hear. The message of God is believe and be saved or reject Jesus and be judged. God has provided everything necessary for our salvation except believing for us...which is essentially what the Calvinist claims God does.

[Romans 1:16 NIV](#)

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

[Romans 10:14-15 NASB](#)

¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

[John 6:29 NASB](#)

²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

God has set the stage for salvation by providing all things necessary for physical life such as creation, sustenance, marriage, families, nurturing, companionship, work, governments, etc. Spiritually speaking, He has also provided all things necessary for salvation; Biblical revelation, prophecy and history, Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sins, truth, the gospel, preachers, churches, minds that comprehend, wills that choose, evangelists, fellowship, etc. God has gone to great lengths to invite men to fellowship with Him. He has provided for salvation to the utmost limits of His character. He has reconciled Himself to man through the cross, but does man want to reconcile with God? God created man with free choice so that love is willingly reciprocated and not forced.

The sinner is equipped to believe or reject the truth of the gospel. He is equipped to hear and evaluate the message. The sinner has been given a lifetime to evaluate the ultimate questions of life.

God reveals Himself to all men through creation. The Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment and continues drawing men through the calling of the gospel. Those who hear the truth and respond in faith are saved. Through this channel of faith directed toward Christ, Christ returns back through this faith the gift of grace. It is grace through personal faith which brings salvation, the righteousness of Christ and many other things as well. Christ and His Spirit has taken up residency within the believer causing the believer to cross from death to life and guaranteeing the inheritance and salvation of those saved.

Vicarious Exchange of Responsibility

So while God has gone to immense lengths and suffering to make salvation available to all men, He doesn't believe for us like Calvinism teaches. This would place the responsibility for who is saved on God, not man. If God were responsible for all who believe, then He couldn't hold men responsible for rejecting Him. The wrath of God awaits all men who reject Him. The responsibility rests on man.

But in Calvinism's reprobation, whether double or single predestination, man can't choose to believe on his own. According to them, faith has to be gifted and initiated by God in order for anyone to believe. Therefore God's choice brings the final outcome. God's choice is the determining factor for who is ultimately saved and who ends up in the Lake of Fire. Ironically in Calvinism, God's choice is vicariously transferred to men, who are credited with His rejection as if it were their own, and are then condemned to suffer the consequences of His choice. This vicarious exchange of responsibility makes God out to be a liar and a murderer. It is a lie to say that all mankind has a true choice when he doesn't. And to condemn men to destruction for His choice makes God a murderer. Calvinism is a horrible blasphemy against the holy character of God.

Preaching the Gospel

Calvinists will often time give out the true gospel in hopes of revealing the elect. They reason it is only the elect who are equipped to respond in belief. The gospel they preach will ordinarily be the words of the true gospel described in the pages of scripture. Many who have heard these words of the true gospel and believed have truly been saved. However, the problem comes when the scriptural words of the gospel are twisted. The new Christian, craving the pure spiritual milk of the Word, is told that while they thought they believed from their heart, it was really gifted faith that was operating. While they thought they made a free will choice, it was really irresistible grace because of election that affected their salvation. The words of scripture are then assigned different meanings to construct a Calvinist gospel and Reformed theology in their thinking. It is a ploy of the enemy to pull the Christian who began with the true gospel, toward a false gospel. Paul warned of this in Galatians 1.

[Galatians 1:6-7](#)

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

The Christian who is saved, and who seeks to understand the depth of the gospel, is given Calvinistic explanations which eventually lead them toward adding works to their salvation through [Lordship Salvation pg. 123](#). The Calvinist explains those who responded in belief were the elect who have been enabled by God to believe. The Reformed Calvinist explains they were even saved before hearing the gospel because regeneration occurs either at conception or baptism. But we would say that in spite of the inconsistency between the Calvinist position and the true gospel, those who respond by making a genuine personal choice are saved. To the Calvinist, the gospel was preached to reveal the elect, but God used it to save sinners.

To most Calvinists, believing from the heart by personal faith is a work and a false conversion. However, the Hyper Calvinist thinks there is no point in even giving the gospel. He thinks evangelism

is manipulative and creates false conversions because sinners might be tempted to believe from personal faith. Any conversion wrought by the will of man is a human work and therefore false. In the hyper Calvinist thinking, God in His absolute sovereignty is the One who produces salvation from start to finish. Man has absolutely nothing to contribute to prompting salvation. Hence, they prefer a person respond to truth through bible reading. If they comprehend the Word and have ears to 'hear,' the Spirit of God must be indwelling them. Keep in mind that many false teachers have a working knowledge of the Word, but twist it to their own destruction.

Philippians 3:18-20 NKJV

¹⁸For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

2 Peter 3:15b-16 NKJV

¹⁵....Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

Another objective of Calvinists in evangelizing the elect is to secure the needed righteousness of Christ to complete the second step in salvation. Strict Calvinists evangelize not only for revealing the elect, but also for acquiring the Law keeping righteousness of Christ for justification. Responding to the gospel is important because the born again before belief elect need have the second requirement of salvation which is justification through the Law keeping righteousness of Christ (see Vicarious Law Keeping). Even many Moderate Calvinists see the righteousness of Christ as a second remaining necessary component for salvation. The cross moves the elect from a negative position of righteousness to neutral, and the Law keeping righteousness of Christ moves them from neutral to positive righteousness. This positive righteousness is in essence, justification. Hence, Law keeping righteousness, which justifies the believer, is necessary for completing salvation. But the Bible says we are justified by faith in the blood of Christ and given His righteousness as part of salvation.

Romans 3:21 NAS

²¹But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets

Romans 3:24-26 NAS

²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

Romans 5:1 NAS

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

In Calvinism, the Law keeping righteousness of Christ is what finally saves and is one of the unstated objectives in evangelism. Regeneration and justification are the two steps of salvation. Not all who call themselves '*Calvinist*' understand these mechanics. Some who have been taken captive to the scheme of Calvinism, through unconditional election, may reject these conclusions, but upon more thorough investigation will find they are true. These Calvinists, who by the way often reject the moniker '*Calvinist*,' don't realize they have been drinking from the broken cistern of Reformed theology and are under its spell.

Praying for Regeneration

So what hope can the Calvinist offer to the non-elect, since he is preaching the gospel to reveal the elect? The Calvinist believes that the preaching of the gospel is an exercise in futility if the listener has not been elected and regenerated first. According to Calvinism, the first thing the unbeliever must get is regeneration because without it man is too dead in his sins to understand the gospel. The Holy Spirit, they say, must intervene by applying the work of the cross to the unbeliever to bring about regeneration. This regeneration is sovereignly and irresistibly bestowed by God and His grace

alone. There is nothing an unsaved man can do to produce regeneration (like faith); furthermore, there is nothing he would want to do since he is dead in sin and hasn't even the slightest desire for spiritual things [Total Depravity pg. 73](#).

So what are the non-elect to do? Since he doesn't have regeneration, he must pray for God's mercy to bestow regeneration. Then he can respond to the gospel. But how can he pray this when God has predetermined all things that will come to pass? And the elect were foreordained before the foundation of the world in the [Covenant of Redemption pg. 52](#)? Reformed theology says it's all been decided beforehand. Since the sinner is too dead in his depravity to believe the gospel, he is told he must pray for regeneration rather than just turn to the cross for salvation. We now discover one of the great inconsistencies in Calvinism: the work of the unbeliever as a "living-dead man."^[1] The tragedy of this position is that it perverts the gospel.

Calvinism states that total depravity means the complete inability to desire, understand, think, or learn about God and His salvation. However, Calvinism also insists on the depraved man seeking, learning about, and praying to God for his regeneration. In the Bible, the sinner is told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, not to pray for conviction or for regeneration. Calvinism tells the sinner the condition of salvation is regeneration and gifted faith, rather than personal faith. The danger of this type of thinking is hearing a twisted gospel message and waiting for a 'feeling' or 'experience' that subjectively confirms to them that they have received the necessary gifted faith, rather than just believe and trust the message simply by faith. Faith is directed away from believing the gospel to gifted faith and regeneration to enable belief. It becomes faith in faith and faith in election, rather than faith in the shed blood of Jesus.

It is interesting to note the Calvinist claims it's impossible for the unregenerate man to believe apart from the Spirit granting [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#). How much harder it must be for the unregenerate and reprobate to pray for regeneration!

Need for Faith

If a man has been regenerated, what need does he have for faith or the cross? He is saved already. If regeneration precedes faith, then faith is unnecessary, for the one regenerated is saved already. Some extreme Calvinists, if they had been in Paul's place, would have answered as follows: What must you do to be saved? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! You are spiritually DEAD and totally unable to respond to God until you are regenerated!

If the Calvinist is born again before belief, which any Bible student would say means saved before believing, then not only what's the point of faith, but what's the point of the gospel, evangelism and missions? The Calvinist sticks with regeneration before belief saying salvation comes later with justification. It's double talk again.

For a moment, let's assume that what the extreme Calvinist is saying is true. Let's assume he is saved before he's even born! How will he know he's one of the elect? In one of three ways; 1) trusting gifted faith, 2) comprehending the Word or 3) persevering in good works. Faith would then be placed in faith, in the ability to understand the Word or in works. The danger of these is imagining you've been gifted with faith, understanding the Word apart from the Spirit, and trusting in good works rather than living by faith.

Adaptive Evangelizing

In Calvinism, gospel preaching is motivated by the desire to reveal the elect. For the non-elect, the Calvinist would advise praying for *Irresistible Grace*, regeneration and gifted faith to believe the message. The message isn't the same for all people everywhere. The gospel is for the elect only while prayer for regeneration is for the non-elect. There is no display of urgency to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...nor is there any love or compassion of God demonstrated for the lost. This

platitude of praying for the gift of grace and faith is the best hope the Calvinist can offer the non-elect. Here the cold heartlessness of the Calvinistic god is unmasked. God didn't die for all mankind and there's no way to know if He loves you personally! And worse yet, there's no way to know if you're one of the elect!

Quotes

- **Quote** - One, read and hear the divine Word...Two, give serious application of the mind, and examination of truth in order to understand and feel its force...Three, pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit both as a convicting and regenerating Spirit...prayer for regenerating grace is a duty and a privilege for the unregenerate man. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **W. G. T. Shedd**, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol.11, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d.), p. 472, 512-514.

- **Quote** - ...his first duty is to set his 'seal that God is true' ...His second duty is to cry unto God for enabling power—to ask God in mercy to overcome his enmity, and draw him to Christ; to bestow on him the gifts of faith and repentance. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **A. W. Pink**, *The Sovereignty of God*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), p.160.

- **Quote** - "The Calvinist says that life must precede faith, and is logically the cause of faith. Faith did not cause the new birth, the new birth caused faith." Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>, Citing; **C. D. Cole**.

- **Quote** - "Extreme Calvinists put the new birth before faith, since they believe that spiritually dead humans cannot exercise faith and, therefore, need to be born again before they can believe" Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>, Citing; **C. Gordon Olson**, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism*, p. 39.

- **Quote** - "once he [the sinner] is born again, he can for the first time turn to Jesus...asking Jesus to save him" Quoted from Dave Hunt, *What Love is This*, pg. 115., Citing; **Edwin H. Palmer**, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, enlarged ed., 20th printing. 1999, 19; Citing **Martin Luther**, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J.I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1957, 19.

- **Quote** - "A cardinal point of Reformed theology is the maxim, 'Regeneration precedes faith.'" Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Pg.115., Citing; **R. C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986, pg 10.

- **Quote** - "Repentance and faith are the acts of regenerated men, not of men dead in sins." Source Cited: <http://www.mission.org/jesuspeople/calvinism.htm>, Citing; **James E. Adams**, *Decisional Regeneration*, McDonough, GA: Free Grace Publications, 1972, 12.

- **Quote** - "It is your decision to choose or reject Christ, but it is not of your own free will" Source Cited: <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/fruits-of-calvinism.html>, Citing; **John H. Gerstner**, *A Primer on Free Will*, Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and reformed Publishing Co., 1982, 10.

- **Quote** - In regeneration, God changes our hearts. He gives us a new disposition, a new inclination. He plants a desire for Christ in our hearts. We can never trust Christ for our salvation unless we first desire Him. This is why we said earlier that regeneration precedes faith. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **R. C. Sproul**, *Chosen by God*, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 1986, p. 118.

- **Quote** - "Hence it follows, first, that faith...is the fruit of spiritual regeneration; for the Evangelist affirms that no man can believe, unless he be begotten of God; and therefore faith is a heavenly gift. It follows, secondly, that faith is not bare or cold knowledge, since no man can believe who has not been renewed [reborn] by the Spirit of God. Source Cited: *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6,, pg 448., Citing; **John Calvin**, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984, pg. 43.

- **Quote** - Spurgeon- If I am to preach faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd indeed! " Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/regenera.htm>, Citing; **Charles Spurgeon**, *The Warrant of Faith*,

References

[1] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>

Vicarious Law Keeping

Salvation by the Obedience of Christ?

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>

The Bible teaches that a person is saved by faith alone through the grace of God alone. Even the *'Five Solas of the Reformation'* declare that salvation is by *'Faith alone* through *grace alone* by *Christ alone* by the *Scripture alone* to the *Glory of God alone.*' By this point, we should be able to recognize that what the Reformed mean by these five 'Solas' and what the Bible means by these concepts, are quite different.

In this section we'll focus on the statement; *'by Christ alone.'* What exactly did Christ do that the Reformed place their faith in? We again need to define our terms. Unfortunately, what they mean by *'Christ alone'* includes not only His death but also His life. So while they say *'Christ alone'* they don't mean *'His death alone.'* True saving faith trusts in the death of Christ on the cross alone for salvation. The cross is where His blood was shed and life given for the payment for sins. The Bible teaches that this one act of obedience by Jesus Christ on the cross provided the propitiation for mankind's sin. Faith in this one act of obedience is what brings salvation to the believer.

Romans 5:19 NKJV

¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

But there are men in Calvinism who teach as doctrine a theory sometimes called 'Vicarious Law-Keeping' which claims that Christ not only *died for us* (a truth which we fully agree with), but that Christ also *lived for us* (during His life) and *kept for us* God's Law and commandments as our substitute.^[1] They teach that the debt man owed to God was paid and fully satisfied not only by Christ's substitutionary death but also by the obedience of His life.^[2] They say that both a sin payment and perfect obedience are required for our salvation. They say that there are two sides to the cross; death (passive obedience) and law observance (active obedience). See [Diagram of Reformed Salvation pg. 270](#) and [Diagram of Biblical Salvation pg. 268](#).

Reckoned Righteousness

A person is declared saved when he believes that Jesus Christ, the perfect God/man, died on the cross while shedding His blood to propitiate mankind's sin. When an individual believes this gospel, his faith is reckoned to him for righteousness. Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Neither Abraham nor believers have any righteousness of their own. Upon belief, the righteousness of God is imputed to them. Faith completely agrees with and is assured that this gospel of God is absolutely true. The righteousness spoken of in Romans 3, which was testified to by the Law and the Prophets, is the righteousness of God to forgive sin based on faith in Christ's death and shed blood on the cross alone.

Romans 3:21-24 NKJV *Emphasis Added*

²¹But now the righteousness of God **apart from the law** is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

Romans 4:11 KJV

¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also

Romans 4:13 KJV

¹³For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Christ's Righteousness

But in 'Vicarious Law Keeping' two things are necessary for salvation. One is faith in the cross and the other is faith in the obedient life of Christ. This may sound theologically correct, but upon closer examination it reveals a twist on the gospel. The Reformed firmly believe that Christ's life on earth was, in part, purchasing the righteousness that would be given to believers to save them. Not only would this gift of Christ's righteousness justify them, it also enables the elect to obey the Law. Christ's righteousness is said to be Law-Keeping righteousness when Romans 3 says this righteousness of God is apart from the Law.

The Bible teaches that a man's faith is accepted by God for the crediting of God's righteousness to his account. At the point of faith, the believer is given Christ's perfect, divine righteousness. The believer is clothed with Christ and His perfection. But the righteousness of Christ's earthly life was Law keeping obedience. The gift of the righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of God, not the gift of Law keeping righteousness.

Active verses Passive Obedience

Once the Reformed convince us of Law Keeping righteousness is necessary for salvation along with the cross, they begin to teach that Christ demonstrated two types of obedience; His active obedience to the Law and His passive obedience on the cross. His perfect obedience to the Law demonstrated His divine perfection. The Law of Moses was designed to reveal sin, and since Christ was sinless, He never broke the Law. Christ was born perfect and without sin because He is God incarnate. His perfect life not only proved He was without sin, but proved that He was God! Thus He was more than qualified to be the unblemished Lamb of God and our sin payment.

But adherents of *Vicarious Law Keeping* say that Christ kept the Law not only to demonstrate that He was the acceptable payment for sin, but also to purchase a righteousness that would be a necessary component for our salvation as well. The cross is said to be His passive obedience that paid for sins and guilt before God, and His obedient life is said to be His active obedience that purchased our righteous standing before God. So law keeping righteousness then becomes a necessary component for salvation. Salvation is no longer based on faith alone. And the nature of this righteousness is Law keeping rather than the character of God. In this scenario, righteousness set on equal footing with faith rather than being subsequent to faith.

This may seem like a small point but we'll see that it becomes very important. Jesus' perfection and deity was recognizable because He kept the Law perfectly. No other man could keep the Law because no other man was God incarnate! His perfect law keeping qualified Him to be the Lamb of God to provide the flawless sacrifice for mankind's sin. Conversely, man's sin is revealed through his inability to keep the Law. The Law was designed to point out sin and convict men of being sinners. "*By the Law comes the knowledge of sin,*" (Romans 3:20).

Reformed theology believes the Law is in effect for the church today. They teach that the Mosaic Law, given to the Jewish 'church,' is a vestige remaining from the Covenant of Grace found in [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#). They say men are still under the moral Law of Moses and need to keep the Law but are unable to do so unless enabled with Jesus' Law keeping righteousness. They teach that this Law keeping righteousness of Jesus is what enables the believer to keep the Law and persevere in good works once saved. Thus the [Perseverance of the Saints pg. 123](#) becomes persevering in the moral part of the Law rather than persevering in trust and faith.

Theoretically, the unconditionally elect person is said to be regenerated (born again) before belief by means of *Irresistible Grace*. When this grace is bestowed, the work of the cross is credited to those whom God has chosen to selectively save ([Unconditional Election pg. 82](#) and [Limited Atonement pg. 98](#)). Irresistible Grace also grants them [Faith as a Gift pg. 135](#). Sometime later in their life these elect will

exercise this gifted faith to respond to the gospel. They say that man is too dead in their sins ([Total Depravity pg. 73](#)) to believe. Therefore gifted faith, rather than personal faith, is necessary to enable the elect to respond to the gospel. When gifted faith is placed in the cross, the elect acquire Christ's Law keeping righteousness. This Law keeping righteousness declares the elect justified, and provides the ability to obey and persevere in moral law observance.

Justification

If the reformed say they've been born again before belief, then what is it that takes place at the point of belief? They say, at the point of responding to the gospel, the elect are given the gift of Jesus' earthly Law -keeping righteousness to meet the requirement of God for righteousness in order to be justified. For them salvation is a two-step process; regeneration prior to gospel belief and justification at gospel belief. To them, the requirement for justification is Jesus' earthly Law keeping righteousness. They think of justification as a judge who is looking for perfect law keeping before declaring the criminal justified. Instead, the Bible says God is looking for faith that Jesus paid for the sinner's crimes. Faith in the blood and death of Christ justifies. Faith is credited for righteousness.

All men break the Law. The Reformed say we need to be judged as having kept the Law perfectly, hence Jesus' perfect earthly Law keeping righteousness is the necessary component credited to the believer's account in order to be saved. Inadvertently, they make Law keeping the requirement for salvation when the Bible teaches that faith is the requirement for salvation.

Necessity of Law Keeping

So you might ask why this distinction is such a big deal or why do they redefine the gospel to include this kind of righteousness? [Reformation Theology pg. 49](#) teaches the church is made up only of the predestined elect throughout history going back to Adam (some say to Abraham). Since the Reformed reason that the church has been the only program of God since time began, it was the church that received and is still under the Law today. The OT Jews merely occupied the church. In the OT, no man could keep the Law. In the NT, the Law is written on our hearts. The Law of Moses is based on the perfect character of God and is confirmed in the consciences of men. Rather than men choosing to obey or sin once saved, the Reformed insist that those who are elect, will prove their election by their ability to obey.

Reformed theology not only makes God responsible for men believing, but also makes God responsible for men obeying. Predestination says that God has foreordained everything. Reformed teaching reasons that God has elected certain men to be saved by irresistible grace. If the elect are given the grace to believe, then they also are given the grace to obey. If Jesus has written the Law in their hearts and has given them Law keeping righteousness, then there is no reason why the elect can't obey. If one can't keep the Law, it reveals they weren't chosen for election and therefore, their salvation is questionable. The elect prove they are saved not only by responding to the gospel, but also by their life of obedience. But the believer isn't under the Mosaic Law. God has reckoned simple faith for righteousness. There is no legal righteousness required for salvation. The Mosaic Law is obsolete.

Salvation by the Obedience of Christ?

The Vicarious Law Keeping view is not readily apparent because it is obscured by the redefinition of theological words. It can be summarized as salvation by the obedience of Christ. Not only are the words 'Vicarious Law Keeping' hard to grasp, but the Reformed assign these words different meanings. The word 'vicarious,' means "to stand in as a substitute for another person." Christ was our substitute sacrifice for sin. The penalty of the Law was death for sin. But the reformed say that He was also our substitute Law keeper. The Law doesn't say obedience is the penalty for sin. The

Bible clearly teaches that no one will be saved by keeping the Law. So in this view, Christ not only died as our ransom for sin to release us, but also lived as our Law keeper to justify us. The Reformed say that His sinless life from birth to death was His active obedience and His sufferings and death on the cross were His passive obedience. Both of these are said to be credited to the account of the elect for salvation.

The Reformed not only change the definitions of theological words, but also use repetition as a way to imbed their teachings. The theological phrase, 'the righteousness of Christ' is an oft repeated expression that has been explained as Christ securing the gift of perfect righteous obedience for those who believe by faith. The meaning usually read into this verse is that Christ has kept the Law for sinful man because God requires law keeping righteousness for salvation. But Romans 3:21 explains that the 'righteousness of Christ,' which was witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets, is apart from the Law. Truly all men are sinners who fail to keep the Law. The penalty for Law breaking is death. Christ paid the death penalty by dying on the cross. If God reckons sinners to have kept the Law because Christ kept the Law for him, then righteousness surely comes by the Law and the death of Christ was in vain (Galatians 2:21). If Christ's Law keeping life could justify and was truly vicarious, then why did Christ have to die? ^[3]

Galatians 2:21 NASB

²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

The question that needs to be asked is, "How does Christ's life and death both have atoning value?" Remember that in the Reformed scheme, Jesus' life of Law keeping obedience provides justification, rather than justification coming by faith. Reformed theology insists that the obedience and sufferings of Christ, prior to the cross, are necessary for our salvation. Calvinism affirms that the death of Christ, His '*passive obedience*' dealt with our guilt, while the merits in the life of Christ, His '*active obedience*' provides for our justification. This teaching is a different gospel. This makes both His life and death salvific. While the Reformed claim salvation by Christ alone, they don't mean His death alone. This unusual twist says that it is not our individual Law keeping that justifies us, which would obviously be an unacceptable work, but rather it is Christ who kept the Law representatively for us that is acceptable. So the merits of His Law keeping are imputed to us for salvation.

It is important to note that the believer is clothed with Christ's righteousness and is to please God, not by Law observance, but by trusting Christ's payment for sin, by walking in truth, love and in the Spirit. Our righteous standing before God is due to our union with Christ. He has become for us the righteousness of God, which we receive by faith, and which is "without [apart from] the law." The life of Christ has no legal basis for our justification. His death provides salvation which prompts the righteous character of God to be given as a gift for justification.

Romans 4:13 NASB

¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The Righteousness of God

Christ's holy and spotless life is profound to those who are spiritually minded. Contemplation of His perfections displayed prior to the cross evokes true worship, for worship does not arise only in our thankfulness and appreciation for His death, but also in consideration of all that He is in Himself. But that is not to say that His life contributes directly to our redemption. Rather His holy character was something essential to His own nature as well as qualifying Him to become the sacrificial Lamb. His holiness was essential, but it is not vicarious for us. The gospel is not that Christ lived His life for our benefit. The gospel is that He "died for our sins, was buried and rose again." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)^[4]

As alarming as this may seem, this Reformed position of justification continues to our present day. The popular Reformed theologian R. C. Sproul has set forth this view in the most extreme terms. He asserts that the cross alone was insufficient, for the death and life of Christ are on equal footing in the work of justification and redemption. Therefore, without the redemptive work in the life of Christ, the death of Christ could not justify the believer. ^[5]

*"The **cross alone, however, does not justify us** . . . We are justified not only by the death of Christ, but also by the life of Christ. Christ's mission of redemption was not limited to the cross. To save us He had to live a life of perfect righteousness. His perfect, active obedience was necessary for His and our salvation. We are constituted as righteous by the obedience of Christ which is imputed to us by faith" ^[6] Emphasis added*

An Evangelical Celebration

Evidence of this teaching can also be found in the 1999 document entitled, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration* (signed by many leading evangelicals including Hybels, Hayford, MacArthur, Robertson, McCartney, Swindoll, Lucado, Stott, Ankerberg, Neff, Stowell, Stanley, etc.) which expressly states:

God's justification of those who trust in him, according to the Gospel, is a decisive transition, here and now, from a state of condemnation and wrath because of their sins to one of acceptance and favor by virtue of Jesus' flawless obedience culminating in his voluntary sin-bearing death.

It later adds:

We affirm that Christ's saving work included both his life and his death on our behalf (Galatians 3:13). We declare that faith in the perfect obedience of Christ by which he fulfilled all the demands of the Law of God on our behalf is essential to the Gospel. We deny that our salvation was achieved merely or exclusively by the death of Christ without reference to his life of perfect righteousness.

What the Bible Teaches

Lamb of God

Jesus' perfect life qualified Him to be the Lamb of God sacrificed for us without spot or blemish!

[1 Peter 1:19 NASB](#)

¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

[Matthew 17:5 NASB](#)

⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

One Act of Righteousness

The Bible refers to one act of Righteousness that paid for sins, not a lifetime of acts.

[Romans 5:18-19 NASB](#)

¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

1 Peter 3:18 NASB

¹⁸For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Only on the Cross

Only on the cross was Jesus forsaken for sin; only there did He pay for sins

Hebrews 9:28 NASB

²⁸so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Mark 15:34 NASB

³⁴At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELOI, ELOI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Took Wrath on the Cross

The wrath of God was poured out on Jesus on the cross, not during His earthly life

John 12:27 NASB

²⁷Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Justified by Faith in Blood

We are justified by His blood, not by His life of obedience.

Romans 5:9 NASB

⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Believers are Dead to Law

The believer is free from the Law. The Law can't justify anyone. The Law is powerless to make righteous. Therefore Jesus' ability to keep the Law doesn't provide for our salvation.

Romans 7:4 NASB

⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

Leads to Law Keeping

This theology leads to Law keeping. Jesus' Law keeping is supposedly credited to the believer so they can persevere in keeping the Law to validate their salvation!

Romans 4:5 NASB

⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Galatians 3:11 NASB

¹¹Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Galatians 2:16 NASB

¹⁶nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

Philippians 3:9 NASB

⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Vicarious Law Keeping Nullifies the Cross

If Christ's Law keeping life had atoning value, then why did He have to die?

Psalms 22**Isaiah 53**

Justified by Faith

Since we are justified by faith in the shed blood of Christ on the cross by reason of His death, we're not justified by Christ's Law keeping.

[Romans 1:17 NIV](#)

¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

[Romans 3:28 NASB](#)

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

[Romans 5:1 NASB](#)

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

[Romans 5:9 NASB](#)

⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

[Galatians 3:11 KJV](#)

¹¹But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.

[Hebrews 10:38 KJV](#)

³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

[Leviticus 17:11 NASB](#)

¹¹for the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

*** Key Point**

If god reckons the sinner to have kept the Law because Christ kept the Law for him, then righteousness surely comes by Law and the death of Christ was 'in vain.' We are justified by faith in His blood and death, not by faith in His Law keeping.

[Galatians 2:21 NAS](#)

²¹I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

*** Bears Repeating**

"The cross alone, however does not justify us."^[6]

Quotes

- **Quote** - Christ's vicarious life began in the manger . . . there his sin-bearing had begun . . . when He was circumcised and baptized it was as a substitute . . . and He was always the sinless One bearing our sins... Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>, Citing; **Horatius Bonar**, *The Everlasting Righteousness*, London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1879, pp. 26, 27, 29, 32.

- **Quote** - "The atonement is the full life of Jesus on earth, but particularly his death on the Cross. It is his full life on earth, because without a life of suffering in which he fulfilled the law, he would not have been able to adequately function as our high priest. But it is most particularly in his crucifixion that we see the atonement. His death paid the penalty for our sin removing that sin from us. We have been paid for. The Crucifixion did not have as its primary purpose a demonstration of God's love for us. It was a substitute death." **Name Anonymous**, 2005.

- **Quote** - In classical (Reformed) Protestant theology the phrase "the imputation of Christ's righteousness," means, namely, that believers are righteous and have righteousness before God for no other reason than that Christ, their head, was righteous before God, and they are one with Him, sharers of His status and acceptance. God justifies them by passing on them, for Christ's sake, the verdict which Christ's obedience merited. God declares them to be righteous because He reckons them to be righteous; and reckons righteousness to them, not because He accounts them to have kept His law personally, but because He accounts them to be united to the one who kept it representatively. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>, Citing; **J. I. Packer**, *Justification*, in Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology, (Ed.) Harrison, Bromiley, Henry, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, p. 306.
- **Quote** - . . . when it is asked how Christ, by abolishing sin, removed the enmity between God and us, and purchased a righteousness which made him favourable and kind to us, it may be answered generally, that he accomplished this by *the whole course of his obedience*. This is proved by the testimony of the Paul, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). And indeed he elsewhere extends the ground of pardon which exempts from the curse of the law to the *whole life of Christ*, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made unto the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). Thus even at his baptism he declared that a part of righteousness was fulfilled by his yielding obedience to the command of the Father. In short, from the moment *when he assumed the form of a servant, he began, in order to redeem us, to pay the price of deliverance* . . . <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Calvin's Institutes*, vol.2, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962, p. 437.
- **Quote** - "In short, when he assumed the form of a servant, he began, in order to redeem us, to pay the price of deliverance" - Source Cited: <http://www.enjoyinggodbministries.com/article/18-the-theology-of-john-calvin/>, Citing; John Calvin, *Institutes* Vol. 2, Eerdmans Publishing, 1962, p 437.
- **Quote** - The Scriptures teach us plainly that Christ's obedience was as truly vicarious as was his suffering, and that he reconciled us to the Father by the one as well as by the other Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>, Citing; Archibald Alexander Hodge, *The Atonement*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1953, pp. 248, 249.
- **Quote** - "We are clothed in His righteousness alone...His perfect obedience provides our righteousness. This is all that is needed, and nothing less will suffice." Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>; Citing: *Is Jesus the Only Way to God?*, Coral Ridge Ministries, D. J. Kennedy, pp. 8-9 undated pg. 8-9.
- **Quote** - God's justification of those who trust in him, according to the Gospel, is a decisive transition, here and now, from a state of condemnation and wrath because of their sins to one of acceptance and favor by virtue of Jesus' flawless obedience culminating in his voluntary sin-bearing death. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarlaw.htm>, Citing; Donald Bloesch, *The Church*, Intervarsity Press, Edition 2, 2002, pg. 298.
- **Quote** - We affirm that Christ's saving work included both his life and his death on our behalf (Gal. 3:13). We declare that faith in the perfect obedience of Christ by which he fulfilled all the demands of the Law of God on our behalf is essential to the Gospel. We deny that our salvation was achieved merely or exclusively by the death of Christ without reference to his life of perfect righteousness. Source Cited: http://www.ligonier.org/thegospel_affirmations.php, Citing: *An Evangelical Celebration*, Affirmations and Denials, point 9.
- **Quote** - "Simply put, God requires that humankind obey an immutable law in a life of perfect, perpetual obedience. The purpose of the Mosaic law...was to prove humanity's inability to live up to these requirements. By perfectly keeping the law, Jesus earned salvation. By suffering our punishment in our place, Jesus extends this salvation to us." Source Cited: <http://www.avoidingevil.com>, Citing: **Keith Johnson** *Major views of the Atonement*, http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_atone10.htm

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- [1] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarious.htm>
- [2] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarious.htm>
- [3] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarious.htm>
See included article by David Dunlap "*The Righteousness of Christ*"
- [4] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarious.htm>
See included article by David Dunlap "*The Righteousness of Christ*"
- [5] <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/vicarious.htm>
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Putting Believers under the Law

Law as the Rule of Life

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Adapted and excerpted with permission from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger11.htm>

The New Testament teaches that a believer has been delivered from the Law of Sin and Death to the Law of the Spirit of Life! It teaches the believer is dead to the Mosaic Law, having been crucified to it, and made alive with Christ. We are to live the Christian life in faith that Christ's death paid the penalty for our sins. We are assured of our complete acceptance in Him. We stand in a position of grace and forgiveness. Therefore, Christians are told not to live out of Law observance, but to live out of the new nature which is faith in Christ. What pleases God is faith, not works. Law observance leads to works not faith. The two are diametrically opposed. We are never to look to the Law to please Christ but to look to the cross in faith and thanks.

The purpose of the Law is to point out sin and condemn the sinner. Its purpose is to bring a person to the end of themselves and cry out for the mercy of God to forgive their trespasses. Once sin is revealed, it is brought to the cross and confessed. Repentance for salvation is the changing of one's mind from thinking of themselves from being basically good to one of being a sinner...and to change one's mind about Jesus from whomever they've thought Him to be to understanding that He is the blessed God who loves mankind and died to pay for all their sins. Jesus Christ is our sacrifice for sin. It is He alone who washes away the offense and guilt of sin.

Living in Law observance is to live out of the flesh. Once the Law becomes our focus, it serves as a list of do's and don'ts which is the opposite of trusting Christ. Law keeping is not the Spirit filled life. We are unable to live the Christian life and please God in the flesh. We must live out of the new nature which is Christ in us. We trust that Christ in us is able to do in the new nature what we can't do in the flesh. The flesh counts for nothing. The Spirit gives life. Mortifying the flesh and trusting Christ is the way Christians deal with temptations, objectives, successes, ministry, and every facet of life. This is the way the whole Christian life is to be lived out....dependence on Christ by faith. It is in remembering the cross that true freedom is found.

Reformed Theology attacks the very essence of the Christian walk and the rule by which it should be lived, by sending the believer back to Sinai (the Law) instead of to Calvary (the New Covenant of Grace). Therefore these proponents of the Law violate several passages that tell the believer not to return to the Law. If you were to confront Reformed men about Law adherence, they would never openly admit that a person is justified by the works of the Law. In fact, they would loudly proclaim just the opposite; "The just shall live by faith." But they also teach that Christ's life purchased the righteousness that enables believers to fulfill the Law. They would say that the shed blood of Jesus saves sinners and the life of Jesus purchased righteousness. The cross is said to have two sides to it. Both His death and life are salvific. Therefore the precedent has been set in their minds, by Christ Himself, that the Law has merit for today.

Reformed theologians consistently teach that believers are under the Law as a rule of life rather than under grace by faith as a rule of life. Usually they say that the believer is not under the ceremonial part of the Law (the sacrificial system) or under the civil part of the Law (national law), but is under the moral portion of the Law (the Ten Commandments, etc.). The overpowering characteristic of all Reformed theologians is their adherence to the doctrine of the believer's relationship to the Law. They would say that the believer is 'not under the Law for salvation' but 'under the law as a rule of life.' Covenant theology teaches the Law was actually given to the church not to Israel because during the time of the Mosaic Law, the Church was primarily occupied by the Jews. Therefore the Law is operative for the church today, thus confirming the importance of Law keeping today. Ironically these

men, who want to be under the Mosaic Law, want the blessings promised to Israel for obedience, but not the cursings for disobedience. The Law promised both!

Not only did the church receive the law in their thinking, but the church also received the kingdom promises. And if the Law will be operative during the millennium and many of them believe we're in the kingdom now, then it stands to reason that the Law is in force today. Some of the Reformed take this kingdom mandate very seriously and are working to put all of society under the Mosaic Law in order to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ. If we're in the kingdom now, then the world should look like it's in the kingdom by submitting to the Law. This branch within reformation circles is known for their Dominionism of which Theonomy and Reconstructionism are subsets. Both Theonomy and Reconstructionism hold to postmillennial eschatology where the church prepares the world for the second coming of Christ. This optimistic preparation of the world would lead to the blending of church and state...a theocracy...like Israel was a theocracy.

Alarming, this Dominionist thinking has entered the ranks of the home schooling movement in the United States to help the next generation further the cause of Theonomy unknowingly! The Christian home schooling movement is part of the long-term revolutionary strategy to create a Theonomy here in the United States. Portraying the United States as a chosen country or a Christian nation is a basic tenet of Theonomy which ignites the passions of the 'chosen church' into action, resulting in the gospel of moralism. The rallying cry used to evoke such emotional involvement is: "We must return America to the values and lifestyles upon which it was founded." [1]

The sad reality is that a man-made theocracy will fail because it is not biblical nor is it God ordained. On the contrary, it will result in a massive persecution of Christians who refuse to participate. If it succeeds, chances are it will mesh with the one world governmental structure of the antichrist.

Dominion Theology

Teaches that Biblical Christianity is to rule every sphere of society

Reconstructionism

Advocates the reconstruction of society

Theonomy

A combination of two Greek words -- *theos* [God] and *nomos* [law] -- asserts that all of society is to be brought into the obedience of the Mosaic Law

Dominionism

Excerpted with permission from: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/dominion.htm>

There is a movement known as Reconstructionism, Kingdom Now theology, Theonomy, and/or Dominion theology, and it is a curious blend of Reformed/Calvinist theology and Charismatic influence.

In spite of the fact that many Dominionists-Reconstructionists-Theonomists are hyper-Calvinists, they write and speak as if they believe that they must help God get things under control down here on earth so that the kingdom can be set up in order that the King Himself can reign properly (through them, of course!). Dominion theology (the belief-system behind the Reconstructionist movement) teaches that through the coming of Christ, the believer has dominion over every area of life. We are now in the Kingdom of God. The question is when will we reign? The dominion of the earth is accomplished not only through prayer and evangelism, but through political process and social reformation.

Dominion Theology is a term used by some social scientists and journalists to describe a theological form of political ideology, which they claim has influenced the Christian Right in the United States, Canada, and Europe, within Protestant Christian evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Dominion

Theology is derived from the Biblical text where God grants humankind "dominion" over the Earth. It is influenced by postmillennialism, a view of the End Times which believes that godliness will eventually pervade secular society (some so-called "Golden Age postmillennialists" believe the present age will culminate in a literal one-thousand-year period of virtual heaven on earth, a millennium) before Jesus returns in a Second Coming.

Three Basic Beliefs

Excerpted with permission from: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/dominion.htm>

1. Satan usurped man's dominion over the earth through the temptation of Adam and Eve
2. The Church is God's instrument to take dominion back from Satan
3. Jesus cannot or will not return until the Church has taken dominion by gaining control of the earth's governmental and social institutions.

The Highlights

Excerpted with permission from: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/dominion.htm>

1. The Old Testament Law is our rule of life for today.
2. The OT Law is to govern over society as well. Since we are called to subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28), DT teaches that God's Law should rule (or dominate) all aspects of society. This view is known as Theonomy (or God's law) "The Christian is obligated to keep the whole law of God as a pattern for sanctification and that this law is to be enforced by the civil magistrate"
3. A central piece of DT is its belief in covenant theology. As a result, it makes no distinction between the church and Israel.
4. DT teaches a high level of social and political activism in order to take over society
5. Followers of DT look for a great end time revival in which the masses will turn to Christ. As a result, DT does not believe in the rapture of the church. According to DT, the world should be, and is becoming, a better place through the efforts of Christians.
6. DT believes that we are in the Kingdom age, but the Kingdom in another sense is yet to come. We are in the Kingdom, and have Kingdom authority, but on the other hand, we are ushering in the Kingdom through our efforts. "The Kingdom is now, but not yet." This is also an axiom of Progressive Dispensationalists.
7. DT is postmillennial in its eschatology. It is believed, that as a result of the reconstruction of society by Biblical principals, that the final aspect of the Kingdom of God will be established on earth. Christ cannot return until a certain amount of dominion is achieved by the church.
8. DT is preterist in its interpretation of prophecy.
9. DT uses an allegorical hermeneutic, especially in reference to prophecy. So we find that the Great Tribulation took place at the fall of Israel in A.D. 70; the Antichrist refers to the apostasy of the Church prior to the fall of Jerusalem; the Beast of Revelation was Nero and the Roman Empire, etc.
10. Reconstructionists teach that the mission of the church goes beyond the spiritual transformation of individuals, to a mandate to change society, a "moral patriotism," if you will, in opposition to secular humanism. For Christ to be pleased with Christians, thereby, they must become political and social activists. We must change the laws of the land, gear up to elect Christians to office, and generally seek to take dominion over our world and bring it under the Law of Moses.
11. Motivation for godly living, based upon the blessed hope -- the return of Christ (Titus 2:13) -- is replaced with the task of restructuring society. This cultural mandate to restructure/restore society is a task that may take thousands of years, even by the DT's own admission (approximately 36,000 years, according to David Chilton)

12. If we are in the Kingdom of God now, then the Charismatics would be correct to teach that health and prosperity is the right of every believer today. This is why "Reconstruction" Calvinists and "Kingdom Now" Charismatics have formed at least a loose unity -- they both have the same world view. They are not looking for Christ to return and set up His Kingdom; they are attempting to set it up for Him
13. A theological anti-Semitism exists in the Dominionist plan to replace of Old Testament Israel with the Church, often called the "New Israel" (i.e., "replacement theology" -- the church replaces the Jews as the new or true Israel, and Israel has no future as a distinct nation within God's plan
14. DT claims that the word "fulfill" actually means "confirm." Thus, Christ did not in any sense fulfill, or complete, or do away with the Law, rather he confirmed it as our rule of life today.

Theonomy

Excerpted with permission from: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/dominion.htm>

During the 1960s, a new movement began within the sphere of Reformed or Covenant Theology, primarily out of conservative Presbyterianism (Reformed and Orthodox). This movement is called Theonomy or Reconstructionism. If Dominion theology says that man is to take dominion of the earth, theonomy is the means by which that dominion is achieved. Theonomists say that the governmental structures need to be reconstructed under the Mosaic Law as the rule of the nations so that man can effectively manage the earth. One of the most important distinctives of Dominion Theology, which drives Theonomy, is its belief that Christians are under the Law as a way of life, and are obligated to ultimately bring the world under that Law.

The word "*theonomy*" derives from the Greek words "theos" God, and "nomos" law. It is used to reveal God as the sole source of human ethics. Cornelius Van Til argued that there "is no alternative but that of theonomy or autonomy" (Christian Theistic Ethics p. 134). At the heart of Reconstructionism's system of belief is a postmillennial view of eschatology.

Since the mid 1970's, Theonomy has been most often used in Protestant circles to specifically label the ethical perspective of Christian Reconstructionism, a perspective that claims to be a faithful revival of the historic Protestant view of the Old Testament law as espoused by many European Reformers and Puritans. Some in the modern Reformed churches are critical of this understanding, while other Calvinists affirm Theonomy. John Calvin and the Continental Reformers, the Westminster Divines and other Puritans, and Christian Reconstructionists, each developed theonomy in this sense. In Geneva, John Calvin organized a theonomy which had disastrous results. People were inspected, fined, banished, excommunicated, tortured, imprisoned or executed for violating civil law or violating Calvin's Institutes!!

The Agenda

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- Christian conversion must be the true experience of the vast majority of people
- Christians must take over the rule of every sphere of society
- Christians must be political and social activists
- Christians take over the rule of the world
- Christians must subject every sphere of society to the Biblical law found in the Old Testament, especially all the moral and civil aspects of the Mosaic Law that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai

The Highlights

Excerpted with permission from: http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm

- The church should now be in the process of reclaiming from the devil what Adam lost. Secondly, the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) commands the followers of Christ to disciple all the nations, which we are told, goes beyond personal salvation and sanctification to the reformation of society;
- "Theonomy involves the application of the law of God, and the biblical law particularly, to all of life. It also requires that one appeal to the whole law of God -- including the civil law of the Old Testament -- as a necessary supplement to being saved by grace through faith.
- Reconstructionism has adopted "covenantalism," the theological doctrine that Biblical "covenants" exist between God and man, God and nations, God and families, and that they make up the binding, incorporating doctrine that makes sense of everything.
- The "Christian" Reconstruction movement (CRM) claims that believers possess a cultural mandate from God to reclaim in this age dominion over human society. In Reconstructionism, the main thrust shifts from the salvaging of lost souls in a doomed society to the reconstruction of a Christian world.

Curiosities

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The Reconstructionist postmillennial view of history has prompted the adoption of some interesting beliefs and interpretations of the Scriptures.

(1) Authority -- Some Reconstructionists imply that the Scriptures by themselves are not sufficient as final authority for faith and practice. One individual indicates that there is a twofold authority, namely, the Bible and theology.

(2) Eschatology -- Reconstructionism is strongly opposed to Dispensationalism. Reconstructionism rejects the idea that the Rapture and the Second Coming will be two separate events at different times. It insists that the Church will be raptured to meet Christ in the air while He is descending to earth in His glorious Second Coming on the last day of world history

(3) Economics -- They believe that when the eventual collapse of the American economy and the present apostate civilization takes place, the Kingdom of God can be developed in the world by the remnant that survives the collapse through the adoption of a medieval, feudalistic type of economy and lifestyle.

(4) Democracy -- Reconstructionists assert that a democracy in which ultimate authority resides in the whim of the people is the inevitable enemy of divinely revealed Christianity.

(5) Humanism and Public Education -- Reconstructionists believe that humanism and God's law are irreconcilable enemies. The modern state is dominated primarily by humanists, who use the state to enforce satanic control over other spheres of life. (Home schooling)

(6) The Mosaic Law and Sanctification -- Reconstructionists strongly reject the idea that the Mosaic Law was abolished when Christ died. Instead of Christ's death abolishing the Law, it enabled man to keep the Law. They insist that God requires all nations, institutions, cultures, and individuals to be subject to the civil and moral aspects of the Mosaic Law. Reconstructionists are convinced that there are only two alternatives open to nations, institutions, cultures, and individuals -- obedience to the Mosaic Law or humanistic self-rule and lawlessness. According to Reconstructionists, Christians are dead to the Mosaic Law as the means of justification, but they are not dead to it as a rule of life. For the Christian, obedience to the Mosaic Law is required for practical living; keeping the Law is the Christian's means of sanctification.

(7) Evangelism and the Gospel -- Reconstructionists propose that personal redemption is not the do-all and end-all of the Great Commission, but our evangelism must include sociology as well as

salvation; it must include reform and redemption, culture and conversion, a new social order as well as a new birth, a revolution as well as a regeneration. This is a false gospel (cf. Gal. 1:8-10).

Verses that Refute Theonomy

Romans 6:14 NIV

¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 8:1-2 NIV

¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Galatians 2:19 NASB

¹⁹For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

Galatians 2:21 NIV

²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Galatians 3:10 NASB

¹⁰For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."

Galatians 3:11 NASB

¹¹Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Galatians 3:18 NASB

¹⁸For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

Galatians 3:21 NASB

²¹Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Galatians 5:3 NASB

³And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.

Galatians 5:4 NIV

⁴You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Galatians 5:18 NASB

¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law."

1 Timothy 1:9 NASB

⁹realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

Hebrews 7:12 NASB

¹²For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

Hebrews 11:6 NIV

⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Quotes

- **Quote** - "The law is the standard of sanctification. It is true that Christ merited salvation for His people by keeping the law, and thus released us from its penalty and condemnation. But God never intended to replace the law as a reflection of His character. The law cannot save us, but it will forever remain a perfect reflection of God's character. For that reason, we strive to keep the law, not as a means of justification, but as the standard of sanctification. The Spirit has been given to us to assist us in keeping the law." http://www.forerunner.com/puritan/PS.Recon_Manifesto.html A
Reconstructionist Manifesto, By **P. Andrew Sandlin**, Published May 2008

- **Quote** - "Since we are Calvinists, we believe the Christian Faith applies to all of life." http://www.forerunner.com/puritan/PS.Recon_Manifesto.html *A Reconstructionist Manifesto*, By **P. Andrew Sandlin**, Published May 2008.
- **Quote** - "We believe ... that the main reason God gave the Holy Spirit to the church in a special empowering was so the church could do even greater works than Christ did while He was on earth, so it can fulfill the commission given to it, bringing all nations and peoples under the authority of Christ and his gospel and word. ... We believe our calling as individuals and families and churches and civil governments is to take godly dominion in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." http://www.forerunner.com/puritan/PS.Recon_Manifesto.html *A Reconstructionist Manifesto*, By **P. Andrew Sandlin**, Published May 2008
- **Quote** - "We fervently support the separations of church and state. But we do not believe in the separation of the state (or any other institution) from God. God by His law must govern the state just as He governs the individual, family, and church." *A Reconstructionist Manifesto*, By **P. Andrew Sandlin** Published May 2008 http://www.forerunner.com/puritan/PS.Recon_Manifesto.html
- **Quote** - "Parents would be required to bring their incorrigible children before the judge and, if convicted, have them stoned to death" **Mark Rushdoony**, *Chalcedon Report* #252, 1986. Source Cited: <http://www.antipasministries.com/html/file0000134.htm>
- **Quote** - "A godly nation must keep the Sabbath to have God's blessing, embracing not only a weekly observance, but the observance of the sabbatical year of rest ... This is a legal national duty and requirement ... For the nation to deny the Sabbath is to deny God" **R. J. Rushdoony**, *Chalcedon Report* #20. Source Cited: http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm Source Cited: <http://www.antipasministries.com/html/file0000134.htm>
- **Quote** - "The dispensational system of theology is inherently and inescapably antinomian...Dispensationalism should be discarded as being a serious deviation from Biblical Christianity." Ed Clowney, J.I.Packer, Roger Nicole, Bruce Waltke, James Boice, etc. are the general editors of *The New Geneva Bible* which was published in the Fall of 1992. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/disp/jmacdis.htm>
- **Quote** - "the coming of the kingdom of God through Jesus the Messiah has transformed and reinterpreted all the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament. . . . Jesus the Messiah, who lived, died and was raised from death *in the land*, has opened the kingdom of God to people of all races, making all who follow him into 'one new humanity' **Colin Chapman**, *Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002, p. 285. Source Cited: <http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=249>
- **Quote** - "The divorce problem will be solved in a society under God's law because any spouse guilty of capital crimes (adultery, homosexuality, Sabbath desecration, etc.) would be swiftly executed, thus freeing the other part to remarry" **Mark Rushdoony**, *Chalcedon Report* #252, 1986. Source Cited: http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm
- **Quote** - "In winning a nation to the gospel, the sword as well as the pen must be used" Source Cited: http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm **Gary North**, *Christian Reconstructionism*, 6:1, p. 198.
- **Quote** - "We believe that the international Church has superseded for all times national Israel as the institution for the administration of divine blessing to the world." **Kenneth L. Genty, Jr.**, "*Supersessional Orthodoxy; Zionist Sadism*," *Dispensationalism in Transition*, Vol. VI, No. 2; Feb. 1993, p. 1. Source Cited: <http://www.raptureready.com/featured/ice/TheIsraelOfGod.html>
- **Quote** - I learn in the law that God abhorred stealing, but it is not because I am under the law that I do not steal. All the word of God is mine, and written for my instruction; yet for all that I am not under law, but a Christian who has died with Christ on the Cross, and am not in the flesh, to which the law applied. I have died to the law by the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4). **John Darby**, cited by Miles Stanford in the paper entitled, *Arminius, To Calvin, To Paul--Man, Law, or Christ-Centered?* Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger11.htm>

- **Quote** - "In a Christian society the death penalty is still appropriate for the crime of worshipping another god on the Lord's day" **James Jordan**, *The Green Papers*, July, 1982. Source Cited: http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm
- **Quote** - "The Christian Reconstruction movement believes that the Bible contains not only a message of personal salvation through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, but also a comprehensive law structure which is alone able to provide a just basis for society. It is committed to the view that sovereignty and thus government belong to God, and that all delegated government, whether to family, church or state (civil government), is to be exercised in obedience to the law of God's covenant. Furthermore, salvation involves every aspect of man's life and thus also the relationships he sustains to the world around him. The exercise of dominion in accordance with the terms of God's covenant is therefore basic and vital to the Christian faith. To neglect this is to deprecate the extent of Christ's victory at Calvary." Brochure announcing the 12th Annual Northwest Conference for Christian Reconstruction, http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm
- **Quote** - Some good men who in grievous error would impose the law as a rule of life for the Christian mean very well by it but the whole principle is false because the law, instead of being a rule of life, is necessarily a rule of death to one who has sin in his nature. Far from a delivering power, it can only condemn such; far from being a means of holiness, it is, in fact, the strength of sin (1 Cor. 15:56). **William Kelly**, cited in *The Complete Green Letters* by Miles Stanford, p. 265. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger11.htm>
- **Quote** - That is, we believe that in the unfolding of the plan of God in history, *the Christian Church is the very fruition of the redemptive purpose of God*. As such, the multi-racial, international Church of Jesus Christ *supersedes* racial, national Israel as the focus of the kingdom of God. Indeed, we believe that the Church becomes "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), the "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29), "the circumcision" (Phil. 3:3), the "temple of God" (Eph. 2:19-22), and so forth. We believe that Jew and Gentile are eternally merged into a "new man" in the Church of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:12-18). What God hath joined together let no man put asunder! **Kenneth L. Genty, Jr.**, "*The Iceman Cometh! Moronism Reigneth!*" *Dispensationalism in Transition*, Vol. VI No. 1; Jan. 1993, p. 1. Source Cited: <http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=249>

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[1] http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/cor/notes_on.htm

The Nature of the Believer

Is it One Nature or Two?

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger06.htm>

Christendom has debated for years about whether the believer has one nature or two. The crux of this argument is whether the old nature was crucified with Christ leaving only one new nature or if the authority over the old nature was rendered powerless, leaving the Christian to reckon the old nature dead to live out of the new nature of Christ. Again the lines are generally drawn along Calvinist and non Calvinist lines. Calvinists claim we have one new nature and the non Calvinists claim we have two natures. Calvinists believe that since we've been given the righteousness of Christ, the old is gone and the new has come. Non Calvinists say the old is dead and passing away, and the believer has a choice in his struggle against sin to either live out of the old or live victoriously by faith out of the new.

Perseverance in the New Nature

In Calvinism, [Perseverance of the Saints pg. 123](#) teaches that the true believer in Christ will, by the [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#) given to them, persevere in good works because he's been given the new nature of Christ. They teach that the new nature is the only nature of the believer and that the old man is completely gone! The believer will never sin grievously because it is the Lord's Spirit in them who keeps them from serious sin. Keeping the whole system in mind, if God sovereignly chooses who will believe and sovereignly predestines all events in history, then by His sovereign design, He will keep the elect from serious sin. Therefore if the Calvinist sins horribly, his theology will force him to conclude he must not have received the *Irresistible Grace* from the Spirit, and therefore must not be saved. Or he might reason that he received the evanescent faith which Calvin spoke about in his Institutes. He worries that if the old nature presents itself at all, then he must not be saved because he's not supposed to have an old nature. The consequence of this thinking is a devastating lack of assurance and a works mentality.

Irresistible Grace to Obey

Calvinists claim they've been given a type of grace called irresistible grace but would never say this grace has been *infused* in them. Infusion of grace is a Catholic doctrine the Reformed argue against. But in essence, the outcome of their walk before God is the same.

The Roman Catholic Church has long regarded grace as an instrumental "infused grace," the receipt of which allegedly imbues Christian persons with the capability of living and functioning with behavioral righteousness and good works to please God. ^[1]

Calvinists teach that since the elect are chosen, regenerated, given irresistible grace to believe, and are imputed with the Law keeping righteousness of Christ, then it also stands to reason that the believer is able to observe the Law out of this one new nature. He expects to not sin grievously because the power of the Spirit in him keeps him from sin. If the old nature presents itself, to the Reformed, it evidences the person hasn't received the Law keeping righteousness of Christ, hasn't been given the grace to obey and therefore isn't elect. In short, he isn't saved. Both non Calvinists and Calvinists would whole heartedly agree the believer is able to live an excellent life out of the righteousness of Christ through the new nature by faith. However, the Calvinist doesn't think the believer can sin grievously and still be a Christian. If they sin, then they must have the old nature and not the new.

Holding such a view has some very practical implications. If the believer possesses only one new nature in Christ, then we should expect the believer to be remarkably free from sin and exhibit a quality of life which is truly exceptional. There are few if any examples of this kind of perfection. We should also expect to see Law keeping flourish, fruit inspection to be rampant and assurance of salvation to diminish, which we exactly see in Reformed circles.

Choice of Which Nature

The Bible actually teaches that the new believer has two natures, the 'old' and the 'new.' The believer is said to have died with Christ and that the old power over the believer is gone but the new power of Christ has come. We are to choose to live out of the new nature by faith and offer ourselves as living sacrifices to Christ. We are to put away the 'old' and live out of the 'new.' Even Paul struggled to live by faith which he chronicled in Romans 7. There would be no need for these verses that instructs the believer to put on the 'new' and put off the 'old' if the 'old' were not still around. Actually sin dwells in our mortal flesh and as long as we're in this body of death, sin will still be present. It is only when the believer is given their resurrection body that they will be done with the old nature of sin.

[Romans 6:13 NIV](#)

¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

[Romans 7:6 NIV](#)

⁶But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

[Romans 7:24 NIV](#)

²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

[Romans 7:14-25 NASB](#)

¹⁴For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. ¹⁵For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. ¹⁷So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²²For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

[Romans 8:13 NIV](#)

¹³For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

[Romans 12:1 NIV](#)

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

[1 Corinthians 15:42 NIV](#)

⁴²So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

[2 Corinthians 4:10 NIV](#)

¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

[2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV](#)

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Responsibility

Man has a deep aversion to being held responsible for his choices. Again, the doctrine of Calvinism makes God responsible for whether or not a person obeys. In Calvinism, God becomes the blame for sin because He's supposedly predestined everything that happens. He also becomes the blame when He has selectively elected who will receive *Irresistible Grace* which keeps the elect persevering in faith and obedience. The believer is put under a heavy load of works and Law keeping to minimize outward sin, not realizing that anything that is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). For the Reformed, good deeds done out of obligation would be a demonstration of faith, but the Christian is to serve through a cheerful heart of faith. Because the Calvinist believes he has one nature, the choice to depend on Christ by faith is undermined. He doesn't realize there's a choice because he doesn't believe he has two natures. Whatever he chooses, is in essence what Christ chooses. He doesn't think to avail himself of walking by the power of God for obedience because he already has the power of God in him for obedience. And if God has foreordained all of life, then what choice does the Calvinist have. It's an impossible situation when there is serious sin. There's no forgiveness for failure. Defeat is crushing and hope is fleeting. The wisdom of God, in giving man choice for obedience and gracious love in repentance, is seen when compared against the despair of Calvinism.

References

[1] <http://www.christinyou.net/pages/gracegod.html>

Payment for Sins Before the Cross?

Bloodless Atonement

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted with permission from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/boresins.htm>

An unusual and less common teaching of reformation theology is the Lord's death on the cross was not the only place where sin's penalty was paid, but that the payment of this penalty also involved our Lord's sufferings apart from Calvary's cross. Reformed men have pointed to the Lord's sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane as being a time when the Lord Jesus was suffering as the Divine Substitute for man's sins. In light of the Reformed doctrine of "Vicarious Law-Keeping," it is not surprising that they should hold to such a view. If Christ's righteous acts were substitutionary, and if His Law-keeping righteousness was imputed to the believer's account, then it would follow that our Lord's non-cross sufferings should also be substitutionary and expiatory (removing sin). They teach that His sufferings throughout His life were expiatory, but the Bible teaches no such thing.

Garden of Gethsemane

There are at least two key reasons why we know that our Lord was not bearing our sins in His own body in the Garden of Gethsemane.

- 1) In His prayers in the Garden, the Lord addressed God as "Father" (see Matthew 26:39, 42, 44; etc.). But on the cross, Jesus referred to His Father as "My God." It is incongruent that the Lord Jesus would have addressed our God as "Father" in the Garden when He was being judged. When Jesus was truly being judged on the cross, He referred to Him as "My God." If He were forsaken by God in the Garden, then how could He address Him as "Father"?
- 2) Immediately following His time in the Garden, the Lord Jesus said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). Notice that the drinking of the cup of God's wrath was yet FUTURE. He had not yet partaken of that cup. He would drink of that cup on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

The Lord's anguish in the Garden was anticipatory of Calvary's cross. It did not involve His suffering for our sins, but it anticipated this awesome event.

Payment on the Cross

The Bible makes clear that Christ's work of bearing the iniquity of us all took place 'on the tree.' As the animal sacrifices took place on the altar so the Lord's sacrifice took place on the altar of Calvary's cross. The strong implication from Matthew 27:45-46 is that the three hours of darkness were the hours when Jesus was forsaken by His Father because it was then that our sins were laid upon Him. What else could have been meant in the hours of the cross, when it should have been broad daylight, but was supernaturally dark at that point? Isaiah 53:6 attests that "the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." God laid our iniquity on His Anointed when He hung on the tree. How unfounded is the idea that our Lord was bearing sins all His life! If He had been, all His life bearing our sins, He must all His life have been abandoned by God who cannot look on sin with the least allowance.

Though Christ was not a sinner, He was treated as a sinner when He was made a curse for us. Though we are not righteous, we are treated as righteous because God sees the believing sinner in His Righteous Son. Christ became a curse for us when God poured out His wrath on our Sin-Bearer. When did He become a curse for us? On the Calvary's tree! Because of our Sin-Bearer we are brought near and we have been reconciled to God. How and where did this take place? On the

cross, by the blood of Christ. And Christ suffered only once for sins. It was a one time act of redeeming love. This teaching is not at all consistent with a lifetime of suffering for our sins. Christ once suffered for our sins, and this is equated with His being 'put to death.' Thus, it is His suffering in death for sins that are involved, not His sufferings throughout His incarnate life. Paul preached the cross, not the Garden. And Christ bore our sins on the cross when He was lifted up, not in the Garden when He agonized in prayer.

Scripture Verses

Leviticus 17:11 NASB

¹¹For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

The payment of sins is made at the point that blood is shed while the life is given as well.

Isaiah 53:6 KJV

⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

There was a specific point when the sins of each man were placed on Christ. This didn't happen throughout His life.

Romans 4:25 NKJV

²⁵Who was delivered for our offenses

He was delivered to death for our sins. No other time in His life, including the Garden was He delivered to death for sins.

Romans 5:9-10 NKJV

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

The death and the blood are both in view in this passage for reconciliation. The life that's in view is His resurrection, not His earthly life!

1 Corinthians 15:3 KJV

³For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures

Notice that Christ died for our sins, not prayed for our sins in the Garden, nor lived for our sins...He died for our sins!

2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV

²¹God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

There is only one point when Christ is made sin for man. He didn't not live His life being made sin nor did He pray in the Garden while being made sin. He was made sin on the cross.

Galatians 1:4 NIV

⁴who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

It was the will of God to sacrifice His Son for the sins of mankind.

Galatians 3:13 NIV

¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

The cursing of Christ was not during His life, nor in the Garden, but hanging on the tree, which is the cross.

Galatians 6:14a NIV

¹⁴God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are told that the cross is where we should marvel at the love of God for His willingness to provide salvation for man.

Ephesians 2:13 NASB

¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

The blood of Christ, which atones for sin, was shed on the cross. Even though the scripture talks about Christ's sweat as if drops of blood, we know that the life had to be given at the same time. Otherwise, Christ's sacrifice would just be blood letting. Scripture speaks of the death and the blood.

Colossians 1:20 NASB

²⁰and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Peace with God is made through the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross, not faith in His life.

1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV

¹⁸For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Sinners are redeemed through the blood of Christ, not through the life of Christ.

1 Peter 2:24 NKJV

²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Sinners are healed, meaning brought to new life, through the cross, not through the life of Christ.

1 Peter 3:18 KJV

¹⁸For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

Sinners are brought to new life (quickened by the Spirit) when they place their faith in the suffering death of Christ on the cross. Christ did not die for regenerated elect, but rather for all men who are unjust sinners.

Revelation 1:5 KJV

⁵And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

The payment for sins is on the cross. The washing away of sins is by Christ's blood. The preponderance of salvation verses is the cross alone....not the cross and His life!

Quotes

- **Quote** - "I do not know whether what Adam Smith supposes is correct, that in the garden of Gethsemane Christ did pay more of a price (for our sins) than he did even on the cross; but I am quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such refinement that they think the atonement was made on the cross and nowhere else at all." Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/boresins.htm>, Citing; **C. H. Spurgeon**, *A Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of our Lord*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979, p.119.

- **Quote** - **Matthew Henry** - (speaking of His sufferings in the Garden) "He was now bearing the iniquities which the Father laid upon him, and, by his sorrow and amazement, he accommodated himself to his undertaking. The sufferings he was entering upon were for our sins, and they were all to meet upon him and he knew it." Source Cited: <http://biblebrowser.com/matthew/26-44.htm>, Citing: **Matthew Henry**, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Matthew to John*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991, p. 320.

- **Quote** - "I feel myself only fit to be cast into the lowest hell; but I go to Gethsemane, and I peer under those gnarled olive trees, and I see my Saviour. Yes, I see him wallowing on the ground in anguish, and I hear such groans come from him as never came from human breast before. I look upon the earth and I see it red with his blood and, while his face is smeared with gory sweat, and I say to myself, "My God, my Saviour what aileth thee?" I hear him reply, "I am suffering for thy sin." Source Cited: http://www.salembible.org/biblestudies/reformed_theo_12.htm, Citing: **C. H. Spurgeon**, *A Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of our Lord*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979, p.131.

- **Quote** - "We may even dare to say that our sins sent Christ to "hell," not to the "hell" (Hades, the abode of the dead) to which the Creed says he "descended" after death, but to the "hell" (Gehenna, the place of punishment) to which our sins condemned him before his body died...God in Christ endured it in our place. Source Cited: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/3505/GodForsakenByGod.html>, Citing; **John R. W. Stott**, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 79, 161.

- **Quote** - **Anne DeVries** about the suffering of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was not just the fear of suffering and dying that made Him speak these words. He had often spoken without trembling of the suffering awaiting Him. He had even mentioned it earlier that night. There was something else bothering Him, something mysterious, much more horrible than the physical suffering awaiting Him. He Himself was surprised at the horrible pain He suddenly felt. That pain was caused by the burden of our sins, the sins of the entire world, which God now placed on Jesus' shoulder. Jesus, who had never done wrong, suddenly felt God's wrath resting upon Him. That wrath directed at all of man's wickedness. Jesus had chosen to bear the punishment for that wickedness, and now He felt the pain that His decision involved. **Anne DeVries**, *Story Bible for Older Children*, Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, Copyright 1979, 126: Gethsemane, Pg. 201.

The Five Solas of the Reformation

Another Way to Explain Reformed Theology

The Five Solas of the Reformation have been held up by many leaders in the visible church as a comprehensive statement expressing the essence of the Reformation of Catholicism. The Reformers' were attempting to bring the 'one holy, catholic and apostolic church' back to that original message for which it was created.^[1] The Five Solas of the Reformation have lasted through the centuries as a tool to combat the influences that seek to undo the intent of the Reformation. Today it is used to help ward off efforts that threaten the purity of the Reformation.

The Five Solas are as follows; Sola Scriptura, Solus Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide and Soli Deo Gloria. They essentially mean Scripture alone, Christ alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, to the Glory of God alone. Ostensibly, these look like a condensed and comprehensive statement of true faith, however, each phrase has been redefined to point toward pure Reformation theology and its Calvinistic gospel.

Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone

Sola Scriptura is used to defend the use of the scripture alone as sufficient to bind the conscience, teach all that is necessary for salvation, and teach proper Christian behavior.^[2] However, notice that 'sola scriptura' doesn't specifically mean the gospel. It doesn't say the gospel alone, it says scripture alone. This provides enough room for some Reformed camps to minimize the cross to instead claim that bible comprehension is able to quicken the faith of the elect. The bible teaches that faith in the gospel is what saves.

1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NASB

¹Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJV

¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Another problem with the phrase 'scripture alone' is that the hearer is led to believe Reformed teachers are doctrinally correct when they only use the scriptures. Surely, extra biblical sources are not to be added to the purity of the Word, but deception can easily be implanted using the Word if it is explained wrongly. Therefore, the scriptures must be interpreted using the whole counsel of God and with His character in mind. No verse should be interpreted in ways that violate the nature of His attributes. So to say that God unconditionally elects some, thereby reprobating others, is a violation of His attributes that reveals selective election to be a false interpretation of the scripture passages that 'seem' to teach this type of election. One must keep the character of God as the lens through which passages are understood. Hence, claiming 'Scripture Alone' doesn't mean one has the truth alone!

Sola Christus - Christ Alone

'Sola Christus' is the phrase that every born again believer would agree with. Christ alone provides salvation through His death and shed blood on the cross paying for the sins of mankind, then raising to new life to prove He is God and is able to raise believers to life in resurrection. The Reformed understand that 'Christ alone' is absolutely essential to the gospel, their view of the gospel.

The Reformed consider the phrase 'Christ Alone' to represent the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ on the cross to provide reconciliation to the Father through His substitutionary death, and through His sinless life under the Law, provides righteousness for believers which brings their justification. This theological statement sounds doctrinally correct, yet it provides room for salvation through both His life and His death ([Vicarious Law Keeping pg. 151](#)), and the penal substitutionary view of [Limited Atonement pg. 98](#). True salvation absolutely comes by 'Christ Alone,' but biblically, this means only faith in His 'death alone.' The term 'Christ Alone' in the hands of the Calvinist, leaves room for His life to be salvific as well as His death.

Sola Gratia - Grace Alone

Sola Gratia means salvation through 'Grace Alone.' All Bible believers agree that God's grace is what ultimately regenerates a person. But what exactly prompts the grace of God to flow? Here we see that how one defines the nature of grace, determines what kind of 'Grace Alone' is in view.

The Reformed protest loudly against pleas made for sinners to believe from the human heart. They say that altar calls manipulate the masses into false conversions. They abhor the self-esteem movements, church growth movements, Emergent movement, or any other marketing technique that obscures the total depravity of the sinner who is in need of God's [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#) which brings both [Gifted Faith pg. 135](#) and regenerating grace. Hence the Reformed say that the elect are saved through Irresistible Grace alone which regenerates the elect before belief and gifts them with the necessary faith to believe the gospel when it is presented. So 'Grace Alone' really means Irresistible Grace alone that is active to regenerate before even hearing the gospel.

The Bible teaches that faith introduces the sinner to the grace of God that is returned back to the sinner through their channel of faith prompting the regeneration of the sinner. Sinners are depraved, yet not physically dead. Hence the depraved sinner can reason through the truth of the gospel and make a decision to believe or reject the salvation being offered by God. Believing sinners are saved through God's grace alone, but not through Calvinistic Irresistible Grace alone.

Sole Fide - Faith Alone

Sole Fide is the Latin term used by the Reformed to affirm that sinners are saved by 'Faith Alone' through 'Grace Alone' because of 'Christ Alone.' They mention that 'Faith Alone' causes some to shrink back because the way of salvation is narrow. They say that modern church techniques cause the Word to be preached infrequently causing the church to lose its true gospel. The true gospel for the Reformed Calvinist is Christ as our substitute payment for the elect's sins so that His death actually completed our salvation. Faith in any other way of understanding this gospel of Limited Atonement is considered false. This is the narrow view of faith alone they hold. They say that faith should be in what Christ has completely done for us, not in what we attempt to do in reaching out to Him. Hence faith alone is in what Christ does, not what man does. Believing the gospel from the human heart is not true salvation. True salvation is belief in Christ's actual completed transaction on the cross through gifted faith. False faith believes the supposedly false gospel that Christ died for the sins of the whole world and is potentially ready to save any sinner who believes from their heart.

Soli Deo Gloria- To the Glory of God Alone

Soli Deo Gloria, to the 'Glory of God Alone,' is the phrase meant to elicit awe and inspiration from those who worship God for providing His gracious payment for the salvation of mankind. God alone deserves thanksgiving and praise for the costly payment of sin provided through His Son. God will never cease to be worshiped throughout eternity for His unspeakable gift.

While the Reformed rightly point out that God is sometimes not the center of worship in the church, and point out various heretical practices within its walls, many of their criticisms are motivated by protecting the honor and glory that God alone deserves. The Reform so revere God in His holiness and His sovereignty in providing monergistic (God alone) salvation, that anything that man contributes to salvation (synergistic) is tainted and produces a false conversion. They reason that if man contributes faith from his heart to salvation, then man can take some of God's glory for himself. If man can make decisions for himself, then he is in essence detracting from the sovereignty of God. God is to be worshiped for the good and the bad that He predestined. Man is not to answer back to God, which puts himself on level with God. God is to be worshiped, obeyed, submitted to and revered for He alone provided and sovereignly predestined, which includes election and reprobation by default.

Conclusion

The Five Solas of the Reformation are the clarion cry to worship God for His gracious provision of salvation. Superficially, these Five Solas sound absolutely correct. Any Bible believing Christian would agree with them. However, once one understands the Reformation's gospel of Calvinism, the real intent of these 'solas,' hidden beneath biblical sounding concepts and words, becomes evident.

The gospel of Calvinism believes that God's irresistible 'grace alone' applies the limited salvation secured by 'Christ alone' as well as gifting the elect with 'faith alone' to place faith in the death and life of 'Christ alone.' All of these concepts are taught by Reformed teachers through the 'Scripture alone' so that God can be praised, worshiped and adored for His sovereign election and salvation wrought for 'the glory of God alone.'

Documents such as the Westminster Confession of Faith, the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and the modern day Cambridge Declaration^[2] all make these points of Calvinism clear.

References

[1] *Reformation Essentials*, Michael Horton,

http://www.monergism.com/updates/reformation_essentials_by_mich.php

[2] *The Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals*, April 20th, 1996. Source Cited: <http://www.monergism.com/The%20Cambridge%20Declaration.pdf>

Infant Baptism

Baptismal Regeneration

One of the common observances in Reformation churches today is the practice of infant baptism. Infant baptism appeared in Christian church history in the Second Century and is the fountain head for several beliefs such as baptismal regeneration, sign of inclusion into the covenant, acceptance by the covenant community, considering Roman Catholic baptisms as valid and Federal Vision theology (discussed below).

To simplify, infant baptism is the sprinkling of water to the infant for the purpose of initiating the baby into potential salvation. The Roman Catholics claim infant baptism washes away the original sin of Adam while its reformation claims infant baptism is analogous to circumcision, initiating the child into the covenant community of the elect. In both cases, infant baptism is depended upon for grace toward salvation. This 'grace' toward salvation places the focus on the ritual rather than faith in the cross for salvation.

Roman Influence

The Roman Catholic, Saint Augustine, was a strong proponent of infant baptism. Since he is considered a doctrinal father not only of Roman Catholicism, but also of its reformation, it's not surprising to see infant baptism practiced in Reformed churches as an integral part of their salvation theology.

"St. Augustine and the African Fathers believed that unbaptized infants share in the common positive misery of the damned, and the very most that St. Augustine concedes is that their punishment is the mildest of all." [1]

"The primary purpose of the Church of Rome in excluding unbaptized infants from heaven is to force parents to commit their children to her as soon as possible ... the pressure put on members of the Mother Church of Rome parents to see that their children are baptized EARLY is almost UNBELIEVABLE... ..a commitment which once she receives she never relinquishes." [2]

"It follows, that the children of believers are not baptized, that they may thereby then become the children of God, as if they had been before aliens to the church; but, on the contrary, they are received into the Church by this solemn sign, since they already belonged to the body of Christ by virtue of the promise" [3]

Even though the reformers broke from the authority of Rome, they didn't break with their practices of infant baptism or baptismal regeneration. Rome at the Council of Trent placed anathemas on anyone who rejected infant baptism as necessary for salvation. Martin Luther teaches in his small catechism that Christ is present in the waters of baptism and faith in these waters imparts salvation. John Calvin also taught infant baptismal regeneration.

"But as baptism is a solemn recognition by which God introduces his children into the possession of life [e.g., regeneration], a true and effectual sealing of the promise, a pledge of sacred union with Christ, it is justly said to be the entrance and reception into the church. And as the instruments of the Holy Spirit are not dead, God truly performs and effects by baptism what he figures." [4]

"God's church and the sacraments are also given in God's grace for the edification of the elect and the good of the world. The church, one through all time, can be known by the preaching and hearing of God's Word and the proper administration of the sacraments. Although the true church is known only to God, the visible church is thoroughly related to it on earth. Officers and leaders in the church should be those individuals who try responsibly to follow in Christian discipleship, but their authority cannot depend on their righteousness. The offices should be only those designated in the New Testament. Sacraments (baptism and the Eucharist) should be celebrated as mysteries in which Christ is spiritually present; in the Eucharist he believed that Christ is present both symbolically and by his spiritual power, which is imparted by his body in heaven to the souls of believers as they partake of the Eucharist."^[5]

John Calvin was the first to draw covenantal conclusions from the theology of the early church fathers of Irenaeus and Augustine. [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#) believes in three theological covenants supposedly made before time began and which are not explicitly found in the Bible. These are added to the Biblical covenants which are clearly outlined in scripture. Covenantal adherents believe the church is comprised of only the elect throughout history. This means that the church extended back in time, rather than being born on Pentecost (Acts 2) and was in existence throughout the Old Testament. Therefore it was the church, primarily populated by Jews in the OT, who representatively received the covenants of God on behalf of the church. When the Jews received the covenants, it was really the church who was receiving the covenants. Therefore it wasn't just the Jews who received the Law, it was the church who received the Law. Under Covenant theology, the Church is still under the Mosaic Law today. This supposed relationship between the Church and Israel in the past, gives justification for some to label themselves the Israel of God today. This is known as replacement theology ([Supersessionism pg. 230](#)) which is an integral part of Covenant theology.

Anabaptists

With the legalization of Christianity in 313-325 A.D., Christians were introduced to the Roman pagan worship system which included infant baptism. Infant baptism, like many other ancient practices of mystery religions, continued through the centuries and was picked up by Christians in the early 3rd century. Many Christians, remaining true to the Bible, rejected infant baptism bringing persecution by Romanists for their stance. Even though Christianity was made legal, those rejecting infant baptism were made to conform or face death.^[6] Even in Catholicism's reformation, those who refused infant baptism for believer's baptism, were persecuted and put to death. The first public execution of an Anabaptist in the Reformation occurred in Zurich, at the behest of Zwingli, by drowning. These Anabaptists, became known as the '*re-baptizers*.' The term was later shortened to '*baptists*' to indicate their practice of rebaptizing adults, who became believers and realized their Roman infant baptism, was to be rejected.

In Roman Catholicism and its reformation, infant baptism signified inclusion into the religious and political dimensions of the church. Infant baptism became associated with inclusion into the church which was very nearly ruling the state. In the reformation of Catholicism, Luther insisted on infant baptism as a way to show solidarity with the states converting to the reformation. Therefore, rejecting infant baptism was associated to rejecting the state. This practice of registering citizens through infant baptism continues in Scandinavia and certain German provinces today.^[7] The rejection of infant baptism by the Anabaptist grew through time and prompted the separation of church and state we enjoy today.

Analogous to Circumcision

The Reformed consider all the OT covenants to be in effect in some form today and so have spiritualized circumcision and replaced it with baptism. Baptism wasn't instituted for the church until the day of Pentecost. Baptism is the church practice of identifying with the death, burial and

resurrection of Jesus; buried in the likeness of His death as one is immersed into the waters and raised to the newness of His life (Romans 6:4) as one is raised up from the water. Since baptism wasn't practiced in the OT, and since all the OT covenants are in force today, there needs to be a spiritualized corollary to justify this practice.

Circumcision was considered by the OT scriptures to be an inclusion into the covenant nation of elect Israel; hence John Calvin considered baptism to be an inclusion into the covenant community of the elect church. Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant just as the rainbow was the sign of the Noahic Covenant and Sabbath observance was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant. Baptism is said to point to the sign that points to a greater spiritual reality of election through the Covenant of Redemption made within the Godhead before time began. See [Timeline of Covenants pg. 272](#).

An anomaly within Protestant circles is the Reformed Baptists who do practice believer's baptism. There is some disagreement among Calvinists as to what baptism means and to whom it should be administered. Generally, most adherents of Catholicism's reformational doctrine have a sacramental view of baptism.

Can the Waters of Baptism Save?

In the third century, believers began baptizing their children before any confession of faith. They related this to the rite of circumcision, which was applied to sons at eight days old, so similarly, baptism was applied to infants. Yet it is by faith, and God's grace through our faith, that one is saved. No work of man or any kind of biblical ritual can impart grace. Salvation is found only in the person of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross for sinners. The purpose of baptism is to identify with Jesus Christ...buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the newness of life (Romans 6:4). Baptism is practiced by Christians as an ordinance. It is a symbol and witness of the change of ownership that has taken place for the believer. We identify with the Lord Jesus, His message, and the body of believers. It is a symbol of the old life being dead and the new life of Christ which has come. This new life takes place at the point of belief in Jesus as God, His death on the cross, and in His resurrection...not when immersed in the waters of baptism as an infant. Those who heard the message of the gospel of Christ and believed were obedient to be baptized in water as the visible sign of their repentance. It is a symbol, not the substance.

The Bible teaches that by God's grace through faith, salvation is given. Faith is the means. But the Reformers taught that both grace and Christ are present in the waters of baptism and infuse the believer with salvation. Notice how faith is bypassed. Because faith is obviously missing, they then teach that it's faith in these waters of baptism, which has the Word, which saves. Martin Luther's mantra of 'faith alone' was in part, faith in the waters of baptism. This issue was so important that people were put to death over their beliefs about baptism! The Catholics and the Protestants tortured and executed the Anabaptists who rejected infant baptism.

Bible verses do not say that baptism is necessary for salvation. If baptism was necessary, then Jesus couldn't have offered salvation to the thief on the cross. If baptism is necessary for salvation, then Jesus' death on the cross wasn't enough to save a person. The message of the gospel wouldn't be the cross alone, it would have to include the cross and baptism.

This baptismal teaching introduces another way of salvation and the cross then isn't the one act of salvation. Nowhere does the Bible say we have "to be baptized to be saved" without faith being implied in the context. So when examining verses for salvation and for baptism in the Bible, you will find that faith stands alone for salvation separate from baptism verses, but you won't find that baptism stands alone for salvation. Examining the greater context in scripture always teaches salvation occurs before baptism. Therefore salvation is found apart from the practice of baptism in the Bible. If they were pronounced saved by their faith before baptism, as Abraham was pronounced 'saved' before circumcision, then baptism is clearly not part of the gospel. Baptism is never referred to as a

"rite" or an "ordinance" that brings salvation. Adding baptism to salvation is adding works to faith, which Paul says nullifies faith. True Christianity is different from religion; it is not by works, it is by faith!

Identification

In the Old Testament, baptism was a ritual of conversion to Judaism. Pagans would become proselytes through this ritual by being baptized in order to become identify with the people of God. John the Baptist baptized with a baptism of repentance in anticipation of the coming Messiah. Salvation of these converts was the same as for the Jews, which is faith. And Jesus Himself instituted baptism in the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Articulating and believing the words, 'In the name of Jesus' distinguishes Christian baptism from all others at that time. This was not referring to the formula said over a person, but indicated a confession in Christ which was made publicly. We are told there is no other name by which one is to be saved. Christ alone is the fullness of the Godhead (bodily). There is much discussion over using the words, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" but the point of baptism is that a person has confessed belief in the correct God.

Is a Roman Catholic Baptism Valid?

It comes as a surprise to learn that those who leave Roman Catholicism to enter a Reformed church do not need to be rebaptized. The Reformed say that infants, who were baptized into Roman Catholicism, do not need to be rebaptized in order to be part of the covenant community of the elect. Remembering that in Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, baptism provides sacramental grace from the Spirit, one wonders what Spirit they share in common. The Bible teaches we were baptized by one Spirit into one body, (1 Corinthians 12:13). How then, when Rome teaches a salvation by works, and teaches grace for salvation through baptism, can the Reformed claim that a Roman Catholic baptism is valid for those departing Romanism? Baptism is identification with Christ's death and His people. Surely the Reformed would not consider the Roman Catholics brothers in the same faith and same gospel.

This thorny issue is justified by both religions' reverence for Augustine, who when arguing with the Donatists, insisted the ritual of baptism is so efficacious for the one being baptized, that it matters not who administers it, providing it is done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore if the Roman Catholics baptized in the name of the Trinity as do the Reformed, then the baptism of Roman Catholicism is acceptable by reformation churches. Hence some who depart Romanism are never rebaptized after leaving Catholicism.

Of course, the Bible teaches that baptism is into the name of Jesus Christ whom the fullness of the Godhead indwelt. Using the 'name' of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit isn't the issue; it's the identity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that's at stake. Roman Catholicism has a different gospel by placing trust in a Jesus who must be sacrificed weekly to impart grace for salvation, who is subjugated by His mother for dispensing that grace, and who is transubstantiated into a wafer to be adored. This is not the Jesus of the Bible. The Spirit of Catholicism is also different. Consider the Mormons who also baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Clearly their baptism

would be rejected because they too believe in a different Jesus and their church is occupied by a different spirit.

Federal Vision Theology

Without getting into all the particulars of this theology, it is interesting to take a cursory look at Federal Vision Theology, which is being debated among the Reformed today. This debate centers, in part, around the validity of baptism. If baptism admits the infant into the covenant community of the elect, and is a sign of a greater spiritual reality, meaning [Unconditional Election](#), then how are the Reformed to explain the departure from the 'faith' of one who was baptized as an infant? If John Calvin taught that the elect beget elect, how can it be explained if an adult turns their back on their calling?

Federal Vision theology teaches that baptism is salvific for those who continue in the faith. That if the infant, baptized into the covenant community, walks away from the blessings of the faith, then that baptism was not mixed with faith. How can the infant even have faith? If elected, at conception or baptism the infant is given God's special [Gifted Faith pg. 135](#). Hence, if the infant has been elected, he can be said to have faith. So baptism is salvific if the infant has gifted faith. Therefore those who depart the 'faith' were apparently not gifted with faith, but instead were gifted with false faith. Federal Vision proponents actually conclude that those who were infant baptized, but failed to persevere, were actually elected by God to a false faith!

Of course, the ultimate proof of baptism's efficacy rests in the baptism of Jesus himself. Here, we have the ultimate paradigm for understanding God's work in baptism. Jesus received the Spirit in fullness at his baptism, and was declared to be the beloved Son of the Father. With appropriate qualifications, this is what God does in our baptisms as well: He pours out his Spirit upon us and declares us to be his dearly loved children. In context, none of these passages teach baptism automatically guarantees salvation. But they do teach that God does a great work in baptism, a work that may be considered the beginnings of salvation for those God has elected to persevere to the end.^[8]

God has decreed from the foundation of the world all that comes to pass, including who would be saved and lost for all eternity. Included in his decree, however, is that some persons, not destined for final salvation, would be drawn to Christ and to his people for a time. These people, for a season, enjoy real blessings, purchased for them by Christ's cross and applied to them by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. ... They may be said to be reconciled to God, adopted, granted new life, etc. But in the end, they fail to persevere, and because they fall away, they go to hell.^[9]

This theology is not surprising in light of John Calvin's evanescent faith;

"... Experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected in a way so similar to the elect that even in their own judgment there is no difference between them. Hence, it is not strange, that by the Apostle a taste of heavenly gifts, and by Christ himself a temporary faith is ascribed to them. Not that they truly perceive the power of spiritual grace and the sure light of faith; but the Lord, the better to convict them, and leave them without excuse, instills into their minds such a sense of goodness as can be felt without the Spirit of adoption there is a great resemblance and affinity between the elect of God and those who are impressed for a time with a fading faith Still it is correctly said, that the reprobate believe God to be propitious to them, inasmuch as they accept the gift of reconciliation, though confusedly and without due discernment; not that they are partakers of the same faith or regeneration with the children of God; but because, under a covering of hypocrisy they seem to have a principle of faith in common with them. Nor do I even deny that God illumines their mind to this extent.... there is nothing

inconsistent in this with the fact of his enlightening some with a present sense of grace, which afterwards proves evanescent."^[10]

Instances where baptism is mentioned

Acts 2:37-41; 8:5-13; 8:37, 38; 9:1-18, 22; 10:43,48; 16:14, 30-34; 18:8; and 19:5

(A total of 9 times, which are always attached to faith)

Instances where baptism is not mentioned

Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 9:35, 42; 11:21, 24; 12:24; 13:12, 43, 48; 14:1, 7,22,27; 16:5; 17:4, 12, 34; 19:17-20; 26:18 28:23, 24

(A total of 22 times there are conversions with faith and no hint of baptism)

Some Biblical Considerations Concerning Baptism

Death of Christ (Rom. 6:3)	Remission of Sins (Acts 2:38)	Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13)
Salvation (Mk. 16:16)	Working of God (Col. 2:12)	Clothed With Christ (Gal. 3:27)
Enter Kingdom (Jn. 3:5)	Washing (Acts 22:16)	Saved (Tit. 3:5)
Cleansed (Eph. 5:26)	Justified (1 Cor. 6:11)	Saved (1 Pet. 3:21)

Verses

The confusion is increased by misunderstanding the meanings of a few verses:

John 3:5 NASB

⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Luke 23:41-43 NASB

⁴¹"And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" ⁴³And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.

Acts 2:38-39 NASB

³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Titus 3:5 NASB

⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

Catechisms

Luther's Small Catechism ^[11]

Luther's Little Instruction Book
(The Small Catechism of Martin Luther)
Translated by Robert E. Smith May 22, 1994

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

First.

What is Baptism?--Answer.

Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and **connected with God's Word**.

Which is that word of God?--Answer.

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: *Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

Secondly.

What does Baptism give or profit?--Answer.

It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and **gives eternal salvation** to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are such words and promises of God? Answer.

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Thirdly.

How can water do such great things?--Answer.

It is not the water indeed that does them, but the **word of God which is in and with the water**, and faith, which trusts such **word of God in the water**. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: *By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.*

Fourthly.

What does such baptizing with water signify?--Answer.

It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?--Answer.

St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: *We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Westminster catechism

The following selections regarding "infant baptism" are gleaned from the Westminster catechism.

Question 94. WHAT is baptism?

Answer..... Baptism isto be unto him a **sign and seal of the covenant of grace**, of his ingrafting into Christ, of remission of sins, and regeneration by His Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life...

Question 95. WHOM is baptism to be administered?

Answer..... the INFANTS of such as are members of the visible church, are to be baptized

WHO PRACTICES INFANT BAPTISM? ^[12]

Infant baptism is practiced by the Roman Catholic Church, the various groups representing Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as by most of the denominations that withdrew from Rome during the Protestant Reformation, including Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: “By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. ... The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are ‘reborn of water and the Spirit.’ God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism ... Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte ‘a new creature,’ an adopted son of God, who has become a ‘partaker of the divine nature,’ member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. ... From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant” (The New Catholic Catechism, 1994, # 1263,1257,1265,1267).

EASTERN ORTHODOX: “We confess one baptism for the remission of sins” (Constantinopolitan [or Nicene] Creed, 381). “Our sacraments, however, not only contain grace, but also confer it on those who receive them worthily ... Through baptism we are spiritually reborn” (Council of Florence, 1438-45). “When one asserts his faith in the Son of God, the Son of the Ever Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, he accepts first of all the words of faith into his heart, confesses them orally, sincerely repents for his former sins and washes them away in the sacrament of Baptism. Then God the Word enters the baptized one, as though into the womb of the Blessed Virgin and remains in him like a seed” (*The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Russian Orthodox Church*, Issue No. 4, 1980). “Sacraments ... are not simply symbols of divine grace, but sure agents and means of its transmission. ... [through baptism one] becomes a member of the church of Christ, being liberated from the controlling power of sin, and being reborn in the new creation in Christ” (International Eastern Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Dialogue Commission, 1985).

LUTHERAN: “Baptism effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare. ... It is not the water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water” (Luther’s Small Catechism, 1529, IV). “It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children, too, should be baptized, for in Baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him. On this account the Anabaptists who teach that infant Baptism is not right are rejected” (The Augsburg Confession, 1530, IX). “Being by nature sinners, infants as well as adults need to be baptized. Every child that is baptized is begotten anew of water and of the Spirit, is placed in covenant relation with God, and is made a child of God and an heir of his heavenly kingdom” (Baptism formula used by Lutheran pastors in baptizing infants, *The New Analytical Bible and Dictionary of the Bible*, Chicago: John A. Dickson Publishing Co., 1973).

The August 2001 issue of *The Berean Call* contains the following warning from a reader of that publication: “Enclosed is my ‘Memento and Certificate of Baptism’ and my daughter’s ‘Certificate of Holy Baptism,’ both as babies into the Lutheran Church. As you can see, my certificate was printed by the Missouri Synod’s Concordia Publishing House and reads, ‘In Baptism full salvation has been given unto you; God has become your Father, and you have become His child.’ My daughter’s reads, ‘You are a child of God because God has made you His child through this act. All of God’s promises belong to you as you live under Him in His Kingdom.’ You must know that Luther’s Catechism, used in every Lutheran Synod, declares concerning the ‘Sacrament of Baptism,’ that ‘it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.’ It also states regarding the ‘Sacrament of the Altar’ [the Lord’s Supper], ‘namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words.’”

ANGLICAN: “Baptism is a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed.... The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ” (The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, XXV, XXVII).

METHODIST: “Sacraments are ... signs of grace ... by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him. ... Baptism ... is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church” (The Articles of Religion, 1784, XVI, XVII).

REFORMED: “We condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that young infants, born of faithful parents, are to be baptized. ... We therefore are not Anabaptists, neither do we agree with them in any point that is theirs” (The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566, chapter XX).

PRESBYTERIAN: “Baptism ... is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins ... Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized. ... by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time” (The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646, XXVIII).

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES: “Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other, and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity” (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, 1982).

Quotes

- **Quote** - "Infants who are not baptized will be damned." Source Cited: <http://www.mission.org/jesuspeople/Calvinism>, Citing; **Augustine**, *History of the Christian Church* by Phillip Schaff, Volume 8, p. 556.
- **Quote** - "...by baptism we are ingrafted into the Body of Christ..." **John Calvin**, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Source Cited: <http://anti-calvinism.blogspot.com/search/label/Spurgeon>
- **Quote** - "To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is to save. No one is baptized in order to become a prince, but as the words say, to 'be saved.' To be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil and to enter into the kingdom of Christ and live with him forever." -- Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Martin Luther**, Quoted from *The Large Catechism*.
- **Quote** - "... made children of God. ... by a new birth, and by the renewing of the inward man, which is done in baptism ... For, besides that they who are baptized are regenerate and renewed by the Holy Ghost to a heavenly righteousness, and to eternal life ... And this is to put on Christ truly, according to the gospel. ... This is diligently to be noted, because of the fond and fantastical spirits, who go about to deface the majesty of baptism, and speak wickedly of it. Paul, contrariwise, commendeth it, and setteth it forth with honorable titles, calling it, 'the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' And here also he saith, that 'all ye that are baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' Wherefore baptism is a thing of great force and efficacy" Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; *Commentary On Galatians* -- **Martin Luther**, translated by Erasmus Middleton, pp. 221-222).
- **Quote** - "... so, it is to be observed, must you also be saved in baptism. Just as that water swallowed up all that was then living, of man and beast, so baptism also swallows up all that is of the flesh and of the corrupt nature, and makes us spiritual. Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; *Commentary On Peter & Jude* -- **Martin Luther**, Kregel Publications, p. 169).
- **Quote** - Our children, before they are born, God declares that He adopts for His own when He promises He will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise their salvation is included. Source Cited: <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol.11; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1962, p.525
- **Quote** - "They [the sacraments] cannot be detached from the power of God and from the working of the Spirit, who convinces us in the sacrament. The administration of the sacrament does not fulfill its function with regard to our salvation unless the Spirit as teacher sends his power, the Spirit "by whose power alone our hearts are penetrated and affections moved and our souls opened for the sacraments to enter in" (*Institutes* 4.14.9)." Source Cited: <http://www.apuritansmind.com/Baptism/McMahon-WhatDoesItMeanToBeReformed.htm>, Citing; **Berkouwer**, *The Sacraments as Signs and Seals*, Article.
- **Quote** - "... you have this baptismal regeneration, preparing stepping stones to make it easy for men to go to Rome. ... I pray you never rest upon this wretched and rotten foundation, this deceitful invention of antichrist." Source Cited: <http://www.apuritansmind.com/Baptism/McMahon-WhatDoesItMeanToBeReformed.htm>, Citing; **Charles Spurgeon**, from his sermon titled *Baptismal Regeneration*,
- **Quote** - "The fact that Christianity is a religion of salvation is expressed in the sacramental life of the Church. ... Baptism and the Eucharist [are] sacraments which create in man the seed of eternal life. Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Pope John Paul II**, Quoted from *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 74-75.

- **Quote** - "Luther attached great importance to his baptism. When the Devil assailed him, he would answer, 'I am baptized' Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Roland Bainton**, *Here I Stand*, p. 287.
- **Quote** - "In Baptism, we have been swept into the new creation and in the Supper we are actually fed with the body and blood of Christ as pilgrims on the way to the Promised land ..." Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Michael Horton** in the May/June 1997 issue of *Modern Reformation*, p. 14.
- **Quote** - But how, they ask, are infants regenerated, when not possessing knowledge of either good or evil? We answer, that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null. Infants who are to be saved (and that some are saved at this age is certain) must, without question, be regenerated by the Lord. ...Many He certainly has called and endued with true knowledge of Himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, Citing; **John Calvin**, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol.11, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 541,542.
- **Quote** - "Historic Reformed [Calvinist] theology contests the view that only adult, believer's baptism is true baptism, and it rejects the exclusion of believers' children from the visible community of faith.... Rather, the scriptural case for baptizing believers' infants rests on the parallel between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament baptism as signs and seals of the covenant of grace." Source Cited: : *What Love Is This*, Dave Hunt, Third Edition, Published by The Berean Call, Copyright © 2006, ISBN-13: 978-1-928660-12-5, ISBN-10: 1-928660-12-6, Pg 430., Citing; **R.C. Sproul**, *Geneva Study Bible*, 'Infant Baptism.'

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Communion vs. the Lord's Supper

Sacrament or Ordinance

Another ritual performed within Reformation circles is the practice of 'Communion.' Communion, like [Infant Baptism pg. 178](#), is considered a sacrament; a sacred foundational practice from which salvational grace from God flows. These sacraments are considered by the reformed to be an outward sign of an inward reality. The outward sign is the ritual itself while the inward reality is special election. The ritual is a conduit which conveys grace and confirms the covenant within the elect church community.

The covenant being confirmed and alluded to is the [Covenant of Redemption pg. 52](#). This covenant is one of the three extra covenants, added to the Bible by Covenant theologians, where the Godhead entered into a covenant among themselves. The Father is said to have chosen the elect, Jesus agreed to die for the elect and the Spirit applies election (before belief), redemption (before belief) and gifted faith (at belief for justification) to the elect through [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#). This covenant is the unseen reality behind the sacraments.

In Catholicism, the most important sacrament is called the Eucharist, part of the 'Sacrifice of the Mass' (discussed below), and is the pinnacle of their worship because it keeps one in a state of grace for salvation. In Protestantism, taking the sacrament also conveys grace (discussed below). However for the Bible believer, grace comes by the Spirit at belief.

Scripturally speaking, the Lord's Supper is a memorial meal to remember and proclaim His death until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26). Error occurs when one uses an ordinance, which is a symbol and remembrance, and makes it a sign or actual conveyance of grace. People misplace faith in the ritual hoping to receive grace for salvation, rather than placing their faith in the Lord's death and resurrection for salvation. The true ordinance reminds the believer of the salvation by faith through the cross and His promise of His return, whereas the sacrament points to the sign of election for salvation grace.

Believing that rituals impart grace or point to the greater reality of election is claiming that grace comes in other ways than by faith in the death, burial and resurrection. Satan is the master counterfeiter who wants to have a 'like' copy of what God has instituted. It appears the same, but it's an imitation not based on truth. God is seeking worshipers who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. The Holy Spirit of God cannot be present to impart grace in pseudo ritual not based on Truth. Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 mentions remembering Jesus' death and return. He gives stern warnings for taking the bread and cup in an unworthy manner. He warns to avoid disciplining judgment, but mentions nothing of receiving grace. Faith in the cross introduces us to salvation, rather than faith in the 'elements' or faith in the sign of election. Only faith in the cross, introduces us to saving grace.

[Romans 5:1-2 NASB](#)

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

The Pagan View ^[1]

If aberrations of baptism can be found in ancient paganism, then it is not surprising to find the idea of ingesting the gods also practiced in paganism. This practice of ingesting the gods, found in the ancient Osiris worship of Egypt, stems from the pagan idea of a bloodless sacrifice, which is seen in

many of the past ancient mystery religions as well as in some cultic religions of today. Breads made from grain, said to symbolize the god(s), are ingested to commune with the divine. Some ancient cultures worshiped the Sun god by placing a round wafer in an open disc with radiating rays. Forms of this ancient practice were adopted by the ancient Israelites who baked cakes for the Queen of Heaven (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:14-25) and erected sun images above altars, which King Josiah tore down (2 Chronicles 34:4). They burned incense and bow down before these altars in honor of the Sun god who was none other than Baal.

This worship of Baal, through sacramental 'elements,' continues to our day. Freemasonry participates in communion through the use of corn, oil and wine. In antiquity, corn was intimately related to Baal who is said to be the Sun god. Wheat or corn, in ancient practices, was said to symbolize the 'son' who was also known as Baal. The worship of bread or corn is essentially the worship of Baal and a perversion of Christ being the bread of heaven that gives life. So rather than believing in the Jesus who paid for our sins with His blood, paganism shifts worship to the bloodless wafer who supposedly represents the Christ child. And to make this practice all the more appalling, the Sun god was at times also called Molech; the scorching god that babies were sacrificed to.

Other religions, like the Mormons use water and yeasted bread for their sacrament, also a bloodless ritual. Another consideration to bear in mind is that pagans consider the sacrament to be the renewing of covenant vows. The Bible calls the Lord's Supper a remembrance. There is no hint of worshipping the bread and the cup.

When we become acquainted with the false pagan practices of worshipping bloodless sacrifices that supposedly give life, we see the importance of placing our faith in the real blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the true bread of heaven that gives true eternal life.

The Catholic View

Take for example the Catholic view of communion. The Catholic believes that the priest raises the bread and wine, called 'elements' up to heaven, blesses it and then pulls Christ out of heaven to inhabit the 'elements,' changing the substance of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ. These 'elements' of mere bread and wine have been transubstantiated into (changed from one substance to another) the body and blood of Christ. The Catholic then partakes of these elements, trusting that ingesting 'Christ' imparts grace to them. Christ is sacrificed in an unbloody way. Once ingested, He is now said to be indwelling the partaker.

The Catholic ritual of immolating (sacrificing) Christ is called the 'Sacrifice of the Mass' where the ritual ingesting of the 'Eucharist' (Christ's transubstantiated body and blood) occurs. The Catholic firmly believes the Romanist priests have been vested with holy power to perform this transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Parishioners are very careful in handling the Eucharistic crumbs, taking painstaking measures to prevent them from falling to the floor or being discarded in an unholy way. Many Catholics will take the Eucharist daily to insure that Christ is always 'in them.' They are taught that a lifetime of this ritual sacrificing and consuming of Christ through the ritual of the 'Sacrifice of the Mass,' imparts grace as do other works and rituals like baptism and penance, that will hopefully reduce their expected time in purgatory. Hence, it is a mortal sin to neglect Mass. The Catholic considers assurance of salvation to be a 'sin of presumption' and therefore strive to continually remain in a state of grace. Accrued grace provides benefits against purgatory. Heaven is rarely mentioned. Since Romanists place faith in grace, there are several means of receiving grace, the most important of which is partaking of the Eucharist through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Biblically speaking, salvation is found through faith in a person, not faith in a ritual. It is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the cross for sinners. He indwells believers spiritually, not physically by a wafer. Placing faith in a wafer or any other ritualistic practice corrupts the true gospel

of salvation by faith. Eternity is forever and we need to make sure that the gospel we believe in is biblically what God promises will save.

The Protestant View

The 16th century Catholic reformers mostly rejected the Romanist view of transubstantiation and the Sacrifice of the Mass where Christ is actually present in the Eucharist. Reformers continued to call this sacrament the 'Eucharist' but modified transubstantiation to consubstantiation. In this view, Christ isn't actually *in* the elements but *with* (con) the elements. Reformed theology today prefers to use the term 'communion' viewing this sacrament as an outward sign that points to an inward reality. The outward sign is the ritual; the inward reality is election through the [Covenant of Redemption pg. 52](#).

Those who follow the views of John Calvin and other reformers, declare that Christ's body and blood are not pulled down from heaven to inhabit the elements, but that 'the Spirit truly unites things separated in space.' The two things being united are the ritual with gifted faith in election. Following a phrase of Augustine, the Calvinist view is that "no one bears away from this Sacrament more than is gathered with the vessel of faith."

"The flesh and blood of Christ are no less truly given to the unworthy than to God's elect believers," Calvin said; but those who partake by faith receive benefit from Christ, and the unbelieving are condemned by partaking. By faith (not a mere mental apprehension), and in the Holy Spirit, the partaker beholds God incarnate, and in the same sense touches him with hands, so that by eating and drinking of bread and wine Christ's actual presence penetrates to the heart of the believer more nearly than food swallowed with the mouth can enter in."^[2]

While Calvin specifically rejected adoration of the Eucharistic bread and wine as 'idolatry,' he is saying that through faith the partaker is able to connect with Christ in the Communion because Christ is present *with* the elements of the meal. And because Christ is present in these elements, if partaken with faith, gifted not human faith, then Christ is received and therefore grace is received. This is why 'Communion' is called communion; there is a communing exchange with Christ occurring through practicing this ritual in a spiritualized way.

Leftover elements from consubstantiated communion services can be disposed of without ceremony or reused in later services; they are unchanged. Since they are unchanged, the communion meal is said to direct attention toward Christ's bodily resurrection and return.

Today, some within the Reformed camp debate about administering the elements to babies. These sacraments are said to be received by faith, but if they are administered to those too young to exercise faith, what benefit could be gained. Remembering the Reformed view of gifted faith, bestowed by [Irresistible Grace pg. 112](#), this is the faith of infants who receive communion? In Covenant theology, those who are elected are considered part of the Covenant community. Since the elect beget elect, there is no need to exclude children from the practice of baptism or communion.

In the opinion of this author (Cornelis P. Venema), the typical practice of Reformed churches amounted to an illegitimate exclusion of children from one of the rights and privileges that belong to them as members of the covenant community.^[3] Parenthesis added

Our children, before they are born, God declares that He adopts for His own when He promises He will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise their salvation is included.^[4]

We see then that the practice of communing with the gods through ingesting elements occurred in antiquity. We've seen that the pagans have a bloodless sacrifice, the Catholics re-sacrifice Christ and the Protestants view communion as a sign of inclusion into the elect Covenant community. We've

also seen that the Lord teaches, through the apostle Paul, the Lord's Supper is a memorial service where believers proclaim Christ's death until He returns. While the division seems to fall between Protestant and Catholic lines, it is actually between Augustinian thought and the Bible. Both Roman Catholicism and its reformation claim Augustine as their doctrinal father.

We tend to think that the sacramental divide is between Catholics and Protestants..... But the real divide is between those who affirm that in the sacraments God really does something, and those who do not. In that sense, the Reformed understanding of the sacraments is far closer to the Roman Catholic understanding than, say, to the Baptist view, which sees the sacraments only as ordinances by which we give testimony to our faith. Calvin and all the Reformed confessions make clear that sacraments are both sign and seal of our incorporation into Christ and our salvation in him. The sacraments not only symbolize salvation, they seal it, they guarantee it, they bring its reality into our bodies and souls.^[5]

The Biblical View

The Bible doesn't teach that Christ is present with the partaking of the bread and wine, nor does the recipient receive special grace. The cup and the bread are symbols of the believers' participation (1 Corinthians 10:16) in the blood and body of Christ by faith, personal faith, in His sacrifice for sin. The partaking of the bread and the wine are done in remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:24-25) of Christ's death and future coming. All who have believed are welcomed to partake.

While the Bible teaches that believers share in the blood and body of Christ through faith, it never teaches that He is spiritually present in or with these elements. The only way that a person can partake of and benefit from the blood and body of Christ is by personal faith. Saints are not born again by baptism, communion or election, but only by personal faith in the gospel. Faith brings the indwelling of God in the believing sinner. The Trinity takes up residency in the believer and there is no need for a ritual to give additional grace. All the grace needed for salvation was poured out at belief. From that point forward, God gives grace as is fitting for the need of the moment through His Word, answered prayer, the ministering of the saints, etc. The Bible does not teach that rituals impart Christ or grace. Conversely, claiming that rituals impart grace actually supplants faith bringing grace.

Some Definitions

Transubstantiation –noun

1. The changing of one substance into another.
2. *Theology.* the changing of the elements of the bread and wine, when they are consecrated in the Eucharist, into the body and blood of Christ (a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church).

Consubstantiation –noun

The doctrine, proposed by Martin Luther, that the substance of the body and blood of Jesus coexists with the substance of the bread and wine in the Eucharist.

Covenantal

Zwingli viewed the sacraments as being a covenant that the individual was entering into. If the person failed to obey, then God was free from any obligation to that covenant supposedly made through that sacrament.

Denominational Views ^[6]

<u>Roman Catholic Church</u>	Transubstantiation	Actual blood and body of Christ
<u>Eastern Christianity</u>	Transubstantiation	True sacrifice, objective presence, pious silence on particulars
<u>Anglicans/Episcopalians</u>	Transubstantiation	Real Presence with opinion
<u>Lutherans</u>	Consubstantiation	Sacramental union: in, with, and under the forms
<u>Methodism</u>	Consubstantiation	Real Presence as "Holy Mystery"
<u>Calvinist/ Reformed</u>	Consubstantiation	Spiritual feeding, "pneumatic" presence

Luther's Small Catechism ^[7] *Emphasis Added*

**Luther's Little Instruction Book
(The Small Catechism of Martin Luther)
Translated by Robert E. Smith
May 22, 1994
THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR**

The Sacrament of the Altar: The Simple Way a Father Should Present it to His Household

I. Q. What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

A. It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink, established by Christ Himself.

II.. Q. Where is that written?

A. The holy apostles Matthew, Mark and Luke and St. Paul write this:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night on which He was betrayed, took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to His disciples and said: "Take! Eat! This is My body, which is given for you. Do this to remember Me!" In the same way He also took the cup after supper, gave thanks, gave it to them, and said: "Take and drink from it, all of you! This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you to forgive sins. This do, as often as you drink it, to remember Me!"

III. Q. What good does this eating and drinking do?

A. These words tell us: "Given for you" and "Shed for you to forgive sins." Namely, that the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given to us through these words in the sacrament. Because, where sins are forgiven, there is life and salvation as well.

IV. Q. How can physical eating and drinking do such great things?

A. Of course, eating and drinking do not do these things. These words, written here, do them: "given for you" and "shed for you to forgive sins." These words, along with physical eating and drinking are the important part of the sacrament. Anyone who believes these words has what they say and what they record, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

V. Q. Who, then, receives such a sacrament in a worthy way?

A. Of course, fasting and other physical preparations are excellent disciplines for the body. But anyone who believes these words, "Given for you," and "Shed for you to forgive sins," is really worthy and well prepared. But whoever doubts or does not believe these words is not worthy and is unprepared, because the words, "for you" demand a heart that fully believes.

Protestant Denominational Views of Communion ^[8]

Anglicans: Real Presence in Eucharist

Anglicans generally and officially believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but the specifics of that belief range from transubstantiation, sometimes with Eucharistic adoration (mainly Anglo-Catholics), to something akin to a belief in a "pneumatic" presence, which may or may not be tied to the Eucharistic elements themselves (almost always "Low Church" or Evangelical Anglicans). The normal range of Anglican belief ranges from Objective Reality to Pious Silence, depending on the individual Anglican's theology. There are also small minorities on the one hand which affirm transubstantiation, or on the other hand, reject the doctrine of the Real Presence altogether.

Lutherans: The sacramental union: "in, with, and under the forms"

Disagreement exists across the various Lutheran bodies regarding the appropriateness of the term Eucharist. Lutherans believe that the Body and Blood of Christ are "truly and substantially present in, with and under the forms" of the consecrated bread and wine (the elements), so that communicants eat and drink both the elements and the true Body and Blood of Christ Himself (for example, Augsburg Confession, Article 10) in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence is more accurately and formally known as "the sacramental union". A detailed defense of and an agreement concerning this doctrine was the subject of the Wittenberg Concord of 1536. It has been called "consubstantiation" by some, but this term is rejected by Lutheran Churches and theologians as it creates confusion with an earlier doctrine of the same name. For Lutherans, there is no sacrament unless the elements are used according to Christ's institution (consecration, distribution, and reception). As a consequence of their belief in this principle, some Lutherans have opposed the reservation of the consecrated elements (also known as the reserve host), private masses, Eucharistic adoration, and the belief that the presence of Christ's body and blood continue in the reliquæ (what remains of the consecrated elements after all have communed in the worship service). This interpretation is not universal among Lutherans. A variety of practices exist regarding the handling of bread and wine that remain after the communion service. In high church congregations, the practice tends to be similar to that of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions — the host is stored in a place of honor such as a tabernacle, consumed by those leading the service or (in the case of wine) poured into the earth. In less formal congregations, the elements receive no special treatment. They may be used again for another service or the remaining bread may be taken home and eaten by those in attendance. Lutherans use the terms "in, with and under the forms of [consecrated] bread and wine" and "sacramental union" to distinguish their understanding of the Lord's Supper from those of the Reformed and other traditions.

Methodism: Real Presence as "Holy Mystery"

According to the Articles of Religion in the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church, The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped. The Methodist Church believes in the real presence of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion: Jesus Christ, who "is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:3), is truly present in Holy Communion. Through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, God meets us at the Table. God, who has given the sacraments to the church, acts in and through Holy Communion. Christ is present through the community gathered in Jesus' name (Matthew 18:20), through the Word proclaimed and enacted, and through the elements of bread and wine shared. The divine presence is a living reality and can be experienced by participants; it is not a remembrance of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion only.

Calvinist Reformed: Spiritual feeding, "pneumatic" presence

Many Reformed Christians, who follow John Calvin hold that Christ's body and blood are not physically present in the Eucharist. The elements are only symbols of the reality, which is spiritual nourishment in Christ. The sum is, that the flesh and blood of Christ feed our souls just as bread and wine maintain and support our corporeal life. For there would be no aptitude in the sign, did not our souls find their nourishment in Christ. [...] I hold...that the sacred mystery of the Supper consists of two things—the corporeal signs, which, presented to the eye, represent invisible things in a manner adapted to our weak capacity, and the spiritual truth, which is at once figured and exhibited by the signs. Following a phrase of Augustine, the Calvinist view is that "no one bears away from this Sacrament more than is gathered with the vessel of faith." "The flesh and blood of Christ are no less truly given to the unworthy than to God's elect believers", Calvin said; but those who partake by faith receive benefit from Christ, and the unbelieving are condemned by partaking. By faith (not a mere mental apprehension), and in the Holy Spirit, the partaker beholds God incarnate, and in the same sense touches him with hands, so that by eating and drinking of bread and wine Christ's actual presence penetrates to the heart of the believer more nearly than food swallowed with the mouth can enter in. Calvin specifically rejected adoration of the Eucharistic bread and wine as "idolatry", however. Leftover elements may be disposed of without ceremony (or reused in later services); they are unchanged, and as such the meal directs attention toward Christ's bodily resurrection and return.

Zwinglian Reformed: no Real Presence

Some Protestant groups (also called the Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table) as a symbolic meal, a memorial of the Last Supper and the Passion in which nothing miraculous occurs. This view is known as the Zwinglian view, after Huldrych Zwingli, a Church leader in Zurich, Switzerland during the Reformation. It is commonly associated with the United Church of Christ, Baptists, and the Disciples of Christ. As with the Reformed view, elements left over from the service may be discarded without any formal ceremony, or if feasible may be retained for use in future services. Some of the Reformed hold that Calvin actually held this view and not the Spiritual feeding idea more commonly attributed to him; or that the two views are really the same. The successor of Zwingli in Zurich, Heinrich Bullinger, came to an agreement theologically with John Calvin. The Consensus Tigurinus lays out an explanation of the doctrine of the Sacraments in general, and specifically, that of Holy Communion, as the view embraced by John Calvin and leaders of the Church of Zurich who followed Zwingli. It demonstrates that at least the successors of Zwingli held to the real spiritual presence view most commonly attributed to Calvin and Reformed Protestantism. Some Christian denominations that hold this view include the United Church of Christ, Baptist Church, Disciples of Christ, and Church of the Nazarene.

Quotes

- **Quote** - Historically, then, the communion is a sign of what Christ has done. The Son of God has come from heaven, has tabernacled among us and has redeemed his people. Dynamically it is a seal in which God seals these general historical truths to the individual Christian. Jesus has died for him. In addition to this, the communion is a sacramental act on the part of the communicant. The ordinance becomes a God-inspired drama in which the believer acts out his deepest feelings about Christ. Source Cited: http://theuniversitychurch.info/oldWebsite/public_html/chap6.html

- **Quote** - "There is no more solemn or sacred moment in the life of the church than the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is called Holy Communion because during this meal a special meeting takes place between Jesus and His people. At that moment Jesus is present with us in a unique way." Source Cited: <http://www.ntslibrary.com/PDF%20Books/EssentialTruths%20RC%20Sproul.pdf>, Citing; R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, IL, 1992

- **Quote** - The Roman Church undermined the importance of God's ordained sacraments by adding sacraments of their own. The Anabaptist enthusiasts undermined them by reducing the efficacy of the two sacraments [Baptism and the Lord's Supper] Christ instituted Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/sproul/general.htm>, Citing; **Michael Horton**, *In The Face of God*, p. 142.

- **Quote** - The thought was that this outward thing, the sacrament, carries with it something unseen, or mysterious, which is received by faith. Augustine, in the 4th century, said, "They are called sacraments, because in them one thing is seen, another thing understood." Source Cited: <http://www.fum.org/QL/issues/0703/livinghigestsacrament.htm>, Citing; Reinhold Seeberg, *The History of Doctrines in the Ancient Church*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961, p. 321-322.

- **Quote** - "The fact that Christianity is a religion of salvation is expressed in the sacramental life of the Church. ... Baptism and the Eucharist [are] sacraments which create in man the seed of eternal life. Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Pope John Paul II**, Quoted from *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, pp. 74-75.

- **Quote** - Nothing other than the Word, baptism, and the Lord's Supper are given this place by God as a means of grace Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/sproul/general.htm>, Citing; *In The Face of God*, **Horton** p. 219.

- **Quote** - "For here in the sacrament [Communion] you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts, protection, defense, and power against death and the devil and all evils" Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Martin Luther** *The Large Catechism* -- p. 98.

- **Quote** - The definition of a sacrament as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace" is also attributed to Augustine.

Source Cited: <http://www.fum.org/QL/issues/0703/livinghighestsacrament.htm>

- **Quote** - "In Baptism, we have been swept into the new creation and in the Supper we are actually fed with the body and blood of Christ as pilgrims on the way to the Promised land ..." Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/luther/martin.htm>, Citing; **Michael Horton** in the May/June 1997 issue of *Modern Reformation*, p. 14.

- **Quote** - It is one thing for an evangelical to believe that the Word is a means of grace. It is quite another to add that the sacraments are a further means of grace. Even the word "sacrament" sounds "Catholic" to many evangelical ears. In fact, it is a biblical concept. Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/sproul/general.htm>, Citing; **Michael Horton**, *In The Face of God*, p. 139.

- **Quote** - The sacraments serve the same purpose as the Word itself, not only offering or exhibiting God's promise, but actually conferring His saving grace by linking us, through faith, to Christ and His benefits Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/Horton/general.htm>, Citing; **Michael Horton**, *In The Face of God*, p. 141.

- **Quote** - Furthermore, a sacrament not only reveals; it confers. Through word *and* sacrament, God actually gives that which he promises in his gospel -- forgiveness of sins, freedom from the tyranny of sin and eternal life. The sacraments not only testify to or signify divine activity in salvation, but are part of that divine redemptive activity.

Source Cited: <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/Horton/general.htm>, Citing; **Michael Horton**, *In The Face of God*, p. 219.

References

[1] Chick publications, *The Two Babylons*, pg. 156. (Excerpted from Alexander Hislop)

[2] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 4, chapter 17, points 10-11
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist#_note-56

[3] http://www.reformedfellowship.net/articles/venema_paedocommunion_oct05_v55_n09.htm,
Cornelis P. Venema, *Paedocommunion*, "Should Covenant Children be Admitted to the Lord's Table? An Introduction"

[4] Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/ddregen.htm>, **citing**; John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol. 11; (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1962), p.525

[5] http://www.reformedworship.org/magazine/article.cfm?article_id=479

[6] <http://www.reference.com/search?q=sacrament>

[7] <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/little.book/web/book-6.html>

[8] <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Eucharist>

ESCHATOLOGY

Overview of Biblical Eschatology

The Rapture

Tribulation

The Kingdom

Overview of Reformed Eschatology

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Replacement Theology

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Reformed Millennialism

Overview of Biblical Eschatology

As you can imagine, Protestant eschatology differs a great deal from Dispensational theology, which is based on a literal interpretation of Bible prophecy. Dispensational theology preserves the distinction between the church and Israel, believes that both the tribulation and the millennial kingdom are still future, that Israel will inherit the promises made to Abraham, believes in the rapture of the church and interprets Bible prophecy literally. Reformed eschatology believes the church has replaced Israel, the Abrahamic promises are for the church, the tribulation is past and the kingdom is now. Many of us have been guilty of deriving our eschatology by listening to trusted teachers, rather than from a detailed study of Biblical prophecy. Becoming acquainted with the various end times views helps us understand what various 'camps' believe and why they believe it. The Biblical gospel more often goes hand in hand with Dispensationalism, while the Reformed gospel lines up along Covenantal (Reformed) end times views. Even though the lines are somewhat clear between these two ideologies, their eschatological views can vary greatly. Protestant eschatology is driven by reformed theology which is driven by the gospel of Calvinism.

Daniel's Seventy Week Prophecy

The foundation for Biblical eschatology is Daniel's 70 weeks prophecy found in Daniel 9 and which is illustrated on the [Overview of End Times pg. 276](#) chart found in the Appendix. In this prophecy of Daniel 9, we are told about 70 weeks that are determined for the Jews. These weeks reveal themselves to actually weeks of years. The **first 69 weeks of years** the Israelites return to their land from Babylonian captivity, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple is decreed, and prophecies about Messiah are given. Messiah would come (the first time) and after the 69th week ended, He would be cut off (the cross) and have nothing (rejection).

The Daniel 9 prophecy then tells us about a time **gap between the 69th and 70th week**. During this gap, two things happen; first, the people, of the Antichrist who is to come, not the Antichrist, will destroy the city and the sanctuary during war. Secondly, desolations were determined for the Jews during this gap. The church, which isn't mentioned in Daniel 9, but is revealed through the ministry of the Apostle Paul, is God's program during this gap. The church, the body of Christ, was mystery not written about in the OT, but revealed in the NT.

The **70th week of Daniel** is still yet future and will commence with the confirming of a treaty between the Prince (Antichrist) and the Jews for one week of years. At the midpoint of this last week of years, the Antichrist will stop the temple sacrifices and grain offerings, and desolate the temple, until the Second Coming of Christ who will put an end to him. Daniel's 70 weeks is a prophecy given to Daniel's people, the Jews.

The **70th week of Daniel** is outlined in Daniel 9 but is detailed in the book of Revelation 6-19. The time phrases are so clear that we can confidently say that the Tribulation is 7 years, which fits perfectly with the prophesied 70th week (one week of years). Since the disastrous events described in Revelation have never taken place, we know for certain that these events are still future. For example, we have never in human history seen more than half of the world's population die in a short period of time (3 1/2 years). Nor have we seen one third of all vegetation burned up. Events like these in the book of Revelation make clear that a future fulfillment is still ahead.

After the 70 Weeks, the book of Revelation teaches a literal kingdom age for the repentant nation of Israel where King David is ruling in Jerusalem and Jesus Christ rules over the whole world for 1000 years. The Kingdom promises made to Israel also have not been fulfilled and therefore are also yet future. Since we can look at our world and say we are not currently enjoying the blessings of the

Millennial Kingdom described in the Bible, then we can also say that the Kingdom is still yet future. So the Tribulation and the Kingdom are both yet to happen.

The Dispensationalist also believes in several other eschatological doctrines the Protestant rejects. These include Christ's coming for His church to rapture her before the Tribulation, His second coming at the end of the Tribulation where He judges the nations, and in His literal rule on earth during the Kingdom when He will rule the nations with an iron scepter. During the millennium, Satan will be bound in the Abyss. After the millennium, Satan is released and very quickly incites a rebellion against the rule of Christ called the Battle of Gog and Magog (Rev 20), which is vanquished with fire from heaven. Satan is then thrown into the Lake of Fire. The next event is the Great White Throne judgment where all whose names are not found in the Lamb's book of life are also thrown into the Lake of Fire, which was prepared not for man, but for Satan and his angels. Then the eternal state is inaugurated and is described as the last major event in the Book of Revelation. This is the prophetic overview from a Dispensational viewpoint.

The Rapture of the Church

The Bridegroom Cometh

Having previously discussed the various forms of [Dispensationalism pg. 39](#), we should now become familiar with a major doctrine of Dispensationalism, which many of the Reformed adherents deny. This teaching is the doctrine of the rapture. The word "rapture" is derived from the Latin word "*raptus*" meaning to seize. It was derived from the Greek word 'harpazo' which is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and means 'to be caught up,' 'to raise from the ground,' 'take for oneself.' The Latin word "*raptus*" became the English word "rapture."

Many Reformed teachers say the rapture is a relatively new doctrine of the church not found in historical orthodox Christianity. They say that John Nelson Darby popularized this theory in the 1830s and that it wasn't widely taught before then. They further impugn the rapture saying that it was channeled through a 15 year old girl in Scotland named Margaret MacDonald. But scholastic work reveals that expressions of imminency were found in the very early church, the medieval church and even during the Reformation period. The clear, but sparse evidence can be attributed to the Catholic Church destroying the writings and works of those they considered heretics, of which pretribulationists would have been.

The doctrine of the Rapture is the teaching that Christ will return for His bride, the Church, before the Tribulation begins. When second coming passages are compared to rapture passages, it becomes clear they are not addressing the same event. The second coming passages clearly describe Jesus coming to the earth to judge the nations and begin His earthly kingdom reign, while the rapture passages describe a catching up in the air of the saints to meet the Lord there and return to His Father's house. These two happenings cannot be combined into the same event. Additionally, the 24 elders are seated and crowned before the tribulation begins. Add to these differences the uncanny similarities of the Jewish wedding custom to the rapture and the impossibility of denying the rapture becomes clear. The valid doctrine of the rapture is meant to be a comfort and privilege to those who belong to the church, the body of Christ.

Another support for the rapture is Daniel's 70 week prophecy given in Daniel 9. There we learn that the 70 weeks are for the Jews. We also learn that there is a gap between the 69th and 70th weeks, which the NT reveals is occupied by the Church. Dispensationalism preserves the distinction between the Church and Israel. Therefore, if the Tribulation is the 70th week of Daniel for the Jews, then we know that the Church isn't part of that event. Paul teaches that the church is not destined for wrath. The Tribulation is the wrath of God poured out on the world. The church will suffer persecution at the hands of the world, but will never suffer the wrath of God poured out on the world. This is another proof that the Church is not in the Tribulation.

The Church today is longing for Christ, her bridegroom and blessed hope, to return and take her to heaven to be with Him forever. She has been given promises and assurances of His return to take her to be with Him, to occupy the place He has prepared for her in His Father's house, and to receive her incorruptible resurrection body which is free from the sin nature. She trusts Christ to remove her from the earth before the wrath of God begins (1 Thessalonians 5:9). The church needs to be out of the way in order for the 70th week of Daniel, which is prophesied for the Jews, to begin. The Seal, Trumpet and Bowl judgments are the wrath of God that will be poured out on the earth to destroy the corrupt world system and bring Israel to faith in Messiah

The distinguishing mark of the Church is the indwelling Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way at the end of the church age, the man of lawlessness is then

revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Because the Holy Spirit indwells the Church, when the Holy Spirit is removed, the church is removed too. This event, of the removal of the Spirit from the earth, is the rapture of the Church.

The Church is raptured or caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Jesus comes to meet His bride in the air before the Tribulation begins and takes her to meet His Father in His Father's house (John 14:2). The Bride is then rewarded and dressed in fine linens (Revelation 19) which are the righteous deeds of the saints. Since the whole church is the bride of Christ, then all believers who are part of the church will be present for her rewards ceremony, known as the Bema Seat judgment. Thus we see that the Bema seat judgment has taken place as evidenced by the 24 elders in Revelation 4 sitting with crowns on their heads. The bride is sequestered in the bridal chamber until the indignation (tribulation) has passed Isaiah 26:20-21. Then after 7 days, as in the Jewish wedding custom, the bride is presented. In the case of the tribulation, 7 years rather than 7 days have passed. The bride comes out of her chambers with her bridegroom and returns to earth with Him. She is forever with the Lord.

Reformed scholars argue against and reject the doctrine of the Rapture because it fits neither their interpretive framework (method of interpreting the Bible) or hermeneutic, nor their view of Biblical history. They believe we are in the kingdom now so anything that suggests a future kingdom contradicts their view of Biblical history. Therefore, the rapture passages are explained away as being descriptive of the second coming of Christ. Generally, the rapture is mocked as being an escapist theory and an absurd impossibility. They accuse dispensationalists of a "secret rapture" saying there is no way for the trumpet of God not to be heard by the entire world.

However they fail to remember that God has raptured a number of individuals throughout biblical history. Enoch walked with God (Genesis 5:24), Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1), Isaiah entered the throne room of God (Isaiah 6), Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:11), Philip was translated to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), Paul was taken to heaven (2 Corinthians 12), the church will be raptured before the trib (1 Thessalonians 4) and the two witnesses will be taken to heaven (Revelation 11).

Proof Texts for the Rapture

[John 14:2-3](#) NASB

²In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

[1 Corinthians 15:51-53](#) NASB

⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

[1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#) NASB

¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The Order of Events at the Rapture

All references taken from the NKJV

The Lord promises to prepare a place for His Bride	John 14:1	you believe in God, believe also in Me
	John 14:1	In My Father's house are many mansions
	John 14:2	if it were not so, I would have told you
	1 Thessalonians 4:14	For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again
	John 14:1	Let not your heart be troubled
	John 14:2	I go to prepare a place for you
Lord promises to return for His Bride	John 14:3	And if I go and prepare a place for you
	John 14:3	I will come again and receive you to Myself
The Lord descends to meet His bride	1 Thessalonians 4:15	For this we say to you by the word of the Lord
	1 Thessalonians 4:16	For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout,
	1 Thessalonians 4:16	with the voice of an archangel,
	1 Thessalonians 4:16	and with the trumpet of God
	1 Thessalonians 4:14	even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus
The dead in Christ rise first	1 Corinthians 15:52	For the trumpet will sound
	1 Thessalonians 4:16	And the dead in Christ will rise first
	1 Corinthians 15:52	and the dead will be raised incorruptible
Those alive and remaining are changed and join the resurrected to meet the Lord in the air	1 Corinthians 15:51	Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep
	1 Thessalonians 4:15	[we]will by no means precede those who are asleep
	1 Corinthians 15:51	but we shall all be changed
	1 Corinthians 15:52	in a moment
	1 Corinthians 15:52	in the twinkling of an eye
	1 Corinthians 15:52	and we shall be changed
	1 Corinthians 15:52	at the last trumpet (not the last trumpet in Revelation)
	1 Corinthians 15:53	For this corruptible must put on incorruption
	1 Corinthians 15:53	and this mortal must put on immortality
	1 Thessalonians 4:15	that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord
The Bride returns with Christ to His Father's House	John 14:3	that where I am, there you may be also

Comparing the Rapture and the Second Coming

<u>Rapture</u>	<u>Second Coming</u>
Rapture is before the tribulation	Second Coming is after the tribulation
Rapture is sudden	Time to realize Second Coming happening
Tribulation begins after rapture	Kingdom begins after second coming
Day and Hour unknown - imminent	Very day can be calculated
No signs	Many signs predicted and fulfilled
Seen only by the church	Seen by the whole world
Judgment of church in heaven	Judgment of nations on earth
Christ comes for His Bride	Christ comes for His kingdom
Church meets Christ in the air	World sees Christ descending to earth
Church goes to the Father's house	Church returns to earth with Christ
Church goes to heaven	Resurrected saints receive the kingdom
Rapture of all Christians	No one raptured
Blessed hope of Christians	Time of mourning of the world
Satan is loose	Satan is bound

Other Rapture Passages

Matthew 16:18	Philippians 3:20-21	2 Thessalonians 2:1	1 Peter 5:4
John 14:3	Philippians 4:5	1 Timothy 6:14	1 John 2:28-3:2
Romans 8:19	Colossians 3:4	2 Timothy 4:1,8	1 John 3:2
Romans 11:25	1 Thessalonians 1:10	Titus 2:13	Jude 1:21
1 Corinthians 1:7-8	1 Thessalonians 2:19	Hebrews 9:28	Revelation 2:25
1 Corinthians 15:51-53	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	James 5:7-9	Revelation 3:10
1 Corinthians 16:22	1 Thessalonians 5:9, 23	1 Peter 1:7,13	Revelation 22:20

Second Coming Passages

Daniel 2:44-45	Matthew 24:3-41	Luke 21:25-28	2 Peter 3:1-14
Daniel 7:9-14	Matthew 25:23-46	Acts 1:9-11	Revelation 1:7
Daniel 9:27	Matthew 26:64	Acts 3:19-21	Revelation 11:2,3
Daniel 12:1-3	Mark 13:14-27	1 Thessalonians 3:13	Revelation 12:6,14
Zechariah 12:10	Mark 14:62	2 Thessalonians 1:6-10	Revelation 13:5
Zechariah 14:1-15	Luke 17:34-37	2 Thessalonians 2:8	Revelation 19:11-20:6
Matthew 13:41	Luke 19:22	1 Peter 4:12-13	Revelation 22:7, 12, 20

More Scriptural Evidence for the Pretribulation Rapture

Used with permission, <http://www.raptureready.com/rr-pretribulation-rapture.html>
See Rapture Ready for more information about the pre-trib rapture view

The Unknown Hour

When we search the Scriptures and read the passages describing the Lord Jesus' return, we find verses that tell us we won't know the day and hour of that event. Matthew 25:13 says Jesus will return at an unknown time, while Revelation 12:6 indicates that the Jews will have to wait on the Lord 1,260 days, starting when the Antichrist stands in the Temple of God and declares himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This event will take place at the mid-point of the seven-year tribulation (Daniel 9:27). Note that some people only see a three-and-a-half-year tribulation. In a way, they are correct because the first half of the tribulation will be relatively peaceful compared to the second half. Nonetheless, peaceful or not, there still remains a seven-year period called the tribulation. When the Jews flee into the wilderness, they know that all they have to do is wait out those 1,260 days (Matthew 24:16). There is no way to apply the phrase "neither the day nor the hour" to this situation. The only way for these two viewpoints to be true is to separate the two distinct events transpiring here: 1) the rapture of the Church, which comes before the tribulation; and 2) the return of Jesus to the earth, which takes place roughly seven years later.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

In Luke 12:36, the Word states that when Christ returns, He will be returning from a wedding. In Revelation 19:7-8, we read about the marriage itself. The marriage supper takes place before the marriage. According to Jewish custom, the marriage contract, which often includes a dowry, is drawn up first. The contract parallels the act of faith we use when we trust Jesus to be our Savior. The dowry is His life, which was used to purchase us. When it's time for the wedding, the groom goes to the bride's house unannounced. She comes out to meet him, and then he takes her to his father's house. This precisely correlates with the events according to the pre-trib scenario. Jesus, the Groom, comes down from heaven and calls up the Church, His Bride. After meeting in the air, He and His Bride return to His Father's house, heaven. The marriage supper will take place there, while down here on earth the final events of the tribulation will be playing out. After the marriage supper of Jewish tradition, the bride and groom are presented to the world as man and wife. This corresponds to the time when Jesus returns to earth accompanied by an army "clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:14).

What They Didn't Teach You in History Class (It didn't happen in 70 A. D.)

Many groups try to discredit the pre-trib rapture by saying most of the end-time events in the Bible have already taken place. A group of people called Preterists claims that the Book of Revelation was mostly fulfilled by 70 AD. If the events described in the Book of Revelation took place in the past, I'm at a loss to explain some of the current situations I see around us: the rebirth of Israel, the reunification of Europe, the number of global wars that have occurred, and the development of nuclear weapons. During history class, I must have slept through the part where the teacher talked about the time when a third of the trees were burned up, 100-pound hailstones fell from the sky, and the sea turned into blood (Revelation 8:7-8, 16:21). I think several people would have to question their opposition to the pre-trib rapture doctrine if they knew that the evidence provided to them was based on the understanding that most tribulation prophecies have already occurred.

The People of the Millennium (Who goes in to the Millennium?)

If Christ were to come back after the tribulation, rapture all the saints, and slay all the ungodly, who would be left to populate the earth during the millennium? Only the pre-trib viewpoint can account for this post-trib problem. The Church is raptured before the tribulation, a vast number of souls are saved during this seven-year time frame, and those who make it through the tribulation go into the millennium while the unsaved are cast into hell.

The Saints U-turn (Can't be Post-trib)

In the pre-trib scenario, after we rise to meet the Lord in the air, we will go to heaven and abide there seven years. At the end of that period, Christ will come down to earth, defeat the Antichrist, and

cleanse the temple. In a post-trib rapture, we would rise in the air to meet the Lord, then do a 180-degree U-turn and come back down to earth. Revelation 1:7 states that Christ will appear out of the clouds and come down to earth. Zechariah 14:4 says that His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. If He's already headed our way, why would we need to be caught up to meet Him?

"Come Up Hither"

Many pre-trib writers cite Revelation 4:1, which says, "come up hither," as a prophetic reference to the rapture of the Church, leaving Revelation chapters 1 through 3 as a description of the Church Age. After the shout to "come up hither," the Church is not mentioned in Scripture at all. The attention of Scripture switches from the Church to the Jews living in Israel.

Armies in Fine Linen

When Jesus returns (Revelation 19:18), an army follows Him. The army's members are riding on white horses, and they are clothed in fine linen that is white and clean. In Revelation 19:8, we are told that the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. If the saints of God are returning with Christ to wage war on the Antichrist, then it is not possible to have a post-trib rapture without us running into ourselves as we are coming and going.

The Time of Jacob's Trouble

In several passages, the Bible refers to the tribulation as a time of trouble for the Jews. The phrase "Jacob's trouble" pertains to the descendants of Jacob. Jeremiah 30:7 says that this time of trouble will come just before the Lord returns to save His people. The final week of Daniel's 70th week is yet to take place. An angel told Daniel that, "70 weeks are determined unto thy people" (Daniel 9:24). Scripture never mentions that the tribulation is meant to be a time of testing for Christians. However, some post-tribbers try to claim that they are the ones being tested during the tribulation. To make this so, they need to spiritualize the 144,000 Jewish believers in Revelation 7:2-8 who receive God's protective seal. Placing the Church dispensation into the same time frame as the seven-year Jewish dispensation, as the post-tribbers do, raises one good question: Can two dispensations transpire at the same time? In the past, God has only dealt with one at a time. Having both present during the tribulation would have to be an exception.

"He" That is Taken Out of the Way

Before the Antichrist can be revealed, Paul said a certain "He" must be taken out of the way. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:7, the "He" that must be removed is widely thought to be the Holy Spirit. It has been promised that the Holy Spirit would never leave the Church, and without the working of the Holy Spirit remaining on earth, no one could be saved during the tribulation. The removal of the Church, which is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, would seem the best explanation for this dilemma. The working of the Holy Spirit could go on during the tribulation, but His influence would be diminished because of the missing Church.

War or Rapture?

(Revelation 19:19-21) When Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation, He will be coming for battle. For those who believe in a post-trib rapture, it would be strange to meet your Lord and Savior just as He's rushing into battle. The idea that war and rapture could occur together is difficult to imagine, especially since they transpire at the same moment.

God Hath Not Appointed Us to Wrath

In 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul assures us that God has not appointed His people to wrath. This wrath is plainly God's anger that will be poured out during the tribulation. Pre-trib believers interpret this as meaning that Christians will be removed from the earth. Post-trib believers tell a different story. They describe this as meaning that God will protect Christians during the tribulation and pour this wrath out on the unbelievers only. This idea runs against the statement made in Revelation 13:7, in which the Antichrist is given power to make war with the saints and to overcome them. A post-trib view would make God's promise of protection from wrath into a lie. In years past, it was possible to think of being protected from the guns and swords of that day. Today, when any major war would involve nuclear and chemical weapons, it's impossible to expect that same kind of protection. When Nagasaki, Japan was bombed during World War II, the bomb exploded over a Catholic church. Everyone who was in

the center of the explosion died--both Christians and non-Christians. The only way to validly interpret God's promise of protection from wrath is by viewing 1 Thessalonians 5:9 as the bodily removal of the Church from this world.

The Salt of the Earth

Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). When the believers are removed, the earth will be plunged into spiritual darkness. When this happens, the Antichrist will then be free to control the world.

God Takes an Inventory

In Revelation 7:3, an angel descends to earth and seals the servants of God. Two bits of information about this sealing highly disclaim a post-trib viewpoint. The first item is the number of people sealed: 144,000. The second one is that all those who are sealed are from the 12 tribes of Israel. For the events in Revelation 7:3-8 to be true in a post-trib interpretation, either the Church has turned against God or God has turned against the Church. A post-tribber could write a thousand-word commentary about why the Church doesn't need to be sealed. Instead of trying to argue about why the Church is not mentioned or sealed, a pre-trib proponent could just say, "We're already in heaven."

Noah and Lot as Examples

The tribulation period is compared to the times of Noah and Lot by Jesus in Luke 17:28. Most people argue over whether the time frame Jesus was talking about in that passage was pre-trib or post-trib. In doing so, they miss an important point. The two circumstances that the Noah and Lot situations have in common are the removal of the righteous and the judgment of the unbelievers. From these two accounts, we see that God prefers to remove His own when danger is involved.

Various Rapture Views

The Bible clearly teaches a rapture of the church before the millennium. Several verses need to be carefully considered in order to determine the timing of the rapture. There are several rapture scenarios postulated by scholars but the view that best fits the scripture, which has been described above in some detail, is the Pretribulation rapture. The five major views that are generally discussed in theological circles are (1) Pre-Tribulation View, (2) The Partial Rapture View, (3) The Mid-Tribulation View, (4) The Pre-Wrath View, and (5) the Post-Tribulation View. See chart titled, [Various End Times View pg. 277](#).

Pre-Tribulation Rapture View

This is the most common rapture view, where Jesus' promises to keep His own from the trial that is coming upon the whole world. *Revelation 3:10* says "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." There is no point for the church to be in the Tribulation since the purpose of the Tribulation is to bring Israel to faith. The Pre-Trib view, in keeping a clear distinction between Israel and the Church, says the tribulation period is solely for the Jews.

Daniel's 70th Week, a prophecy directed toward Israel, clearly states that the 70th week is for Daniel's people, the Jews. The 70th week of Daniel is marked by time phrases that line up perfectly with time phrases found in the passages of the book of Revelation that describe the tribulation period. This synchronizing of time phrases clearly demonstrates that the 70th week of Daniel is the 7 year tribulation period written about in Revelation 6-19. The whole 70th Week is the wrath of God, which is referred to in scripture as the time of Jacob's Trouble. Notice it's not the time of the church's trouble. The church who expects trouble during the church age, is promised to be caught up together to meet Christ in the air. This event is described in 2 Thessalonians.

There is some debate about whether the wrath of God, promised to the Jews, is the entire tribulation period or merely the second half of the trib, but because the severe wrath of God is revealed by the telescoping judgments that begin with the seal judgments, and because such severe

suffering takes place in the first six seals which the Lamb of God opens, it is accurate to say that God's wrath is present throughout the entire Trib, with the devastating severe wrath of God found in the last judgments of the bowls.

Other events that don't include the church and therefore support the Pretrib rapture are the Day of the Lord occurring at the beginning or just before the Trib and the peace and safety of 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 occurs at the beginning of the Trib.

A clear distinction is also made between the Rapture and the Second Coming. The rapture occurs before the trib and the second coming occurs immediately after the trib. The coming of Christ for His church is imminent and therefore the Church, who is not destined for wrath, can comfort one another with these words which promise removal from the earth prior to the wrath of God. The pre-trib rapture coincides perfectly with the removal of the Restraint who is thought to be the Holy Spirit who marks and indwells the church (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

The Pre Trib position alone explains why the church is absent in Revelation 4-19. In this view, the rapture provides enough time for the church to be rewarded in heaven and for the marriage of the Lamb to take place before returning with Him in the Second Coming. Judgment for the church's rewards occurs in heaven during the 7 year Tribulation on earth. The transformed church then returns with Christ in His Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation when He rescues Israel and brings about her repentance.

Pre Tribulationalism also teaches that the 144,000 witnesses are redeemed at the beginning of the Trib, the Sheep and Goat judgment of the nations occurs at the end of the Trib, OT believers are raised at the end of the Trib to rule and reign with Christ during the Millennium, and believing survivors enter the Millennium in their mortal bodies and parent the millennial population.

Mid-Tribulational Rapture View

The Mid-Trib rapture view indicates, by definition, that the rapture occurs at the midpoint of the tribulation. This view believes that since the church has been promised persecution and tribulation, then all who live godly will experience such things, therefore the first half of Daniel's 70th week is in harmony with the calling of the church. While the church is promised persecution at the hands of the world, it is not promised the wrath of God. The wrath of God is poured out on the world, of whom Israel identifies with before her national repentance. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that the wrath found in the first half of the trib is for the church.

Mid trib proponents say that the resurrection of the two witnesses' in Rev 11 illustrates the rapture. These witnesses they say are raptured rather than resurrected. This event occurs with the seventh trumpet which the time phrases in Revelation clearly mark as the midpoint of the trib. Mid-tribbers connect this resurrection of the two witnesses and the 'last' of the seven trumpet judgments with 1 Corinthians 15:52 to claim this event is the rapture of the Church. However these witnesses aren't part of the church the body of Christ, but are Jews. Though the scriptures don't give us their identities, the miracles they perform strongly suggest they are Elijah and Moses, both of whom are placed within Israel and not the church.

Another 'proof' for the mid trib view is the prophecies of Daniel focus on the second half of the 70th week and Revelation's wrath is the second half of the tribulation. Therefore, they reason the real tribulation doesn't begin until the midpoint, providing room to rationalize the church must be present in the first half of Daniel's 70th week and the tribulation. But Revelation 10:7 indicates that the voice of the seventh angel who blows the seventh trumpet lasts to the end of the trib and that only those days were revealed to God's servants the prophets. Hence, it is expected that only the second half of the trib was prophesied about in the OT.

Mid trib proponents adjust the Day of the Lord to begin at the midpoint of the trib, thereby placing God's wrath only in the second half of the Tribulation. The combining of the church and Israel in the first three and a half years of the 70th week of Daniel doesn't clearly delineate Israel from the Church

and therefore overlaps the Church with the Jews in Daniel's 70th Week. The entire 70th week was for 'your people,' meaning Daniel and the Jews. Another difficulty with the mid trib position is the absence of imminence...the judgments can be tracked once they begin making the day and the hour easy to predict. Jesus said, "*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour,*" (*Matthew 25:13*).

Post-Tributional Rapture View

This view states that the Rapture will occur at the end of the Tribulation as Jesus is descending to earth for the Second Coming. As He approaches, the church is caught up to Him and descends down with Him for His glorious appearing. Since the scriptures promise the church will experience trouble, persecution and tribulation, post tribulationists say this 'tribulation' is the Great Tribulation of the book of Revelation.

The posttribulation rapture view is only found in [Covenant Theology pg. 52](#) or [Reformed Theology pg. 49](#). This branch of Reformed theology claims the church has undergone suffering, persecution and tribulation since her inception and therefore has always been in the 'Tribulation.' The character of the Tribulation is shifted from one of seven years to one which has been ongoing even to the present time. Therefore, the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are not for the future, but have happened in history, although not clearly identified as such. These events are not understood literally, but spiritually. They say the persecution from the world is the tribulation of God. This tribulation period will end with the rapture of the church, therefore the rapture is said to be post tribulation. In this view, the church is raptured as Christ is returning to earth, making the rapture coincide with the second coming. The 70th week of Daniel is not a seven year period as scripture teaches, but an ongoing event throughout church history. They say that after the rapture/second coming event, the resurrection of the church is synonymous with the first resurrection. This view is further discussed in the section titled, "Amillennialism."

The problems with this view are the rapture is combined with the Second Coming as the same event, the persecution of the world toward the church is confused with the wrath of God, the Day of the Lord is placed at the end of the Tribulation, sudden destruction while claiming peace and safety (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3) occurs at the end of the Tribulation, the 144,000 are redeemed at the end of the Tribulation, there is no Sheep and Goat Judgment, Gentiles are only judged after the Millennium at the Great White Throne Judgment, the millennial population comes from the 144,000 (which are all males), Church age believers are judged after the Second Coming or at the conclusion of the Millennium.

Partial Rapture View

The Partial Rapture view, held by very few today, states that only those who are watching and waiting for Christ's return will be raptured. Only those who have walked faithfully with Christ throughout their lives are worthy of the Rapture. The Rapture is considered a reward, rather than a privilege of being in the body of Christ. This view believes not only in a rapture before the Tribulation, but also in several raptures during the Tribulation. The hope of being raptured either before or during the Tribulation serves to purify men of carnality and sin. However, if those in the church fail to change before the end of the Tribulation, they will miss the blessings of the Second Coming and the Millennial Kingdom to be resurrected at the end of the Millennium.^[1] One might ask where these church believers who are part of the body of Christ go as they sit out the kingdom for 1000 years. They spend the millennium in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Some who hold this view say that outer darkness is not the suffering of hell, while others do. Therefore some in the church, the body of Christ, will not enter into the kingdom promises made to Abraham and his Seed. The church is not destined for wrath (1Thessalonians 5:9). Some true believers will miss the Second Coming and the Millennium altogether by sitting the Millennium out in outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This view is commonly rejected because it's based on a works principle and adversely affects the doctrine of salvation. Most evangelicals believe that grace through faith puts all believers into the

body of Christ. This Partial Rapture view splits the Body of Christ into the worthy and unworthy based on how well they walk by faith. If unprepared believers must go through the Tribulation, then it logically follows that unprepared deceased believers must go to some sort of purgatory, which is nowhere taught in the Bible.^[2] Although some within this view consider 'outer darkness' not to be a place of suffering, the Bible teaches that it is.

Pre-Wrath Rapture View

This view teaches that the 70th Week of Daniel is divided into three periods; the birth pangs which occur throughout the first half of the Tribulation (Seals 1-4), the fifth seal which is said to occur from the midpoint to the middle of the Tribulation's second half, and the third division beginning with the sixth seal and continuing through the bowl judgments. The sixth seal is a warning that the Great Tribulation is about to end and the Day of the Lord is about to begin with the seventh seal.^[3]

The rapture is placed at the end of the second division between the fifth and sixth seals and is referred to as the 3/4 rapture view since it happens three quarters of the way through the Trib. The great multitude, mentioned in Revelation 7, are those who have come out of great tribulation which is interpreted as a partial rapture between the 6th and 7th seals. At this point, Christ is said to come from heaven for the Second Coming. Thus the rapture occurs with the Second Coming.

Since the Day of the Lord begins at the seventh seal and continues to the end of the 70th week, the wrath of God is not present during the first six seals. The wrath of God is only found in the Day of the Lord. Thus the birth pangs and the Great Tribulation are said to have none of God's wrath but merely the world's persecution. Therefore, the church, by their definition, is said to be on earth throughout the first half of the 70th Week and the entire Great Tribulation. The church is apparently subjected to the wrath of the Antichrist which is not considered the wrath of God. The rapture is placed at the sixth seal and the wrath of God begins with the Day of the Lord in the seventh seal. Hence the term "Pre-Wrath" Rapture.

This view has many problems, the biggest of which is timing. A literal approach of Revelation clearly shows the midpoint of the Tribulation is situated between the 6th and 7th trumpets, not between the 6th and 7th seals. This view blends Israel and the Church, blends the Rapture with the Second Coming, destroys imminence, numbers church saints as the 144,000 witnesses, redefines the timing and character of the wrath of God, and confuses the timing of the Day of the Lord.

References

[1] *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* by Mal Couch, Kregel Publications. Grand Rapids, 'Rapture' pg. 348.

[2] *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* by Mal Couch, Kregel Publications. Grand Rapids, 'Rapture' pg. 348.

[3] *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* by Mal Couch, Kregel Publications. Grand Rapids, 'Rapture' pg. 356.

The Tribulation

The Time of Jacob's Trouble

After the rapture of the church, the next prophetic event to take place is the Tribulation. The Tribulation is the one of the last great events in human history when God will bring time to an end, fulfill many of Israel's prophecies, cause man to realize that he is not in control of his own destiny, force men to choose the worship of Christ or the Antichrist, and come face to face with the reality of eternal torment. Will man continue to base beliefs on extra biblical experiences and his imagination or will he humble himself before the Lord and take the Bible's warnings and promises to heart.

Daniel's Seventy Week Prophecy

The foundation for the study of the Tribulation is found in Daniel 9:24 -27 where we learn 70 weeks are determined for Daniel's people the Jews. When all of prophecy's time phrases are studied, these weeks in Daniel turn out to be weeks of years. The 70 weeks begin ticking down when the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was made by Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, in 444 B.C. The prophesy states that there would be 69 weeks of years for the Jews which would end at the presentation of Messiah the Prince. The end of the 69 weeks of Daniel occurred on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and allowed Himself to be worshiped as King. The 69 weeks of Daniel ended on that very day. While many of Jesus' disciples worshiped Him as King, the majority of Israel did not recognize the importance of that day. When Jesus crested the Mount of Olives, he wept seeing that Israel did not recognize the day of their visitation (Luke 19:41-48). Apparently, the Jews were responsible for counting these 69 weeks of years so they would recognize Messiah when He came.

After the 69th week, the prophecies in Daniel say that Messiah would be cut off and have nothing. 'Cut off' is a phrase that indicates death, therefore we know this refers to the crucifixion. Jesus Christ was crucified and left without a kingdom. The cutting off of Messiah and the desolations mentioned in Daniel 9 indicate that there is a gap of time before the 70th week of Daniel begins. During this gap, Jerusalem and the Temple are not only destroyed by the Romans, but the Jews are told they will suffer and be scattered.

Also hidden in this gap is the Church Age. During this gap Israel is experiencing a partial hardening while salvation is made available to the Gentile whole world through the atoning death of Christ. Daniel's prophecy doesn't mention the Church because that prophecy was intended for Israel. The Church is the body of Christ that was a mystery concealed in the Old Testament but revealed in the New Testament.

Finally the 70th Week of Daniel, which is for the Jews, is the tribulation period when a false prince, the Antichrist, confirms a covenant with the many (the Jews). In the middle of the 70th week, the Antichrist will cut off grain offerings and sacrifices at the rebuilt Jerusalem Temple, in which he sets himself up as god. This abomination causes the temple to be desolated as the Jews flee Jerusalem. According to the Daniel 9 prophecy, the tribulation will continue until the destruction of the Antichrist occurs.

The Tribulation, prophesied throughout the Old Testament, is called the time of Jacob's trouble, the Day of the Lord, birth pangs, desolation, the indignation, and the day of calamity, destruction, wrath, distress, vengeance, darkness, clouds, thick darkness, gloom, alarm, trumpet, the Lord's anger, and destruction.

The Tribulation - Daniel's Seventieth Week

The 70th week of Daniel is described in detail in Revelation 4-20. The time phrases in Revelation match the one week of years perfectly. This seven year tribulation is divided into two 3 1/2 year periods. Each of those 3 1/2 years are further described as 1260 days, 42 months and time, times and half a time which validates Daniel's weeks as weeks of years. The first half is sometimes called birth pangs or as Jesus referred to them, the beginning of sorrows. The second half is called the Great Tribulation or the time of Jacob's trouble.

Prior to the Tribulation

The book of Revelation begins with John's vision of the glorified Christ who instructs him to write the things you have seen (glorified Christ, Revelation 1), the things which are (the seven churches of the church age, Revelation 2-3), and the things which shall take place after these things (after the church age meaning the tribulation, kingdom and eternal state, Revelation 4-22). Revelation 4 and 5 describe the worship scene in heaven where the Lamb of God is the One worthy to open the scroll. The whole book is filled with worship as God is righteous to judge and avenge the blood of His people on the earth.

The Seal Judgments

As the Lamb opens the seals of the scroll in heaven, the judgments begin to unfold on the earth. The seal judgments contain the four riders on horses, the sealing of the 144,000 from the 12 tribes of Israel, the martyrs crying out for justice from under the heavenly altar, cataclysmic events on earth and in the heavens, and finally silence for half an hour in heaven. Once Jesus opens the seventh seal, then all the remaining judgments will inevitably occur. The seventh seal is the seven trumpet judgments. The seventh trumpet is the seven bowl judgments. During the first 4 seals, one quarter of the earth's population dies.

The Trumpet Judgments

The seven trumpet judgments are sounded by seven angels. These trumpets bring fire upon one third of the earth, seas, and waters. Waters are made bitter and the sun, moon and stars are affected. In the fifth trumpet the abyss is opened where demonic locusts come out to torture the inhabitants of the earth. Then there are demonic horsemen that inflict death on at least half of the inhabitants of the earth. And the seventh trumpet is the introduction of the seven angels with the bowl judgments. The midpoint of the Trib falls between the sixth and seventh trumpets. By the midpoint of the Trib, over half of the world's population dies. Never in human history have these numbers of humanity died. This alone proves that the Tribulation is still future.

The Mid Point of the Tribulation

The judgments intensify as they move from the Seals to the Trumpets and finish with the Bowl judgments. In the first half of the Trib, we see two witnesses who are able to protect themselves, and seemingly the temple worshipers and inhabitants of Jerusalem, by power they've been given by God to plague the earth with fire from heaven and turn water to blood. At the midpoint of the Trib, there is a shift in authority away from the witnesses to the beast from the abyss who is able to kill the witnesses. Once they are killed by the beast, the antichrist, the whole world celebrates, follows after the beast and worships him. Many things happen at this midpoint of the Trib: the treaty with Israel is broken; the beast overcomes the two witnesses; the Jews in Jerusalem flee to the wilderness; Satan, the dragon, is cast out of heaven; Satan, the dragon, indwells the beast making him the Antichrist; the beast tries to annihilate the Jews but is thwarted; persecution breaks out against the faithful offspring of Israel; the beast suffers a mortal wound and is healed; the whole world is amazed at the beast and follows after him; the two witnesses resurrect after three days; the antichrist sets himself up as god to be worshiped in the temple; and in heaven the coming of the Lord's kingdom and coming wrath is pronounced.

The Bowl Judgments

The seventh trumpet is the introduction of seven angels dressed in white with golden girdles. These angels come out of the temple in heaven carrying seven bowls filled with the wrath of God. The bowls of wrath are poured out one by one and rather than the destroying in thirds like the trumpet judgments, these judgments affect the whole world. The judgments have intensified and are exceedingly severe. They include malignant sores, all water turning to blood, the sun scorching men with fire, darkness that causes men to gnaw their tongues in pain, the Euphrates drying up to make way for the kings of the East to prepare for Armageddon and finally the most severe earthquake in history which accompanies the return of Christ. Notice that men are given a foretaste of hell when they are scorched with the sun's fire and are in darkness. Throughout these judgments, men refuse to repent and instead blaspheme the name of God.

The Interludes in the Tribulation

Throughout the book of Revelation, there are several interludes that give the background behind the events of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowl judgments. The first interlude, found in Revelation 7, includes the sealing of the 144,000 witnesses from the tribes of Israel. The fruit of their ministry is seen through the end of the chapter where a great multitude is worshiping God before the throne and before the Lamb.

The second interlude is found in Revelation 10 where the strong angel tells John he needs to prophesy further about coming tribulation events and that this prophecy will be sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. The sweetness is the salvation of many while the bitterness is the judgment of others.

The third interlude is rather large and is found in Revelation 11:19 to 15:5. It gives background for the events of the midpoint and the second half of the seven year tribulation. Revelation 11:19 introduces the opening of the temple of God and picks back up with Revelation 15:5 where seven angels with the seven bowl judgments proceed from the opened temple. This interlude describes the woman (Israel) who gives birth to a male child (Jesus Christ) whom the dragon wants to destroy at birth. The male child, who will rule the nations with a rod of iron, caught up to heaven. Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth with great wrath at this midpoint and immediately pursues Israel to destroy her.

The earth helps Israel escape the dragon's wrath, which enrages and moves him to raise up a Beast who has a fatal wound, is healed and who comes back to life. The whole world is amazed with and worships the Beast. He opens his mouth in blasphemies, which ties him to the little horn prophesied in Daniel. He overcomes the saints and rules over every tribe, tongue, nation and people. We also see the introduction of the false prophet who causes an image of the beast to come to life and who forces the world to worship the image of the beast or be slain with the sword. The False Prophet prevents anyone from buying or selling unless they have taken the mark of the Beast on their right hand or forehead. We are given the number of the Beast's name; 666.

Following the martyrdom of those who refuse to worship the beast, we see the 144,000 witnesses in heaven singing. Their deaths and the deaths of those who refused to worship the Beast, leave the earth without a witness. Therefore we see in this interlude, angels flying in midheaven warning the inhabitants of the earth about destruction and judgment for those who take the mark of the Beast. These angels pronounce that Babylon the Great, who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality, is fallen. Many earth dwellers undoubtedly take the mark of the beast to avoid dying by not being able to buy or sell, not realizing that it will mean their destruction.

The final scene in this third interlude is angels coming from heaven to harvest the earth because it is ripe for judgment. The clusters reaped from the vine of the earth are thrown into the winepress which Jesus alone will tread outside the city causing the blood of Israel's enemies to flow up to the horses

bridles for a distance of two hundred miles. This winepress is the Valley of Armageddon and the Valley of Jehoshaphat that Jesus treads when He returns.

Armageddon

The sixth bowl judgment is commonly popularly referred to as the battle of Armageddon. Armageddon is actually a location, the valley of Har-Magedon, which serves as a staging ground for the armies of the Beast (Antichrist). This gathering of the armies of the world, are poised to invade and obliterate Israel. However, before sending forces toward Israel, the Beast sends a contingency to Babylon fulfilling the prophecy of the destruction of the 'woman who has been riding the Beast.' The harlot had been riding on the back of the Beast and committing fornication with the kings of the earth. These turn on her and destroy her fulfilling the purposes of God (Isaiah 13-14; Jeremiah 50-51; Zechariah 5:5-11; Revelation 17-18). The next event is the fall of Jerusalem (Micah 4:11-5:1). From there, the Antichrist's troops head south toward Bozrah where the remnant of Jews is hiding in the wilderness (Jeremiah 49:13-14; Micah 2:12). Facing utter annihilation, the remnant of Israel repents (Psalm 79:1-13; 80:1-9; Isa 64:1-12; Hosea 6:1-13; Joel 2:28-32; Zechariah 12:10; 13:7-9; Romans 11:25-27). Jesus then returns to rescue the Jews from destruction (Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1-3; Micah 2:12-13; Habakkuk 3:3). Then Jesus fights the armies of Antichrist from Bozrah back up to Jerusalem opening up the highway of holiness behind Him through the Valley of Jehoshaphat as he goes (Jeremiah 29:20-22; Joel 3:12-13; Zechariah 14:12-15). When He approaches Jerusalem, He makes His victory ascent on the Mount of Olives (Joel 3:14-17; Zechariah 14:3-5; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 16:17-21, 19:11-21).

Final Scenes in the Tribulation

Judgment of Babylon- During the Tribulation

After the seventh bowl judgment is poured out on the earth and the wrath of God is finished, one of these seven angels shows John the judgment of Babylon, the great harlot who sits on many waters and whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and the earth dwellers who were made drunk with the wine of her immorality (Revelation 17:1-2). Revelation 17 and 18 reveal who Mystery Babylon was throughout history. She is described by the name on her forehead; **BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**. She is described as sitting on the beast with blasphemous names throughout history, clothed in purple and scarlet, adorned with precious stones, gold and pearls, holding a cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her immorality. She is drunk with the blood of the saints. In her was found the blood of all the prophets, saints and the slain of the earth (Revelation 18:24). Her cup of torment was mixed double strength to the degree that she glorified herself. She claimed to be a queen and not a widow who lived sensuously and claimed she would never see mourning. Because she is fornicating with the kings of the earth, she is used to gather the inhabitants of the earth under the power of Antichrist. Once his power is solidified, she is no longer useful and is destroyed by the 10 kings. Revelation 18 describes her complete destruction and the rippling effects her judgment has on the merchants and kings of the earth.

Beast and False Prophet Seized- At the Second Coming

After the Second Coming of Jesus where He defeats the enemies of Israel, the Beast and the False Prophet are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. They are the first to arrive there. Satan, however, is thrown into the abyss for one thousand years so that he cannot deceive the nations during the millennial reign of Christ.

The Second Coming

The Tribulation, as described in the book of Revelation, ends with the Second Coming of Christ as He descends from heaven on a white horse with the armies of heaven following behind. These armies are dressed in the attire of the bride who has made herself ready. It is interesting to note that in the

Jewish ancient wedding customs, the bride was sequestered with her groom for seven days before coming out of the bridal chambers to be presented to the wedding guests.

Immediately after the tribulation is the event known as, the Second Coming of Christ. His glorious appearing will be accompanied by heavenly signs in the sun, moon and stars (Matthew 24:29).^[1] The sign of the Son of Man in heaven will be seen by every eye (Matthew 24:30).^[2] Christ will gather His elect from the four winds of the sky (Matthew 24:31).^[3] And Christ will come from heaven on a white horse with the armies of heaven (Revelation 19:11-14) to judge the nations (Jude 14-15, Matthew 25:31-46), coming in power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).^[4] Christ will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:3-5), unbelievers will mourn (Matthew 24:30), the Beast (Antichrist) and his armies will confront Christ (Revelation 19:20), and Christ casts the Beast and the False Prophet into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20).^[5]

References

[1] *Charting the End Times*, Thomas Ice and Tim LaHaye, Pre-Trib Research Center, Harvest House Publishers, 2001, Eugene, OR, Pg. 65.

[2] *Charting the End Times*, Thomas Ice and Tim LaHaye, Pre-Trib Research Center, Harvest House Publishers, 2001, Eugene, OR, Pg. 65.

[3] *Charting the End Times*, Thomas Ice and Tim LaHaye, Pre-Trib Research Center, Harvest House Publishers, 2001, Eugene, OR, Pg. 65.

[4] *Charting the End Times*, Thomas Ice and Tim LaHaye, Pre-Trib Research Center, Harvest House Publishers, 2001, Eugene, OR, Pg. 65.

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The Kingdom

The Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ

The Bible teaches that God's heart is to save sinners and dwell with His children forever. At the beginning of time, God poured His love and grace out on Adam and Eve, creating for them a paradise to dwell in and fellowship with Him. Work was a joy and relationships harmonious until they were ruined by sin. Since the fall of Adam and Eve and their subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden, man has longed for the relationship with God and earthly conditions he once enjoyed. Many, if not most cultures have in their history some rendition of this creation/garden story. Throughout history, man has unsuccessfully endeavored to re-establish this innocent and perfect existence. History tells of man's attempts and failures in bringing this utopia about. Conquest, wars, philosophies, technology, religions and even mind altering drugs have all failed to create any semblance of this utopic existence here on earth.

However what man cannot possibly recreate, God is more than able and willing to restore. From the moment of the fall, He promised to redeem mankind. And as our Kinsman Redeemer, He is also willing to redeem the property that was lost in the fall, the paradise on earth. As history progresses, we see God advancing toward the goal of redeeming man and restoring what Adam lost. Man is saved from the power of sin at the cross, the penalty of sin at death, and the presence of sin in the resurrection. The love of God is seen in His willingness to restore man to the position and purpose that God originally intended for him.

In the Bible, we see God's faithfulness and plans for bringing this redemption and restoration about. These promises are for those who believe and trust Him. Recounting the steps toward redeeming mankind, God called and promised Abraham that through him all the nations of the world would be blessed. Abraham is the patriarch of the nation Israel. The promises God made to Abraham were for the land, a seed and a worldwide blessing. The Promised Land is the nation of Israel whose land boundaries are outlined in the books of Moses which will not be fully realized until the Millennial Kingdom. The promised Seed is Jesus Christ; all who are in Christ are blessed with Abraham the believer. And the worldwide blessing is the New Covenant whose gospel extends beyond the nation of Israel to the uttermost parts of the world.

The final consummation of the Abrahamic Covenant will be the restoration of the land in the millennium. Many verses in the OT speak of the future kingdom where Israel will enjoy the full extent of her land, will have her Messiah ruling over her, and the effects of the curse will, in part, be rolled back. God repeated these promises to Israel several times during her exile in Babylon for allowing idolatry in the land. These promises were crucial. If Israel was being removed from her land, then God would appear unfaithful. Hence these future kingdom promises, once fulfilled, will validate the faithfulness of God. There will be a future kingdom inheritance for the beloved people of God, the Jews. And God will restore to mankind many of the blessings lost in the fall.

As we have seen, the Reformed understand these promises, made to Israel, as pertaining to the elect church. They claim to be the New Israel of God ([Supersessionism pg. 230](#)) and therefore will inherit the kingdom. Once they've laid claim to the kingdom, they spiritually assert we're in the kingdom now. So Israel is no longer the beloved people of God who can look forward to a national repentance and inheritance of the land. There is no point for her to even be in the land today or to be given status as a nation. Israel's place among the nations is seen as a Premillennialist conspiracy that has brought trouble on the world, not to mention shaming the 'kingdom now theology' in the process.

Ideas and theology have consequences^[1], even global consequences. The battle between the good and evil which motivates the philosophies of men are being played out on a global scale. The struggle between the existence of Israel and the ideology behind a global utopian kingdom here on earth are issues that are rooted in the worldviews of men. So it behooves us to know, from the Word

of God, details about the kingdom, how it will be brought about, what it will be like, and who will populate it. Truly honoring God is upholding His Truth not only for salvation, but also in upholding and believing His plans and purposes for mankind.

Purpose of the Millennium

The Kingdom was promised to the nation of Israel throughout the OT writings. The OT prophets told of the kingdom as the culminating event for the history of Israel. All who had been faithful to Lord God throughout time will participate in the blessings promised Abraham. These promises will be realized for Israel at the time of the Millennial Kingdom. The Lord will be restraining evil by binding Satan for the duration of the millennium and Christ will be reigning from the Davidic throne in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3-4; 11:2-5).

Verses for the Millennium

National Repentance and Restoration of Israel

Near the very end of the Trib, Israel is facing near annihilation at the hands of the world, but is rescued by Jesus who alone battles and is victorious over the forces of Antichrist and the kings of the world. Israel is promised that after her national repentance, she will enter into the New Covenant. Israel will remember her deeds of rebellion and mourn, each one by themselves. The Lord will bring them into the land of Israel, as promised to her, and she will prosper. The Israelites who survive the tribulation will be joined by the saved Israelites of the OT as Jesus at His Second Coming gathers the elect from the four winds and resurrects the bodies of the faithful but deceased Israelites. All inherit the blessings of the kingdom prophesied about millennia beforehand.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 NASB

¹So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, ²and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, ³then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. ⁶Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. ⁷The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. ⁸And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. ⁹Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; ¹⁰if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

Isaiah 11:11-12:6 NASB

- ¹¹Then it will happen on that day that the Lord
Will again recover the second time with His hand
The remnant of His people, who will remain,
From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,
And from the islands of the sea.
- ¹²And He will lift up a standard for the nations
And assemble the banished ones of Israel,
And will gather the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.
- ¹³Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,
And those who harass Judah will be cut off;
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
And Judah will not harass Ephraim.
- ¹⁴They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west;
Together they will plunder the sons of the east;
They will possess Edom and Moab,
And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.
- ¹⁵And the LORD will utterly destroy

The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
 And He will wave His hand over the River
 With His scorching wind;
 And He will strike it into seven streams
 And make men walk over dry-shod.
¹⁶And there will be a highway from Assyria
 For the remnant of His people who will be left,
 Just as there was for Israel
 In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.

Isaiah 12

¹Then you will say on that day,
 "I will give thanks to You, O LORD;
 For although You were angry with me,
 Your anger is turned away,
 And You comfort me.
²Behold, God is my salvation,
 I will trust and not be afraid;
 For the LORD GOD is my strength and song,
 And He has become my salvation."
³Therefore you will joyously draw water
 From the springs of salvation.
⁴And in that day you will say,
 "Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name
 Make known His deeds among the peoples;
 Make them remember that His name is exalted."
⁵Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things;
 Let this be known throughout the earth.
⁶Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
 For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 NASB

³¹"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Ezekiel 20:42-44 NASB

⁴²"And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers. ⁴³There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done. ⁴⁴Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD."

Ezekiel 36:28-38 NASB

²⁸"You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. ³⁰I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. ³²"I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"
³³"Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. ³⁴"The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. ³⁵"They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.' ³⁶"Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it."
³⁷Thus says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. ³⁸"Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD."¹¹

Zechariah 12:10-14 NIV

¹⁰"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. ¹¹"On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.
¹²The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, ¹³the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, ¹⁴and all the rest of the clans and their wives.

Matthew 24:31 NASB

³¹"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Binding of Satan

The millennial kingdom will be a time of righteousness unhindered by the schemes of the devil who has incited sin in the hearts and minds of men throughout history. At the end of the Tribulation, Satan is seized by an angel from heaven who chains Satan in the abyss, then seals it for thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released for a short time.

Revelation 20:1-3 NASB

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

The Davidic Throne Established

God made a covenant with David that he would never cease to have a descendant sitting on his throne. Thus God established the Davidic kingly line. Jesus, when He returns, will sit and rule from the throne of David.

2 Samuel 7:11-16 NASB

¹¹even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. ¹²"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³"He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴"I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, ¹⁵but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶"Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""

1 Chronicles 17:10-14 NASB

¹⁰even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover, I tell you that the LORD will build a house for you. ¹¹"When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. ¹²"He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³"I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. ¹⁴"But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.""

Jeremiah 33:17-26 NASB

¹⁷"For thus says the LORD, 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.'" ¹⁹The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁰"Thus says the LORD, 'If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, ²¹then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. ²²As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.'" ²³And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁴"Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, 'The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them'? Thus they despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight. ²⁵"Thus says the LORD, 'If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, ²⁶then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.'"

Reign of Christ

When Jesus has taken the throne and begun to reign, the peoples of the earth will desire to worship and learn from Him in Jerusalem, something not seen today in our world. He will rule righteously so that there is no longer a need for war, the poor will no longer be oppressed, the afflicted have an advocate, and wickedness will be vanquished. Imagine a government with no corruption. Notice that humans and animals will live together without fear.

Isaiah 2:3-4 NASB

³And many peoples will come and say,
 "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
 To the house of the God of Jacob;
 That He may teach us concerning His ways
 And that we may walk in His paths."
 For the law will go forth from Zion
 And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴And He will judge between the nations,
 And will render decisions for many peoples;
 And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks
 Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
 And never again will they learn war.

Isaiah 11:2-9 NASB

²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,
 The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
 The spirit of counsel and strength,
 The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
³And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,
 And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
 Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
⁴But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
 And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
 And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
 And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
⁵Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
 And faithfulness the belt about His waist.
⁶And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
 And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
 And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
 And a little boy will lead them.
⁷Also the cow and the bear will graze,
 Their young will lie down together,
 And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
⁸The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
 And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
⁹They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
 For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
 As the waters cover the sea.

Seventy Five Day Interval

Before the Kingdom of Messiah begins, there is a seventy five day interval that was prophesied in Daniel 12:11-12. During this interval, it is thought the temple is cleansed from the defilement of Antichrist setting himself up as god and the Judgment of the Nations takes place. The passage in Daniel reads as follows:

Daniel 12:11-12 NKJV

¹¹And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹²Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

The daily sacrifice in the tribulation is taken away at its midpoint. From the midpoint to the end of the tribulation is 1260 days. This verse speaks of 1290 days which gives an extra 30 days past the end of the Trib. Since we know from Ezekiel 40-48 that there will be a millennial temple, it is reasonable to assume that this 30 day period that is spoken in conjunction with the abomination of desolation refers to the setting up of this Millennial temple. This verse also speaks of 1335 days which is 75 days past the end of the Trib. So we see that there is an extra 75 days past the end of the Trib that is divided into 30 days and 45 days. Since the angel is speaking in terms of blessedness, it probably refers to those who are allowed to enter into the kingdom.

Matthew 25:34 NKJV

³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

This privilege of entering into the kingdom is given to those who are judged to be sheep in the Sheep and Goat Judgment, also called the Judgment of the Nations. The sheep are the ones who helped the Jews by giving them food, shelter, drink, clothing, succor and visitation during the tribulation at the risk of their own lives. Only would those who trust the Lord by faith will do such things. These sheep are invited to enter into the kingdom of Christ.

Unbelievers who survive the Trib are the judged to be the goats who did not help Jesus' brethren by giving them food, shelter, drink, clothing, succor and visitation during the tribulation because they didn't want to risk their own lives. These actions display their unfaithfulness to the Lord. Therefore, these are not permitted to enter the kingdom but are instead sent to torment.

So then we see that scripture teaches a 75 day interval during which time the temple is cleansed and the Judgment of the Nations takes place.

Events after the Tribulation

The First Resurrection - After the Tribulation and Second Coming

Israel was promised the kingdom and must be resurrected to inherit these promises. The resurrection is found in Revelation 20:4-6 which specifically mentions the tribulation saints coming to life, but it must be assumed that the OT saints are also resurrected to inherit the land and share in the ruling with Christ. This land promise is their inheritance.

Judgment of the Nations - After the Tribulation and Second Coming

After the false trinity (dragon, beast, and false prophet) are seized and removed, Old Testament saints are resurrected to judge the nations and inherit the kingdom that was promised to them throughout the Old Testament scriptures. This judgment is called the Sheep and Goat judgment or the judgment of the nations and is described in Matthew 25. All who demonstrate kindness to Israel during the Tribulation are permitted to enter into the kingdom. Their heart of compassion and love, to help the Jews, demonstrate their faith toward God at the risk their own lives. These faithful saints are invited to enter into their Master's happiness, the Kingdom age.

Satan Bound - During the Millennium

After the thousand years are over, Satan is released from the abyss for a short time to gather an insurrection against Messiah's rule. This battle of Gog and Magog is vanquished with fire from heaven. At this point, Satan is then cast into the Lake of Fire where the Beast and False Prophet have been for one thousand years.

Millennial Kingdom - After the Tribulation and Second Coming

This millennial kingdom lasts for one thousand years, as Revelation 20:1-6 teaches. Throughout the book of Revelation, many time phrases are given. We see precise time phrases given for the length of the first and second half of the trib (3 1/2 years each) and the number of the witnesses from the tribes of Israel (144,000). When the numbers are too great to count, John clearly conveys this as in the myriads upon myriads. Since John obviously distinguishes numbers into the thousands, he is also able to clearly identify the number 1000. Since he does so six times in Revelation 20, it is clear that the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth will be one thousand years.

Great White Throne Judgment - After the Millennial Kingdom

Immediately thereafter, heaven and earth flee away from the One who sits upon the great white throne and all the dead are raised for judgment. This is called the Great White Throne judgment. The sea and Hades give up the dead that were in them. Death and Hades are then thrown into the Lake of Fire. And any whose names are not found written in the book of life are judged from the

things that are recorded in the books, according to their deeds. If their names are not found in the book of life, they too are thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire was intended for the devil and his angels, not for mankind. Therefore, mankind is the last to be put into eternal torment. It is God's firm desire and hope that all mankind come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved.

Eternity - The Final State

The new heavens and new earth replace the old heavens and earth that have worn out like a garment. The eternal state is described in Revelation 21 and 22. In it we see that the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. She has the brilliance of the glory of God and is fitted with costly and precious stones in her gates and foundation. The walls are like jasper and the city is like golden glass. There is no temple there because the Lord God is its temple. There is no need for the sun or the moon for the glory of God is its illumination. The nations walk by its light, the kings of the earth bring their glory into it, its gates are always open and nothing unclean enters into it. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter in.

We also learn about the river and tree of life. The river of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of the river of life is the tree of life that bears twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations. The curse is gone, the throne of God and of the Lamb are there, the bondservants of the Lamb will serve Him, see His face, and bear His name on their foreheads. There is no night, no need of lamps, and no sun for the Lord God illumines them and they shall reign forever and ever.

Final Remarks

The book of Revelation closes with a final warning not to add to the words of the book to avoid curses described in the book being added to that person. Also, if anyone takes away from the words of the prophecy of this book, God will take away their part in the tree of life and from the holy city written in this book. John ends this last book of the Bible with these words, "*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*"

Who Enters the Millennium?

After the events of the Tribulation, the population of the earth will have been decimated. Before the tribulation even begins, millions of Christians will have been raptured. Over half of the world's population dies before the mid point of the tribulation. After the mid point, the program of Antichrist will exterminate many more believers who refused the mark of the beast and the number of his name. Also taking into account that two thirds of the Jews are killed during this time and that Isaiah prophesied God would make humanity scarcer than the gold of Ophir (Isaiah 13:12), it is clear that not many will be left alive to enter into the kingdom.

At the end of the Trib and before the kingdom begins, the first resurrection gives Old Testament saints the blessings of the Kingdom promised to Abraham. Therefore, the kingdom is populated by the Messiah, his bride, OT saints, and tribulation saints. All who have believed in Messiah throughout the ages will take part in the glorious millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Sinners in the Kingdom

While it is true that the millennial kingdom begins with only believers, these believers will be of two different natures. There will be the resurrected believers, who have their incorruptible bodies, and those who survived the tribulation in their mortal bodies. These mortal believers will enter the kingdom and reproduce creating offspring who will inherit the sin nature. As the populating of the millennium continues, the numbers of sinful people will increase. These sinners are expected to come to faith looking back to the sacrifice of Jesus. Some will refuse Christ and abhor His perfect rule, with an iron scepter, with the millennial Law. Thus, once Satan is released from the abyss after the

thousand years are over, the rebellious will be incited to revolt against Christ in the battle of Gog and Magog (Revelation 20:7-10). It is a surprise to some that there will be sin in the millennial kingdom. Only in the eternal state, the New Heavens and New Earth will there be no more sin!

Sacrifices in the Kingdom

Another surprise to students of the Millennium is the existence of sacrifices in the Millennium. Most believe that since Christ is our sacrifice for sins, there would be no need for other sacrifices in the kingdom. OT sacrifices pointed to the coming atonement of Messiah and since Christ is physically present in the Millennium, what need would there be for animal sacrifices? Some might ask, 'Didn't the New Covenant make the Mosaic Covenant obsolete?' What need would there be for faith since Christ visibly rules and reigns in the Kingdom? These questions are answered through the book of Ezekiel, which describes the millennial temple, new priesthood, and new land divisions of Israel.

In the book of Ezekiel, a temple is described that differs significantly from the temple used by OT Israel. Temples were holy locations where God dwelled in the midst of His people. Israel used the tabernacle and temples to approach God by acceptable blood sacrifices repeated year after year. Today church believers, who have been cleansed by the perfect blood of Christ, become the temple of the Holy Spirit of God individually and collectively as living stones being built into a spiritual house. In the millennium, believers will once again meet with God in a temple. The church age where the Holy Spirit indwells believers is past, yet all must meet with God through a temple.

Temples served as locations for priests to offer blood sacrifices to God to atone for sin. No sinner can approach God without the appropriate sacrifice offered by the correct priesthood. The OT Aaronic priesthood offered sacrifices designated throughout the Mosaic Law. The church today places faith in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus, our High Priest. In the millennium, a new priesthood, the sons of Zadok, will offer sacrifices to God. Interestingly, Hebrews 7:12 tells us, *"For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also."* Therefore, we know that if the sons of Zadok are designated to serve as priests, then there has by necessity been a change in the Law.

The Law of Moses designated many things such as how to approach God (ceremonial portion of the law), how to live as citizens in the nation of Israel (civil portion of the law), and how to live personally (moral portion of the law). In the church age, believers are given the law of Christ (faith) to trust the Spirit to walk in accordance with God's character. Therefore, in the Millennial Kingdom, there will be new law to govern by. Because God's character is the basis for all law, all of these laws will seem similar, but have distinctions. Therefore, sacrifice is necessary to approach God, but it will be different than the Mosaic Law.

Some similarities to the old covenant include;

"a statement concerning the sacrificial system in every chapter but one (chapter 47). These references include: "new moons and Sabbaths...all the appointed feasts" (Ezekiel 44:24; 45:17; 46:3,11-12), "daily offerings" (Ezekiel 46:13-14), "burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the libations" (Ezekiel 45:17; 46:2,4,11-15), "blood sacrifices" (Ezekiel 43:20), an "altar" for burnt offering (Ezekiel 40:47; 43:13-27), an altar for incense offering (Ezekiel 41:22), boiling places to boil the sacrifices of the people (Ezekiel 46:23-24), A Zadokite priesthood to offer me the fat and the blood (Ezekiel 40:46; 42:13-14; 43:19; 44:15-16; 48:11), a Levitical priesthood to slaughter the burnt offering (Ezekiel 44:10-11; 48:22). Furthermore, the offerings are stated to be for 'a sin offering" (Ezekiel 43:22,25; 44:24, 29) and to "make atonement " (Ezekiel 43:20; 45:25).^[1]

In the OT, the sacrifices made by the Israelites were said to atone for sins, yet they actually did not take away sins. Since the atonement for sins is found only in Jesus' death on the cross, it is correct to assume that the millennial sacrifices also will not take away sins. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that the millennial sacrifices under the priesthood of Zadok will provide for the ritual cleansing of the priests, sanctuary and utensils. ^[3]

Verses for Millennial Sacrifices and Offerings

Isaiah 56:7 NKJV

⁷Even them I will bring to My holy mountain,
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
Will be accepted on My altar;
For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

Isaiah 66:20-23 NKJV

²⁰Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. ²¹And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites,” says the LORD.

²²“For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD,
“So shall your descendants and your name remain.

²³And it shall come to pass
That from one New Moon to another,
And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD.

Jeremiah 33:16-18 NKJV

¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved,
And Jerusalem will dwell safely.
And this is the name by which she will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’

¹⁷“For thus says the LORD: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.’”

Zechariah 14:16-21 NKJV

¹⁶And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ²⁰In that day “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 3:3-4 NKJV

³He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the LORD
An offering in righteousness.
⁴“Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem
Will be pleasant to the LORD,
As in the days of old,
As in former years.

Characteristics of the Millennium

The millennial kingdom will be a time unlike any other time in history. It will be marked by true peace found in Messiah's rule and abundant blessings not known in our current world. We are still living in a world marred by sin, led by sinful rulers, short lives snuffed out by disease and tragedy. By the word of God, we know that we are not living in the kingdom yet, but are eagerly anticipating the day when these characteristics will pervade the world.

- Christ will be King over all the world for 1000 years
- Christ will sit on the throne of David and be the perfect Ruler
- Christ will rule in perfect fairness and righteousness
- Mankind lives in the presence of Christ
- The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
- There will be peace and righteousness on earth
- There will be one and only one religion on earth
- The whole world will worship Christ
- The righteous will delight in worshiping Christ in Jerusalem
- Satan is bound and cannot incite sin
- The barren lands will become fruitful
- Desert will blossom and become productive
- Arid places become lush
- Curse of Adam reversed except for death
- Sickness and disease will be cured
- People will live for hundreds of years
- Short lives are considered accursed
- Prosperity
- There will be a change in the nature of animals
- Harmonious living with animals
- Abundant food
- Israel will inherit the promises and blessings to Israel
- Israel enters into the New Covenant

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[2] Pre-Trib Perspectives, Volume VIII, Number 48, August 2007, *Why Literal Sacrifices in the Millennium*, Thomas Ice, Pg. 5. See also: <http://www.pre-trib.org/pdf/Ice-WhySacrificesinTheMi.pdf>

Overview of Reformed Eschatology

For the Reformed person who is committed to 5-point Calvinism, prophecy is understood very differently from the [Dispensationalist Pg. 39](#). For them, the church is the one program of God, for the elect, throughout all of history. Therefore, in Reformed eschatology, there is no distinction between Israel and the Church. Rather the church is made up of the elect throughout all of history. The church is predominantly occupied by the Gentiles today and was predominantly occupied by the Jews in the OT. Therefore, Israel was part of the Church. The various covenants made with Israel in history, including the Mosaic Law, are understood to actually to have been made with the Church. Israel just happened to be the predominant people group that populated the church in the Old Testament. It is said that God was really working with the Church and the Israelite people who represented the church in OT times. Since it was the church who received the Law, the church is said to be under the Law today. This teaching contradicts Paul's teaching in Romans 6:14-15 which tells us we are not under Law but under grace.

If the church has always been the one program of God, what becomes of the promises made to Israel? Again, the Reformed say the promises weren't made to Israel but were made to the church. These promises include the Kingdom blessings. The Jews are said to have forfeited their position with God for having put her Messiah to death. Since the promises are said to have been made with the church, then God is supposedly done with the Jews and is focused on the elect church. And if Jesus offered the kingdom to the elect church, rather than the Jews in the first century, then He delivered the kingdom to her shortly thereafter. Hence, their theology reflects the church is in the Kingdom age now.

This is exactly what is seen in Reformed eschatology. The predominant Protestant view is that we're in some form of the Kingdom now. And if we're in the Kingdom now, when did the Tribulation occur? And if the Tribulation has occurred, when did the Second Coming occur? What about the first resurrection and the binding of Satan for 1000 years?

Since there is widespread disagreement about these events, a variety of views emerge. To understand Protestant eschatology, we have to look at [Amillennialism pg. 252](#), [Post Millennialism pg. 252](#) and [Historic Premillennialism pg. 252](#). These are the most common views held within the Reformed camp. Some say the Tribulation has been ongoing since the days of the apostles, while others say the Tribulation happened in 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem. Some say the Second Coming happened in 70 A.D. and others say Jesus will return after the Kingdom age is finished.

In Dispensationalism, the Kingdom and the Millennium are the same period of time. However, in Reformed eschatology, the Kingdom is not defined as a millennium, because the word 'thousand' is understood as an indefinite period of time. Spiritualizing the word 'thousand' allows for a spiritualized view of the kingdom as well. The Reformed tend to spiritualize prophecy rather than interpret it literally. Hence, it can be said that we're spiritually in some form of the Kingdom now. Some say this spiritual kingdom now is the only rule that Jesus will have over the earth through the hearts and minds of believers, but others say there is not only a spiritual kingdom now but also a physical kingdom later. Those in Reformed circles who say proclaim a future physical kingdom here on earth feel the need to perfect the world through evangelism and Law keeping ([Reconstructionists pg. 160](#) and [Theonomists pg. 160](#)) to prepare the bride of Christ for his return. For many adherents of Reformed theology, they look forward only to the final judgment before Jesus sets up the eternal state. The rapture is rejected and the Judgment of the Nations (Sheep and Goat Judgment) is just another term for the Great White Throne judgment.

So the basics of Reformed eschatology are; the church began in the OT, the Jews have forfeited God's promises to the church, Jesus has already given the kingdom to the church, and there will be a second coming before the eternal state. All Reformed theology holds to some degree of spiritualizing the scriptures. From these, a wide variety of positions can be constructed. Therefore Reformed eschatology is varied.

Allegorical Interpretation

Not Understanding the Bible Literally

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
 Excerpted with permission from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger08.htm>
<http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=204>

Generally, when people don't like what a document says or when they want to make it fit their philosophical bent, they deconstruct or allegorize that document.^[1] This is what the Protestant and liberal theologies often do when interpreting the Bible. But to be kind, many are taught that allegorical interpretation *is* the correct way to understand scripture without realizing they are being taken captive to a man made method of interpreting the Bible. Allegory has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy with Plato. Augustine, a neo-Platonist philosopher himself, is credited with introducing allegorical interpretation into the church in the fourth century having been influenced by Ambrose, Origen and Plotinus. What is allegorical interpretation? Allegory is the representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms. It is the figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another. It is to assign personal or popular impressions to the words of scripture.

The Bible must be interpreted literally, which is the way language is normally understood. The Bible should be understood in the light of the normal use of language, the usage of words, the historical and cultural background, the context of the passage, the overall teaching of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15) and in consideration of God's character. If not, then a person can make the Bible say whatever they want it to say. Allegory makes the Bible say what is desired, what fits a presupposition or an interpretive framework. In arguing for interpreting the Bible literally, we recognize that the Bible writers frequently used figurative language which is a normal and picturesque way of portraying literal truth.

God means what He says and says what He means. God has not given us His word to deceive us or to trick us. He expects us to receive what He has said in simple childlike faith. And the word is written simply enough that even a child can understand. We are to take Him at His word and understand what message He intended to convey with words. If words remain the same, but their intended meaning is changed, then God's message is obscured. But again, men who reject the plain truth of the Word will try to make sense of it through the lens of their presuppositions. This is where eisegesis (reading into the text) and exegesis (taking out of the text) come into play. Men want to deconstruct words, so they can loosen the definitions enough to put their presuppositions in.

Most importantly, the believer must study the Bible in dependence upon the Spirit of Truth whose ministry is to reveal Christ and illumine the minds and hearts of believers (John 5:39; 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:9) The natural, unregenerate man cannot understand or interpret the Word of God correctly. The things of God are foolishness to him; he cannot know them (1 Corinthians 2:14), and his mind is blinded (Romans 3:11; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

It is interesting that allegorical interpretation is used as a defense against the dispensational, literal and prophetic understandings of the Bible. Reformed theology cannot stand under a literal and prophetic understanding of scriptures, and therefore is opposed to the dispensational theological framework of the Bible. Its defenders attack those who warn against understanding the Bible figuratively, mystically, symbolically or allegorically. These literary techniques are often used 'to discredit the traditional and plain understanding of a given Scriptural passage.'^[2] The Bible then becomes a preferred personal interpretation for the individual rather than the message God intended to communicate to believers. The meaning or interpretation varies with each person. Therefore, each person has their own interpretation of what the Bible 'means' to them. In fact, a friend of mine once told me how she was scolded in a reformed Bible study. She was told that if she interpreted the Bible literally, she would miss the whole point of the Bible!^[3]

'Historically, allegorical interpreters have commonly looked down on literal interpreters as stupid or slow since they are unable to ascend to the deeper, spiritual insights of the allegorical approach.'^[4]

'Allegorical interpreters think that they are deep thinkers and see more than is actually in the text. That's the problem; they see more than is in the text! On the other hand, they say literal interpreters don't understand the sophistication of language and literature.^[5] These men are often trained in philosophy or other literary classics and draw upon the techniques used in alternative literatures to argue with the plain reading of Scriptures. The result isn't supporting the Bible but rather tearing it down. And they have yet to come up with a consistent hermeneutic in interpreting the Bible themselves although they claim a historical and grammatical hermeneutic. Interpretation changes with each person. Therefore, each person has their own interpretation of what the Bible 'means' to them.

Over Literalizing the Text

When it's expedient for their theology, the Reformed will over literalize the text. It will be understood in an overly logical way that approaches irrationalism. An example of this is John 3:4-8 where Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. The Calvinist will interpret these verses to mean that you have to be born again before you can '*perceive*' the kingdom of God.

[John 3:3 NIV](#)

³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

This verse says nothing about perceiving the kingdom of God but seeing the kingdom of God. This verse means that one cannot enter the kingdom unless that person is born again. This is a future event. But the Reformed, who believe to be in the kingdom now, spiritualize it to say that unless a person can '*perceive*' the kingdom of God which is occurring now in history, he can't then be born again. The order of events is backwards.

Or take for example the Sheep and Goat judgment. Over literalizing would say that a person is saved by giving help to those in need. As an aside, this is merely an example of over literalizing. The Reformed would not interpret this verse to say that a person is saved by helping. The Reformed would say a person is saved by election. This example is merely to help recognize the mechanic of over literalizing.

[Matthew 25:31-46 NASB](#)

³¹But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' ⁴¹Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' ⁴⁴Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' ⁴⁵Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' ⁴⁶These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Some interpret this passage to say a person is saved by helps and service without knowing who Jesus is. This passage is talking about believers risking their lives by faith to help the Jews, who will be despised and dangerous to protect and help during the Tribulation period.

Example of Allegory from Augustine

'It may shock some to realize that Augustine was not only premillennial in his early eschatology, but he was also dispensational.'^[6] Later in Augustine's life, he discarded premillennialism for an allegorical interpretation of Revelation and eschatology. Augustine was heavily influenced by Greek thinking which is akin to Gnosticism as the following quote reveals.

'Through Plato's eyes {Augustine} understood the material flesh to be flawed, imperfect, defective-especially when compared to the spiritual world with its perfect forms and ideals. The human spirit is tortured in its carnal prison; it longs to be set free. The pilgrim can hasten its release by fleshly self-denial. Therefore, along with his growing disdain for the carnal laetitia (joy) of the saints was an increasing desire to understand the Millennium in a spiritual instead of a material light'^[7]

'A second factor which frustrated the Bishop of Hippo was the growing excitement of millenarians as they saw A.D. 500 approaching.'^[8] Augustine used the 'seven days of creation from Genesis 1...as figures for many concepts, including the "cosmic week.'" The seven days of creation were combined with Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 (a day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day) and the thousand years of Revelation 20 to establish the ages of the world.'^[9] 'Augustine's antimaterialism motivated him to deflate this millennial balloon of material emphasis. He could do this if he could use the Scriptures to prove that the Millennium was spiritual instead of physical, and if he could discredit the "cosmic week" chronology so widely accepted in his day.'^[10]

'... it is Tyconius who stands at the source of a radical transformation of African—and thus, ultimately, of Latin—theology, and whose reinterpretation of his culture's separatist and millenarian traditions provided the point of departure for what is most brilliant and idiosyncratic in Augustine's own theology. And it is Tyconius, most precisely, whose own reading of John's Apocalypse determined the Western church's exegesis for the next eight hundred years.'^[11]

'Augustine allegorized Revelation 20:1-10 to be a recap of the entire book of Revelation rather than a clear chronological progression from the end of the tribulation into the 1000 year kingdom.'^[12] 'The primary tool of Tyconius was not allegory; it was typology. He used typology to avoid the ahistoricism of allegory while insisting that the time of the End could not be known. Through the use of the seven rules of Tyconius, Augustine was able to turn numbers into symbols, to bind Satan in the sixth age of a thousand years rather than the seventh, and to have saints rule with Christ spiritually in the sixth age rather than the seventh. The miracles of the saints proved that they were reigning with Christ in the Church Age, the sixth dispensation. He found the Antichrist, Gog and Magog, and the first resurrection—all in the age in which he lived.'^[13] 'For him it was a tragic waste to try to superimpose a time line on God's redemptive plan, if for no other reason than the fact that Christ Himself did not know when it would end.'^[14] 'By the time the Reformers appear on the stage of history, eschatology was a dead issue. No scholar had avowed millenarianism for centuries.'^[15]

So to summarize Augustine's position, he placed the prophetic events of Revelation 20 in the age in which he lived, rather than in the future, through allegorical interpretation. In allegorical interpretation, Revelation becomes an allegory not to be interpreted literally and a symbolic picture of the struggle between good and evil. It originated in the Alexandrian school and was greatly influenced by Augustine.^[16]

Verses Reflecting the Need for Literal Interpretation

Jeremiah 7:8 NASB

⁸Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail.

Romans 16:18 NASB

¹⁸For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

2 Timothy 1:13 NASB

¹³Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.

Titus 1:10-11 NASB

¹⁰For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.

Titus 3:9 NASB

⁹But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

2 Peter 2:18 NASB

¹⁸For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

Golden Rule of Interpretation

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.

*When the plain sense
Makes good sense
Seek no other sense
Lest it result in nonsense! ^[17]*

Quotes

- **Quote** - "Ideas are certain original forms of things, their archetypes, permanent and incommunicable, which are contained in the Divine intelligence. And though they neither begin to be nor cease, yet upon them are patterned the manifold things of the world that come into being and pass away. Upon these ideas only the rational soul can fix its gaze, endowed as it is with the faculty which is its peculiar excellence, i.e. mind and reason [*mente ac ratione*], a power, as it were, of intellectual vision; and for such intuition that soul only is qualified which is pure and holy, i.e., whose eye is normal, clear, and well adjusted to the things which it would fain behold" Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/a/augustine.html>, Citing; **Augustine**, (De diversis quaest., Q. xlvi, in P.L., XL, 30).

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Supersessionism or Replacement Theology

Has the Church Replaced Israel?

Supersessionism is the term commonly used for Replacement Theology which teaches that the church has replaced Israel and has received the promises God covenanted to give to Israel. This theology says that because the Jews put Messiah to death, God has broken His covenant promises to them and has turned to the Church instead. Therefore the church has inherited all the promises that God pledged to give to Israel. It is the church who is now the program of God, who has inherited the blessings of Israel, who is the primary participant in the covenants and who has received the kingdom promises that Israel has longed to receive throughout the millennia.

Covenant Theology (Reformed Theology) has provided the fuel which energized medieval anti-Semitism, Eastern European pogroms, the holocaust and contemporary disdain for the modern state of Israel.^[1] A pogrom is an organized, often officially encouraged massacre or persecution of a minority group, especially one conducted against Jews. Accusing Israel of putting Jesus to death, many have justified their attacks on the Jews, even those who call themselves 'Christian.' Satanically motivated hatred of God's people has led not only to horrific events such as the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, but also incited a militant attitude against the formation of the modern day formation of the nation of Israel.

Replacement theology has not only justified persecution of the Jews, but led to a distortion of prophecy and biblical theology. Replacement theology is not grounded in literal interpretations of scripture, but rather in allegorizing or spiritualizing the promises of God made with the nation of Israel. Replacement theologians disregard God's future promises made to Israel insisting that Israel has lost the promises through her disobedience and rejection of their Messiah. If the church has replaced Israel, then it stands to reason that the Church is under the Mosaic Law, the book of Revelation happened in 70 A.D., and the church is in the millennial kingdom now.

'Replacement theology has been the consensus of the church from the middle of the second century A.D. to the present day, with few exceptions.'^[2] Replacement theology can be traced back to St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who lived in the fourth century. It is rumored that he expected Jesus to return by a near date. When this did not happen, he decided that prophecy in the Bible should not be taken literally, but should be spiritualized instead. Augustine was taught to spiritualize the passages he didn't like in the Bible, by the Roman Bishop Ambrose, to make them more palatable. Unfortunately, this heresy of spiritualizing the text persists among Calvinists today.

Under the Mosaic Law

The Mosaic Law was given to Moses after leading the Israelites out of Egypt and into the wilderness. Moses received it on behalf of Israel. The Law of Moses is generally divided as the ceremonial law which dictated proper and acceptable worship practices, the civil law which dictated the governmental structure of Israel, and the moral law which dictated codes of conduct. In the Mosaic covenant, Israel was promised blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience. Israel, throughout most of her history, has been a nation in disobedience, which the historical record chronicles. Yet Israel is still beloved by God. The blessings of the kingdom promised to her will be in full once she believes in Jesus as Messiah at the end of the [Tribulation pg. 209](#). The New covenant, made with the house of Israel, will be fully enjoyed by the faithful of Israel in the Kingdom age.

Back in the Land

The return of the Jews to the newly reborn nation of Israel in 1948 is irrefutable evidence that God has not cast Israel off and proves the Church has not replaced Israel. The supersessionist blames the dispensationalist for influencing foreign policy to bring her rebirth about, as if dispensationalists

had that kind of political power and sway! It is God who raises up nations. Israel is being regathered in unbelief for her national repentance which will occur at the very end of the tribulation when Jesus returns and rescues her from near annihilation. Israel will never be destroyed. How do we claim that with such confidence? God has predicated the order of the universe on the existence of Israel! When mankind messes with Israel, they are poking God in the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8). These sure promises to Israel make the position of Replacement Theology untenable. "It appears that supersessionists believe that Israel is a 'has been' and has no future in the plan of God. The Church inherits the blessings, while Israel endures the curses." [3]

Comparing Israel and the Church^[4]

Israel is a nation chosen by God	The Church is a called out assembly
Not all individuals are saved	All individuals are saved
Israel's origins are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob	The Church originated with Pentecost
Israel as a nation was God's witness	Believers are God's witnesses dispersed in world
Israel's program centers around Jerusalem	The Church was dispersed from Jerusalem
Israel identifies with the land and holy city	The Church identifies with Christ and heavenly calling
Israel's program revealed in the OT	The Church's program revealed in the NT
Israel gives animal sacrifices in OT and Kingdom	The Church offers Messiah's sacrifice in the Lord's Supper
Israel's worship centers around a temple	Individual believers are God's temple
Worship requires an Aaronic priesthood in OT and will require a Zadokian priest in the Kingdom	Individual believers are priests
Priests offer animal sacrifices	Believers offer spiritual sacrifices
Israel's history ends at the end of Daniel's 70 Weeks	The Church's history ends at the Rapture
The world is divided into Jew and Gentile	The world consists of Jew, Gentile and the Church
Believers identify with the nation of Israel	Believing Jews and Gentiles united in body of Christ
Jews take priority in the world	Church characterized by equality in Christ
Physical circumcision	Spiritual circumcision
Israel under the rule of Mosaic Law	Church under the rule of Law of Christ
Physically children of Abraham	Spiritually children of Abraham
Sabbath day observance	Christ is the Sabbath rest
Membership by physical birth or conversion	Membership by the new birth in the Spirit
Members of the nation of Israel before Pentecost, tribulation and kingdom.	Members of the body of Christ during the church age
Worship occurs at the Jerusalem temple	Worship where two or three are gathered in Christ's name
Israel likened to the unfaithful wife of Jehovah	Church is the beloved Bride of Christ, blameless and spotless

The Israel of God

Another problem with Replacement theology is the belief that all New Testament believers, Jew or Gentile, are the true Israel of God. Is it really Biblical to refer to Gentile believers as Israelites? Has God created a “new Israel” comprised of believing Jews and Gentiles in this present age? Galatians 6:16 is the only passage produced by all Covenant theologians as evidence that the Church is the new spiritual Israel, or that Gentile believers become spiritual Jews. The verse does not prove their case. The truth is that the term 'Israel' is used a total of 73 times in the New Testament. It is obvious, even to Covenant theologians, that the vast majority of the times the term 'Israel' refers to national ethnic Israel.

For Dispensational Israelology, the conclusion is the Church is never called, nor is it a “spiritual Israel” or a “new Israel.” The term “Israel” is either used of the nation or the people as a whole, or of the believing remnant within. It is never used of the Church in general or of Gentile believers in particular.

Proof text

Galatians 6:16 KJV

And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God

Verses Supporting a Future for Israel

Deuteronomy 11:29 NIV

²⁹When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses.

Joshua 8:33 NIV

³³All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing those who carried it—the priests, who were Levites. Half of the people stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had formerly commanded when he gave instructions to bless the people of Israel.

Exodus 24:7 NIV

⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

Romans 9:27 NASB

²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;

Romans 11:26 NASB

²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

Jeremiah 31:31-37 NASB

³¹"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.³³"But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.³⁴"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."³⁵Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for light by day And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The LORD of hosts is His name:³⁶"If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the LORD, "Then the offspring of Israel also will cease From being a nation before Me forever."³⁷Thus says the LORD, "If the heavens above can be measured And the foundations of the earth searched out below, Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel For all that they have done," declares the LORD.

National Repentance of Israel

Zechariah 12 NASB

¹The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,²"Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.³"It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured And all the

nations of the earth will be gathered against it. ⁴"In that day," declares the LORD, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. ⁵"Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of hosts, their God.' ⁶"In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem. ⁷"The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah. ⁸"In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. ⁹"And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. ¹¹"In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹²"The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; ¹³the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; ¹⁴all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.

Israel's Mourning Turned to Joy

Jeremiah 31:1 NASB

¹"At that time," declares the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."

Quotes

- **Quote** - "It is difficult to understand the behavior of most German Protestants in the first Nazi years unless one is aware of two things: their history and the influence of Martin Luther. The great founder of Protestantism was both a passionate anti-Semite and a ferocious believer in absolute obedience to political authority. He wanted Germany rid of the Jews. Luther's advice was literally followed four centuries later by Hitler, Goering and Himmler." Source Cited: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luther_and_antisemitism#cite_note-64, Citing; **William L. Shirer**, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p.236.

- **Quote** - Even now some evangelicals are attempting to develop new reasons to replace Israel with the church. **C. E. B. Cranfield**, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to The Romans*, 2 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979, vol. 2, p. 448.

- **Quote** - We're not dispensationalists here....We believe that the church is essentially Israel. We believe that the answer to, "What about the Jews?" is, "Here we are." We deny that the church is God's "plan B." We deny that we are living in God's redemptive parenthesis. There, we are again one people. In His holy and heavenly temple there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, pre-mil nor post-mil. There, we are all together, the Israel of God, princes with God, and the ekklesia, the set apart ones. Source Cited: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/sprouljr.htm>, Citing: **R. C. Sproul Jr.**, editor, From *Table Talk magazine*, Spring of 1999, p. 2 (inside cover).

- **Quote** - The inheritance promises that God gave to Abraham were made effective through Christ, Abraham's True Seed. These promises were not and cannot be made effective through sinful man's keeping of God's law. Rather, the promise of an inheritance is made to those only who have faith in Jesus, the True Heir of Abraham. All spiritual benefits are derived from Jesus, and apart from him there is no participation in the promises. Since Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the Abrahamic Covenant, all who bless him and his people will be blessed of God, and all who curse him and his people will be cursed of God. These promises do not apply to any particular ethnic group, but to the church of Jesus Christ, the true Israel. The people of God, whether the church of Israel in the wilderness in the Old Testament or the Israel of God among the Gentile Galatians in the New Testament, are one body who through Jesus will receive the promise of the heavenly city, the everlasting Zion. This heavenly inheritance has been the expectation of the people of God in all ages. *Knox Open Letter*, Seminary of D. James Kennedy (he didn't sign), Signatories include **R. C. Sproul**, **Gary DeMar**, **Michael S. Horton**, **Bruce K. Waltke**. 2002

- **Quote** - "We believe that the international Church has superseded for all times national Israel as the institution for the administration of divine blessing to the world." Source Cited: <http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=249>, Citing; **Kenneth L. Genty, Jr.**, "Supersessional Orthodoxy; Zionistic Sadism," Dispensationalism in Transition, Vol. VI, No. 2; Feb. 1993, p. 1.

- **Quote** - That is, we believe that in the unfolding of the plan of God in history, *the Christian Church is the very fruition of the redemptive purpose of God*. As such, the multi-racial, international Church of Jesus Christ *supersedes* racial, national Israel as the focus of the kingdom of God. Indeed, we believe that the Church becomes "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), the "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29), "the circumcision" (Phil. 3:3), the "temple of God" (Eph. 2:19-22), and so forth. We believe that Jew and Gentile are eternally merged into a "new man" in the Church of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:12-18). What God hath joined together let no man put asunder! Source Cited: http://www.midnightcall.com/articles/prophetic/replacement_theology.html, Citing: **Kenneth L. Genty, Jr.**, "The Iceman Cometh! Moronism Reigneth!" Dispensationalism in Transition, Vol. VI No. 1; Jan. 1993, p. 1.

- **Quote** - "the coming of the kingdom of God through Jesus the Messiah has transformed and reinterpreted all the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament. . . . Jesus the Messiah, who lived, died and was raised from death *in the land*, has opened the kingdom of God to people of all races, making all who follow him into 'one new humanity.' Source Cited: http://www.midnightcall.com/articles/prophetic/replacement_theology.html, Citing: **Colin Chapman**, Whose Promised Land? The Continuing Crisis Over Israel and Palestine (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), p. 285.

- **Quote** - **Anne DeVries** on the Lord's Supper. Jesus and his disciples were seated together at the table. The meal was almost over. It was Jesus' last supper with His disciples. The end of Jesus' life on earth and the end of God's covenant with Israel was near. The Jews could no longer be God's people if they killed the promised Messiah. A new day was dawning. There would be a new people of God living on the earth, a people that love the name of Christ. **Anne De Vries**, Story Bible for Older Children, Paideia Press, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, Copyright 1979, 123: The Lord's Supper, Pg 197.

- **Quote** - The futurists have more problems dealing consistently with Satan than the preterists. There is a fallen angel (Satan) who spiritually fathered the Jews (Matt. 3:7; 23:33; Jn. 8:44) and influenced them to reject Christ and persecute the Christians. **Edward E. Stevens**, International Preterists Association, Preterist Questions and Answers, <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp>

References

[1] Dr. Thomas Ice, What is Replacement Theology, <http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=249>

[2] H. Wayne House, "The Church's Appropriation of Israel's Blessings" in H. Wayne House, editor, Israel: The Land and the People (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), p. 77. Source Cited: What is Replacement Theology, Dr. Thomas Ice, <http://www.pre-trib.org/article-view.php?id=249>

[3] Thomas Ice, Pre-Trib Research Center, What Is Replacement Theology, Pre-Trib Perspectives, <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Ice-WhatisReplacementThe.pdf>

[4] Adapted from George Zeller; Middletown Bible Church; A Comparison and Contrast Between Israel and the Church, <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/dispen/israelch.htm>

Recommended Article

The Use of Israel in the New Testament

by Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

<http://middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/israelaf.htm>

Preterism

Tribulation in 70 A.D.?

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted with permission from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger09.htm>

Preterism is an eschatological theology that teaches all or nearly all of Bible prophecy was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Since Preterism interprets biblical prophecy as fulfilled in the past, it's sometimes referred to tongue in cheek, as 'Past-Tribulationism.' This implies the second coming of Christ and most if not all attending tribulation events have already taken place. The term "*preterism*" comes from the Latin "*praeter*," meaning "*past*." There are two types of Preterists; Full and Partial. Most Reformed theologians and reformed followers are partial Preterists. Full Preterists are generally outside of normative Christianity. The major difference between a full and a partial Preterist is the partial Preterist believes that Jesus' second coming is still future while full Preterism believes Jesus actually returned in 70 A. D. This distinction is further smeared when partial Preterists claim a spiritual return of Jesus in 70 A. D. but a physical return in the future.

Augustine believed that the Roman Catholic Church signaled that the promised Kingdom had arrived. Since the scriptures teach that the tribulation precedes the kingdom, then the Preterists must place the tribulation somewhere in the past before the Roman Catholic Church. So while these beliefs were present in the early and medieval church, Preterism has its more recent origins in a Jesuit priest named Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613). The Catholic Church began a movement to counter the popularity of the Reformation, called the Counter Reformation movement. Alcazar's intent was to disarm the attacks of the Reformers against the Catholic Church. The Reformers claimed that the book of Revelation prophesied the apostasy of the Catholic Church and its downfall. Alcazar reinterpreted the book of Revelation to mean that chapters 4-11 reflected the early church's struggle against Judaism which ended in 70 A.D., chapters 12-19 depicted the church's battle with paganism, and chapters 20-22 reflected the symbolic magnificence of the Roman Church. Therefore in his reckoning, the book of Revelation only extended to 500 A.D. He is considered a moderate Preterist. But the more intense Preterism that has recently emerged in the last 50 years is held by many today.

Before examining the various types of Preterism, we need to get a clear picture of the Tribulation events so that we have a firm foundation to compare these views against. See the diagram titled, [Overview of End Time Events pg. 276](#).

What Happens in the Tribulation?

To set some background, we need to be clear about the Biblical teaching in regard to prophecy. Revelation 4-19 includes the events of the Tribulation, while Rev 20 covers events immediately after the Tribulation and through the millennial kingdom. Of course there is much more written in the Bible about the Kingdom throughout the OT, but Rev 20 gives a basic overview of the Kingdom. The events of the Tribulation are covered in the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls. The Tribulation is divided in two 3 1/2 year periods during which time there are unprecedented cataclysmic events. In the first half of the Trib a world leader comes on the scene, over half of the world's population dies, 1/3 of living vegetation dies, 1/3 of waters are affected, offerings are made in a rebuilt temple, the 144,000 Jewish witnesses are sealed, there are two specially empowered witnesses in Jerusalem, locusts torment men for 5 months, a massive army assembles, there is fire from heaven, etc. At the midpoint the two witnesses die and are resurrected in full view of the whole world, the world leader is revealed and worshiped, the false prophet gives life to the beast's image and forces world worship of this image, the mark of the beast is taken by the earth dwellers, the earth is warned of destruction for those who take the mark, the beast's kingdom is destroyed, religious and economic Babylon are destroyed, a massive earthquake destroys the cities of the earth, Jesus returns with His bride and the beast and

the false prophet are seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire. These are some of the highlights of the tribulation events that will help us evaluate whether or not the tribulation has already taken place.

Events that follow the Tribulation

Immediately after Jesus puts the Beast and the False Prophet into the lake of fire, the resurrection of the OT and tribulation saints takes place in preparation for the Kingdom. These OT saints were promised the Kingdom and so their resurrection allows their inheritance of these promises. This is the first resurrection. After this resurrection, these saints reign with Christ and His bride for one thousand years. Satan is bound during these thousand years in the abyss. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released and incites a rebellion of the nations against Christ and His rule. Christ sends fire from heaven which vanquishes the revolt. Then the final judgment, called the Great White Throne Judgment, occurs. At this time there is another resurrection, often called the second resurrection. This resurrection is for judgment where books are opened and if anyone's name is not found in the Book of Life, he is thrown alive into the lake of fire. This is called the second resurrection and it's a resurrection unto the second death.

Tribulation then Kingdom

The pattern in the Bible for fulfillment of prophecy is 1) tribulation, 2) second coming, and then 3) the kingdom. The Reformed break this pattern by following a 1) tribulation, 2) kingdom, 3) second coming. However, they correctly place the tribulation before the kingdom even if they get the second coming out of order. Since the Reformed believe that the church has existed in the OT, they also believe the kingdom promises were made to the church not the Jews. The current church age is nothing new to them. 'It's always been God's program,' they say. Because the kingdom promises were made to the church, Jesus' first coming was to usher in the kingdom at that time. And because tribulation had to precede the kingdom, the OT prophecies of tribulation are said to have been fulfilled in 70 A.D. with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army before the kingdom began thereafter. Therefore, the tribulation has already occurred and the kingdom arrived shortly thereafter. Hence the term 'Past-Tribbers'...'this is the "*been there, done that*" view of Revelation.^[1] And if the major events of Revelation have been fulfilled, there is no need to emphasize prophecy today.

The Second Coming

Preterists believe that the Tribulation has already happened and that the Church is in the Kingdom now. But we know that before the kingdom is ushered in, one very important event has to occur - the second coming of Christ! We know from Revelation 19 that Christ's second coming happens *before* the thousand years. You might ask how the Preterist explains that Jesus' glorious appearing has already happened since neither the church nor history recorded this momentous event. We'll see that this lack of evidence alone disproves Preterism as wrong and is dangerously close to the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:16-18 who claimed that the resurrection had already taken place.

Full Preterists say Jesus returned in the clouds of battle in 70 A.D. For them, this is the glorious second coming. The second coming presupposes the subsequent first resurrection before the kingdom begins. So to expand the pattern we see 1) tribulation, 2) second coming, 3) first resurrection, 4) kingdom, 5) second resurrection or the Great White Throne judgment. The full Preterists explain that the first resurrection isn't necessarily literal by holding to an inconsistent or overly consistent hermeneutic. Christ has come, the kingdom is now, and the resurrection has occurred; all in a spiritual way. 'The full preterist does believe in a final judgment following a metaphorical millennial kingdom, but believes that all other prophecy has been fulfilled.'^[2] The full Preterists insist that Jesus taught the end was 'near' and from that argues that the Kingdom came in its fullness in A.D. 70. So the full Preterists' order of events is 1) first coming, 2) tribulation, 3) second coming, 4) first resurrection, 5) kingdom which is the same as the biblical order. The problem is that the tribulation events never actually happened.

The partial Preterists agree with full Preterists in saying that the tribulation did happen in 70 A. D. and that Bible prophecy is past, but they do not say that Christ returned after this 70 A.D. tribulation. The partial Preterists say the second coming is still yet future and will occur after the kingdom age. In this brand of Preterism the order of biblical events doesn't follow the book of Revelation. Instead of 1) first coming, 2) tribulation, 3) second coming, 4) first resurrection, 5) kingdom, they hold to a 1) first coming, 2) tribulation, 3) kingdom, 4) second coming, 5) resurrection scenario. The order of events doesn't follow the pattern in scripture.

Reformed Views

For the purpose of background, we need to understand that the various Reformed end times views have been greatly influenced by Augustine. He believed that the events of Revelation 20 were to be understood symbolically and interpreted as a recap of all of human history. Revelation 20 deals with the binding of Satan, the first resurrection, the thousand year reign of Christ and the battle of Gog and Magog at the end of the thousand years. But Augustine condemned a future millennial view (chiliasm) as heresy, which was held by the Donatists whom he zealously hated. Instead, he claimed that the kingdom had arrived with the inception of the Catholic Church. Therefore Christ is reigning through the Pontifex Maximus...who is now known as the Pope. When Luther and Calvin wanted to reform the Catholic Church, they went back to Augustine. Luther was an Augustinian monk and Calvin quoted Augustine copiously. Not only did Augustine influence their theologies, he also influenced their views of eschatology. So if Augustine rejected a literal, future millennium for a current kingdom that began with the Catholic Church, when did the tribulation happen? Obviously if the kingdom rule of Christ began in the 4th century, then the tribulation had to occur sometime prior to then. Hence the belief in Preterism, which means the tribulation, occurred shortly after Jesus' ascension.

Here is an excerpt taken from the International Preterist Association, Question and Answer section on their website:

QUESTION: *Have all prophetic events—Daniel's seventieth week, the second coming, the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth, the judgment seat of Christ, the great white throne, the condemnation of the beast, false prophet, dragon and harlot, the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments . . . in fact all judgments—already taken place, or are they symbolic and have not and will not be literally fulfilled?* ^[3]

ANSWER: *They WERE fulfilled in the first century. Some of them were physically-literally fulfilled in the physical events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem, others were fulfilled in the heavenly realm where the departed spirits were raised out of Hades and gathered into the Kingdom. But, whether they occurred in the physical realm or only in the spiritual realm, the events actually, literally occurred and were fulfilled.* ^[3]

Partial Preterism

Again, Preterism means past and in the context of eschatology, it is the term given to the events of the Tribulation as having been fulfilled in 70 A.D. Preterism has basically two camps; Partial and Full. Partial Preterists are called so because they believe that the Olivet Discourse and the Book of Revelation have had their fulfillment in the past, but still hold to a future resurrection and future coming of Jesus Christ. They hold to several of the full preterist beliefs with some variation. Nearly all Preterists are either Amillennial or Postmillennial.

These Preterists believe that most of Bible prophecy has already happened, Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24) have already been fulfilled and the Day of the Lord occurred in the generation of the apostles. "As a result, they reject such basic concepts as: Rapture of the Church; Literal Seven Year Tribulation Period; Literal Antichrist; Conversion of Israel; Battle of Armageddon; 1000-year Millennium; Future Binding of Satan."^[4] There will be no future temple in Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews took place in 70 A.D.

The various phenomena that Revelation 11 describes as part of the temple's destruction are spiritualized and then split into heavenly and earthly phenomena. Revelation 11 describes a future temple which is desolated and its worshipers are then scattered, but the preterists say this all happened in 70 A.D. This past destruction of 70 A.D. is said to have been accompanied by the sighting of a star that was similar in appearance to a sword. This star is postulated to have been Halley's Comet because there were reports of lights shining around the temple, and visions of chariots and warriors in the clouds and cities in Israel in 70 A.D. The physical occurrences reported at the time also included earthquakes, sounds, multitudes scattering.^[5]

Armageddon, according to the Preterists, is said to have occurred in the late 60s and early 70s A.D. Ancient Babylon the Great is said to be Rome. Since there is no future Tribulation period before Christ's Second Coming, the anti-Christ (as a man) will not appear in the future. If an Antichrist were identified as a man, he would have been the Roman Emperor Nero. The problem is that Nero didn't die at the hands of Jesus in the Second Coming but committed suicide in 68 A.D. Some believe that the Antichrist consists of all the Popes of the Catholic Church collectively.

In Partial Preterism there are many comings of Christ, one of which is the Second Coming. "The term 'last days' means last days of the Mosaic covenant which lasted until 70 A.D."^[6] The Old Covenant changed to the New Covenant in 70 A.D. "Partial Preterists believe that the new creation comes in redemptive progression as Christ reigns from His heavenly throne, subjugating His enemies, and will eventually culminate in the destruction of physical death, the "last enemy."^[7] Resurrection day is combined for the judgment of the righteous and unrighteous. "When Jesus talked about the end of the world, he did not mean that the physical world would be no more."^[8] The Bible talks about the Bema Seat judgment for believers, the Sheep and Goat judgment of the nations and the Great White Throne judgment which is after the kingdom and at the very end of time. They say of Jesus that, "He taught that the old worldview held by various contemporary Jewish groups was coming to an end, to be replaced by a new concept, the Kingdom of God."^[9] Partial Preterism agrees with the ecumenical councils and the "creation of non-covenantal New Heavens and New Earth free from sin."^[10]

Preterism believes that we're currently in some form of the Kingdom now. Before this Kingdom of Christ can begin, Satan has to be bound, which is exactly what the Preterists believe. They say that the binding of Satan is what allows the gospel to advance without hindrance. But we see exactly the opposite in our world today. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:8 that devil prowls around looking for whom he can devour. And Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:2 that the prince of the power of the air is at work in those who are disobedient. These clearly contradict the idea that Satan is currently bound.

Partial Preterism also holds to Replacement theology where they are the New Israel and God is finished with the Israel of the Old Testament. "They see no prophetic future for national Israel. The fact that the State of Israel exists today is blamed on an "accident of history" perpetrated by "ignorant premillennialists" who supported the Balfour Declaration that eventually led to the formation of the modern state of Israel in 1948. While most preterists would insist they are not anti-Semitic, their theology certainly leans in that direction."^[11] Scripture tells us that God has not cast off His people Israel (Romans 11:1), and they have not stumbled so as to fall (Romans 11:11), and that they are experiencing a blindness in part until the full number of the Gentiles come in (Romans 11:25), and that all Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26). These verses are written so that the wild olive branches grafted in might not become arrogant against the natural branches (Romans 11:18). The warning is that if God has broken off the natural branches for unbelief that we are to fear that conceit towards Israel might bring God's severity (Romans 11:20-22).

[Romans 11:19-22 NASB](#)

¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. ²²Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.

Full Preterism

Full Preterism is sometimes called 'extreme' Preterism or 'consistent' Preterism, because it is consistent in its hermeneutic, regardless of how spiritualized or irrational that may be. These Preterists believe that *all* of prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. They say that Jesus returned with the clouds of the battle over Jerusalem. They deny a literal future Second Coming of Christ. The return of Jesus was not a bodily return in glory, even though scripture clearly indicates otherwise. If Jesus didn't return in His resurrection body then we don't have the hope of a bodily resurrection either. Therefore, the soul is said to be raised spiritually at the point of being born again. The righteous have a spiritual body and the unrighteous are sent to the Lake of Fire. So you might ask when they place the judgment if there is no resurrection. They say that judgment is ongoing upon death. The new heavens and the new earth are also redefined to equal the New Covenant and the fulfilled Law in 70 A. D. They reason that the new Christian is a new creation and thus have entered the new heavens. And the new earth will be when the Law pervades the world. Consider the danger of theonomy with respect to this view. What a person believes has consequences for them personally and for others around them.

Claiming that the resurrection of the dead took place spiritually is the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus noted in 2 Timothy.

[2 Timothy 2:16-18 NKJV](#)

¹⁶But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. ¹⁷And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

These Full Preterists also object to the Creeds, ostensibly because they were written by fallible men, but in reality because these creeds refute their view of a spiritual resurrection. It is easy to see that this view is outside the norm of Biblical Christianity.

*Those who try to convince us that Christ has come, announce
by that very action that they are false teachers!^[12]*

Interpretive Framework

It appears that in Preterist writings that there is a type of '*already/not yet*' interpretive framework for interpreting prophetic events. This '*already/not yet*' interpretive framework is clearly found in [Progressive Dispensationalism pg. 39](#), which is a movement within dispensational circles toward a Reformed view of prophecy. For instance, we see that while there was a type of Jesus coming or '*parousia*' in 70 A.D., some believe there will still be the coming of Jesus in the future. In 70 A. D. there was a day of the Lord but there will still be the Day of the Lord. A judgment occurred in 70 A.D. but there is yet the resurrection of the dead. While they won't say the end of Israel came in 70 A.D. because they are the new Israel, the Preterists will say that 70 A.D. brought the end of the Jews is God's prophetic program. With the end of the Jewish Age in 70 A.D., the rapture of the believers, a

final judgment and the end of history is yet to occur in their view. Preterists believe that most Old Testament prophecies were '*physically*' fulfilled in 70 A. D. and can be understood literally from how the prophecies were written. They also believe that the prophecies of the New Testament are '*spiritually*' fulfilled. In their mind, anyone who interprets these Scriptures literally is not only in error, but also in heresy. They have a literal interpretation for the OT and spiritual interpretation for the NT. [Postmillennialism pg. 252](#) and [Amillennialism pg. 252](#) consider man to be in some sort of an allegorical kingdom of Jesus Christ now.

Preterists also practice a radical form of replacement theology by spiritualizing the New Testament Scriptures. They use Scriptures that pertain only to the Israel of the Bible and claim that they now apply to the church, which they call 'the New Israel.' Preterism often goes hand in hand with Postmillennialism. Postmillennialism believes that the church is preparing the world for the coming of Christ. In preparing, the world needs to be brought under the control of the Law, which is for the New Israel. This theology not only distorts the prophetic Scriptures, but redefines major parts of God's word. The effect of this dangerous practice ripples all the way through the fundamental doctrines of salvation.

"By forcing all second coming texts into an AD 70 straitjacket, the past-tribs have conjured up a narrow theory in the extreme. Their interpretative straitjacket can't hold Matt. 24:5-7 (false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes). Just in the last 50 years over a thousand have claimed to be Christ, the 20th century has had the bloodiest wars of all time, 50 million died in WW2 alone, and, then, there's the ever present threat of pestilence (biological warfare), and nuclear annihilation hanging over our heads. Famines? Taking only one example of recent times, in the wake of Communism 10 million starved to death. Need we mention the tremendous push for one world government? And now we have the high tech ability to control everyone on the face of the earth (see Revelation 13: 16, 17). Knowledge and travel has increased 100 fold in these last days, and since A.D. 70 (see Daniel 12:4)."^[13] These contradictions refute their fulfillment as happening in 70 A.D.

"So how do the Past-tribs get around all this? Or, presume to get around all this? No problem, they say the second coming, the first resurrection, the millennial, and the entire book of Revelation are all figurative. They insist that these celestial events did not occur actually in AD 70, but are metaphors, poetic language."^[14]

Problem of Dating

Preterism has some sever flaws, one of which is the dating of the book of Revelation. Most Bible scholars believe that John wrote Revelation around 95 A.D. How can he then prophesy about something that took place in 70 A.D.? When was the mark of the beast implemented (Revelation 13:16-17)? When did the Euphrates River dry up (Revelation 16:12)? Why is there no record of 100-pound hailstones falling from the sky (Revelation 16:21)? Why was Israel dispersed for nearly two thousand years and later reborn as an independent nation in 1948? These questions cannot be answered with any intellectual honesty while adhering to the preterist view.

But the Preterists explains the book of Revelation was not written in 95 A.D., but rather before 70 A.D. contrary to solid evidence. This would make Nero the Roman Emperor at the time of John's writing. But John was banished to Patmos during the reign of Domitian who preferred exile as a means of managing dissidents.

One of the arguments used by Preterists is to point to the temple destruction, mentioned in Revelation 11, and claim this Tribulation event happened in 70 A.D. They forget that the Scriptures twice point to a future temple...once in the Tribulation and again in the Kingdom. The Tribulation temple is the one that the Antichrist desecrates by setting himself up as god in the Holy of Holies. This temple will have the two witnesses prophesying for 42 months and then be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles for 42 months. The Millennial Temple is described in Ezekiel 40-48.

The Fallacy of Preterism



Dr. David R. Reagan

Source Cited; <http://www.according2prophecy.org/Preterism.html>

Denying the Resurrection

When Full Preterism claims that Jesus returned in the clouds of battle in 70 A D, they are actually denying a literal, bodily return of Christ. After Jesus was incarnated in flesh, He always comes in the flesh (2 John 1:7). Therefore a spiritual coming of Christ is denying Him as coming in the flesh and is heresy. They are also denying the resurrection of believers that is to occur before the millennium begins. This error was denounced by Paul as heresy in 2 Timothy 2:16-18.

2 John 1:7 NASB

⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2 Timothy 2:16-18 NIV

¹⁶Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. ¹⁷Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

This denial of the resurrection of the body may have been grounded in good Greek philosophy, but nevertheless it was a denial of the essentials of the gospel. Paul and John didn't spiritualize these verses but rather upholds a literal, physical fulfillment of bodily resurrection for believers.

Preterist denials of the bodily resurrection of believers and propounding the belief that we are living in the resurrection today is no more valid today than when the Corinthians held it in error. Paul explains the resurrection body. His own belief was in physical resurrection. Paul's teaching in I

Corinthians 15 was designed to prove that the resurrection of the believer and the return of Jesus would be physical. More than agreeing with a future physical, bodily resurrection to come, he boldly announced that in Jesus the resurrection had already taken place. Jesus arose physically not merely spiritually. His tomb was empty and nothing physical remained. All evidence pointed to a physical, bodily resurrection. Paul was mocked by the Greeks of his day for teaching a literal, physical resurrection. Not only did Paul continue to teach the resurrection, but he also looked forward to that day of resurrection as a physical reality and not merely a spiritual reality.

Another question to ask if Jesus has already returned, when did believers receive their resurrection bodies? The resurrection was of course one point of issue between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees affirmed the coming resurrection, the Sadducees denied it.

There is much that makes the preterist position difficult to believe. If a person believes that Jesus came in judgment in A.D. 70, then there is no blessed hope! Saying the resurrection is past misses the prophetic fulfillment, renders plain words of scripture mysterious and ethereal, and plainly falls under the denial of our Lord Himself.

Denying the Millennium

The Reformed fathers trace their theology back to Augustine who believed the Kingdom was brought forth by the inception of the Catholic Church. It's understandable how some of these early believers might think the Kingdom had come when the decree went out from Constantine to make Christianity tolerable and legal. Believers would have been thrilled with the freedom from persecution. But that freedom wouldn't last long. Those who remained faithful to the Word of God and would not support infant baptism were still in danger of persecution. Augustine established the need for infant baptism to wash away 'original sin.' Those who rejected infant baptism were considered heretics. And heretics were subject to the threat of death so that they would convert to the Catholic Church out of fear. Augustine's concept of Just War included putting heretics to death so they would convert out of fear.

"It had been held—at least since St. Augustine—that punishment, even lethal in form, could be an act of mercy meant to keep a sinner from continuing in sin, either by repentance of heresy or by death."^[15]

Many considered that the commencement of the Roman Catholic Church brought the kingdom. Augustine himself taught that the kingdom was tied with the Catholic Church.

'The millennium of the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation was seen as a symbolic representation of the whole span of time from before Christ to the Last Judgment and the Kingdom of Christ was institutionalized in the visible Roman Catholic Church. From the Council of Ephesus (431), which condemned belief in a literal, future millennium, the Augustinian interpretation was dominant in Roman Catholicism and later mainline Protestantism.'^[16]

Augustine's beliefs about the kingdom were propagated by Luther and Calvin whose teachings have found their way into Reformed theology of today. The rejection of a literal kingdom by the Preterists has led them to embrace Postmillennialism and Amillennialism today. See the next chapter titled, *Millennialism*.

Closing Comments

It is interesting to note that once Preterism presumes a near fulfillment for prophecy, then other scriptural interpretations must be adjusted to accommodate that mindset. Here we see how determinative presuppositions can be and how 'spread sheet theology' operates. Presuppositions drive the student to adjust their interpretation of scripture to fit the mind set in view. Even though scholarship claims certain rules of interpretation as their hermeneutic, in some respects the hermeneutic is in reality the presupposition and the rules of scholarship merely back up that presumption. Notice the following quote taken from the document called "9.5 Theses for the Next Reformation" and signed by many Preterists. These comments speak for themselves.

3. Scholars across a broad spectrum are in general agreement that this is exactly how every NT writer and the early Church understood Jesus' words. If they were wrong on something this important, how can we trust them to have conveyed other aspects of the faith accurately, such as the requirements for salvation? ^[20]

7. 1st-century fulfillment expectations were the correct ones and everything happened, right on time-no gaps, no gimmicks, no interruptions, no postponements, no delays, no exegetical gymnastics, and no changing the meaning of commonly used and normally understood words. Such manipulative devices have only given liberals and skeptics a foothold to discredit Christ's Deity and the inerrancy of Scripture. ^[21]

Verses Concerning Preterism Explained

Verses Concerning a 70 A.D. Tribulation

[Matthew 24:29 NIV](#)

²⁹"Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."

The Preterists spiritualize this verse to mean that some of these events really did happen, just not in a literal way. But those who interpret scripture literally know that this event has never happened! The sun and the moon have continued to give light and the heavenly bodies have not been shaken following 70 A.D.

[Matthew 24:34 NIV](#) **Key Verse!!**

³⁴I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

This passage is taken from the famous Olivet Discourse where Jesus is answering the disciples' questions about the signs of the end of the age and Jesus' return. The generation that will see these things is the nation of Israel. But of course, if Israel has been replaced with the Church, then Israel cannot be in view here. Instead, it is the generation of those living in Jesus' day who are said to not pass away until these things, the Tribulation events, have already happened.

[Luke 21:29-31 NIV](#)

²⁹He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

The dispensational view of this budding fig tree indicates that when the signs of the times begin to appear, the kingdom is near. Of course we know that the 70th Week of Daniel (the Tribulation) has to occur before the kingdom comes. Therefore, when we see that Israel is back in her land, then we know that the tribulation and the kingdom are near. Other signs of the times include globalism, hate speech laws that prohibit teaching Biblical truths, and ecumenism. All of these signs are a type of the budding of the fig tree. But the Preterist argues against the

fig tree analogy by assuming the fig tree only indicates Israel and therefore her rebirth as a nation and notes that if this were true, then other budding fig trees must also indicate other nations being reborn. They also site that Jesus also cursed the fig tree and said let it be no more, meaning that Israel would no longer be a nation. Jesus was cursing the tree for not producing fruit.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 NIV

¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

This is actually a passage which deals with the rapture of the church, which is yet future. But the Preterist, who sees all prophecy as having happened in the past, believes that this mention of angels, trumpets and gathering in this passage has already happened because it is similar to language used in the Olivet Discourse which they fully believed has already happened. They assume the Olivet Discourse has happened and therefore 1 Thess 4:16 has already happened.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 NIV

¹Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ²not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

The Preterists say that this verse was fulfilled in the Jewish persecution of Christians prior to A.D. 70. and the books of Hebrews, 1 & 2 Peter, James and 1-3 John were books warning Christians during this time not to fall away during this time of persecution. Peter and James were said to be killed and John exiled during this period. Others returned to their former way of life.

The Antichrist was an anti-Christian spirit that motivated the Jewish persecutions. Since the spirit of the 'man of lawlessness' was operating in Paul's time and is said to have intensified during the writings of John, then it was a spirit or force rather than a person. If it were a person, several in that day could have qualified for the anti-Christ. Jewish zealots, the Judaizers, or the Roman Emperor Nero also could have been candidates.

The 70 A.D. destruction of the temple recorded in Josephus is said to fit Revelation's description. The Holy Spirit is said to have restrained this persecution until the Christian church was matured to withstand this onslaught and not apostatize, and that the abomination of desolation was the blood that flowed from the slain in Jerusalem.

Revelation 1:1 NIV

¹The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

This verse speaks about Jesus' soon return. The Greek word for 'soon' is actually 'tachos' which indicates rapidity. When the Tribulation events unfold, they will happen quickly. So this reference for soon is not in regard to proximity but to the speed at which these events will take place. But the Preterist says that this word 'soon' means the event is about to happen. Therefore they will say that the Revelation of Jesus Christ occurred in 70 A.D.

Revelation 1:3 NIV

³Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

This passage speaks of the time being near. The Greek word for 'near' is 'eggus' meaning the time is set and ready or at hand. Even though the time is set, it doesn't mean that the events were about to happen. We know that they haven't happened because of the catastrophic events described in the book of Revelation have not occurred on such a worldwide scale. Therefore rather than insisting and demanding this passage prove all of prophecy has been fulfilled, we need to consider all the passages that speak of the timing of these events against the actual events themselves. Force fitting words without regard to the larger picture doesn't prove anything.

Revelation 22:6-7 NIV

⁶The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." ⁷"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

Again the Greek word for 'shortly take place' is 'tachos' which means rapidity, not proximity.

Revelation 22:10 NIV

¹⁰Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

Again, the Greek word for 'near' is 'eggus' which means set or at hand.

Revelation 22:12 NIV

¹²"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Again the Greek word for 'coming soon' is 'tachos.' Other versions read 'coming quickly.' This indicates rapidity of events rather than nearness of events.

Revelation 22:20 NIV

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Again, the Greek word for 'coming soon' is 'tachos' meaning rapidity rather than nearness.

Verses Concerning a 70 A.D. Second Coming

Matthew 10:23 NIV

²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

The Preterists claim this verse means that the disciples did not finish going through the cities of Israel during the persecution that broke out after Jesus' death and ascension before Jesus returned in 70 A. D.

Matthew 24:26-27 NIV

²⁶So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

This verse is used by the Preterists to prove that Jesus' coming would be in the lifetime of the generation Jesus was speaking to. Preterists say it would have been wrong for the listener to believe Jesus had come before these signs appeared. So, they say, these words of Jesus were only a warning in the near term and that once the signs in the heavens appeared, then anticipating His return was just fine.

But Jesus is warning that there will be false messiahs that others claim can be seen and followed. Jesus' protection against these false reports is the sign of His coming. Seeing lightning from the east to the west is an event so momentous that every eye will see it. Just as the crucifixion has marked all of history since, so would be His second coming if it had indeed happened.

Matthew 24:30 NIV

³⁰"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

The sign of the Son of Man coming is said to be in the clouds of battle from the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. When Jerusalem was destroyed, there never was the sign of the Son of Man that caused all the nations of the earth to mourn. Hence, passages like this these have to be spiritualized.

Luke 21:8 NIV Key Refutation!!

⁸He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.

It is interesting that Jesus warns against two groups of people here...1) false messiahs who claim to be the messiah and 2) those who speak for Jesus saying the time is near. The Greek word for 'near' is 'eggizo.' This is the very word that the Preterists claim as evidence that

prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. but yet Jesus is warning His listeners about those who claim this very thing!

But the Preterist explains this verse as meaning in the short term, only before 70 A.D., the listener should not follow those who say they are the messiah or that the time is near. Only when the signs appear should they say that the time is near.

[Acts 1:11 NIV](#)

¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Preterism argues that the hope of Christ's return was fulfilled in A.D. 70. In order to assert this happening as fact, they spiritualize events in 70 A.D. to prove that Jesus really did return. However, at the ascension of Jesus, the angels foretell that just as Jesus physically ascended, so He would physically descend back to the earth. No such event occurred in 70 A.D.

[James 5:7-8 NIV](#)

⁷Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Since this verse says that the Lord's coming is 'near,' Preterists over literalize this verse to mean that the second coming happened 'near' in proximity to the life of Jesus. To the Preterist, it cannot possibly mean that the tribulation events in God's prophetic plan could be thousands of years in the future. This interpretation is held in spite of ignoring the facts that the catastrophic events that accompany the Tribulation never happened in 70 A.D.

[Revelation 1:7 NIV](#)

⁷Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

Preterists say that Jesus returned in the clouds of battle in A.D. 70. But, all of mankind hasn't seen Jesus returning with the clouds. Every eye hasn't seen Him. And all the peoples of the earth haven't mourned at His coming.

Verses Concerning a 70 A.D. Resurrection

[Luke 20:35 NIV](#)

³⁵But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage,

In the resurrection there are no marriages or family relationships as we know them. If we are living in the resurrection, then why is there still marriage taking place?

[Acts 4:1-2 NIV](#)

¹The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.

The apostles taught the hope of a future physical resurrection from death. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Paul argues in 1 Corinthians for a future physical resurrection for believers. The Preterists say his preaching was meant only for Paul's audience then.

The Preterists make this future hope of resurrection a spiritualized event that happens at belief, rather than a physical event that accompanies resurrection at the rapture. Preterists believe that the resurrection is ongoing from belief.

[Acts 23:6-8 NIV](#)

⁶Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead." ⁷When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸(The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

Paul believed in a literal resurrection rather than a spiritualized resurrection. The Pharisees were literalists and legalists who would not have spiritualized the resurrection. Therefore, when Paul identifies himself as a Pharisee, he is acknowledging a physical resurrection.

[1 Corinthians 15:12-19 NIV](#)

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

Paul's discourse about the resurrection is likened to Christ's resurrection which was physical, not spiritual. To say that there is a spiritual resurrection with a supposed spiritual second coming of Jesus is to render Paul's words irrelevant. Even he acknowledges this by saying that faith is then in vain. How is a spiritualized second coming of Christ not like the Gnostics?

[2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 NIV](#)

¹Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ²not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

These words of Paul were intended to teach a future rapture for those in Christ who were alive at His coming. The physical rapture is a gathering to Him in the air. The Thessalonians worried that they were in the Day of the Lord and had missed the rapture. They knew they were not destined for wrath. They had confused persecution of the world for the wrath of God. They could know for certain that they were not in the Day of the Lord because the man of lawlessness had not been revealed.

The Preterist says that this passage needs to be understood in light of who Paul was writing to. The escape that is spoken of in this passage is not speaking of a future rapture of the whole church before the Tribulation, but that those who were alive at the coming of Christ in the air at 70 A.D. would have their corruptible bodies 'changed' into incorruptible bodies. The rapture is viewed more as a promise of escape from the evil trials on the earth through this change. According to the "Preterist Rapture" view, the top tier of Christians were removed from the earth in A.D.70 ^[20]

[1 Thessalonians 4:16 NIV](#)

¹⁶For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

When in history did we hear this angel heralding the descent of Jesus from heaven? When have the dead in Christ been raised? The Preterist likes to accuse the dispensationalist of a silent rapture when they had a silent trumpet call themselves!

[2 Timothy 2:16-18 NKJV](#)

¹⁶But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. ¹⁷And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

The error of Hymenaeus and Philetus was believing that the resurrection was past. This is the error of full Preterism. Notice that this error upsets and overthrows faith. In Paul's opinion, this preterist doctrine is a particularly dangerous one which is ungodly and deadly!

[1 John 3:2 NIV](#)

²Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

If Jesus has returned, then why haven't we received resurrection bodies? Believers haven't been made like Him yet.

[Revelation 20:6 NIV](#)

⁶Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The book of Revelation speaks of two resurrections; one before the thousand years and the other after. This not only means there is a thousand year kingdom, but two physical resurrections as well. The first resurrection brings to life those who will enter into the millennial kingdom with Christ.

Verses Concerning Preterism's Kingdom Now

Matthew 7:21 NIV

²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

The kingdom rule of Christ begins with the Sheep and Goat Judgment where the goats are prevented from entering. This separation is the judgment of the nations before the millennial kingdom begins. Only true followers of Messiah are blessed and enter in while those who have not believed Christ are destroyed in judgment.

Matthew 8:11-12 NIV

¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

If the kingdom of God is now, then where are those who are in outer darkness? Are they weeping and gnashing their teeth? If these descriptions of the Kingdom are understood literally, then we are definitely not in the kingdom. But if one spiritualizes this verse, then weeping and gnashing of teeth can be interpreted to mean anything unpleasant in life.

Matthew 13:47-49 NIV

⁴⁷"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.

'This age' continues with its mix of evil and righteous, but in the Kingdom the evil are cast out. This judgment precedes the Millennial Kingdom so that all who enter the Kingdom are believers. We do not see evil being rooted out of the world today.

Matthew 16:28 NIV

²⁸"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Rather than interpret this verse to mean that some of the disciples who were with Jesus would see Him glorified in the transfiguration, which is the very next passage (Matthew 17:1-13), Preterists interpret this to mean that those disciples with Him would see the inception of the promised Kingdom era.

Matthew 24:45-46 NIV

⁴⁵"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

This verse speaks of enough time for servants to become slothful.

Matthew 25:5 NIV

⁵The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

The kingdom was a long time in coming.

Matthew 25:19 NIV

¹⁹"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

The Master returns after a long time.

Matthew 28:19-20 NIV

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Here we see that the age will include the discipling of all nations...not just the cities of Israel. Jesus promises to be with them until the end of the age. He doesn't say until the end of the kingdom.

[Luke 19:11-27](#) NIV

¹¹While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

The followers of Jesus anticipated the coming kingdom, but Jesus speaks at least as clearly to the fact that there will be a "delay" before His coming, a delay of some duration. This parable of the Talents in Luke 19 is also described in Matthew 25: 14-30 where the Master is said to be gone for a long time (vs. 19). Jesus is telling those who think the kingdom is near that it will be a long way off.

[Galatians 1:4](#) NIV

⁴who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

Again, we see the term 'age.' Age implies a long time, rather than a short time, the end of which Jesus returns.

[2 Peter 3:3-4](#) NIV

³First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. ⁴They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

Enough time for scoffers to scoff. Enough time to think it must not be a prophecy for the future.

Quotes

- **Quote** - "It is unbiblical to use the term 'Antichrist' for a present-day or future political ruler. The proper context is theological and pre-A. D. 70", Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/d/demar-gary.html>, Citing, Gary DeMar, (*Last Days Madness*, p.204).

- **Quote** - "I believe that the judgment chapters of Revelation (Chs. 6- 19) focus almost exclusively on the events associated with the first imperial persecution of Christianity (AD. 64-68), the Roman Civil Wars (AD 68-69), and the destruction of the Temple and Israel (AD. 67- 70)." quoted taken from Preterist Archive, <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/g/gentry-kenneth.html>, Citing, Ken Gentry

- **Quote** - "It seems indisputably clear that the book of Revelation must be dated in the reign of Nero Caesar, and consequently before his death in June, A.D. 68. He is the sixth king; the short-lived rule of the seventh king (Galba) "has not yet come." Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/g/gentry-kenneth.html>, Citing, Ken Gentry, On Revelation 17:10,

- **Quote** - "Think of it: If these words in these verses do not indicate that John expected the events to occur soon, *what words could John have used to express such?* How could he have said it more plainly?" Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/g/gentry-kenneth.html>, Citing, Ken Gentry, *The Beast of Revelation*; Tyler, TX; ICE, 1982; p. 24).

- **Quote** - "The last days spoken of in the New Testament were eschatological last days only for national Israel, not for the New Covenant church. The "last days" were in fact the early days of the church of Jesus Christ." Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/g/gentry-kenneth.html>, Citing, Ken Gentry, (*Beast of Revelation*, xiv)

- **Quote** - "While partial preterists acknowledge that in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 there was a parousia, or coming of Christ, they maintain that it was not *the* parousia." Source Cited: http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/s/sproul-rc_sr.html, Citing; R.C. Sproul, (*The Last Days* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998, 158.)

- **Quote** - "But there was: the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman army in A.D. 70. That historic event was clearly prophesied by Jesus (Luke 21 :20-24), yet it took place long ago. It took place after the New Testament writings were finished but long before you or I appeared on the scene. The fact is, the vast majority of prophecies in the New Testament refer to this crucial event, the event which publicly identified" the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant.." Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/n/north-gary.html>, Citing, Gary North, (P. 44) (On the Fulfillment of Prophecy)

- **Quote** - "We conclude that the day of visitation refers partly to the incarnation. This event brought a double-edged crisis. Jesus' earthly ministry brought the gracious presence of God's redemption to those who received him, but set the stage for a soon-to-occur visitation of wrath and judgment to Jerusalem and the impenitent children of Israel." Source Cited: http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/s/sproul-rc_sr.html, Citing, R.C. Sproul on Luke 19:43-44 , *The Last Days According To Jesus*, p.81.

- **Quote** - "The nature of the event has to do with a 'Cloud-Coming' of Christ. It is necessary here to understand the Old Testament backdrop for a proper comprehension of the matter. The Old Testament frequently uses clouds as indicators of divine judgment." Source Cited: <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/g/gentry-kenneth.html>, Citing, **Ken Gentry**, (*Before Jerusalem Fell*; Bethesda, MD: Christian University Press, 1997; p. 121)

- **Quote** - Augustine wrote his magnum opus 'the City of God' with a sort of dim perception of the identity of the Christian Church with the new Jerusalem. Indeed we know that the 1000 years were held to be running by the generations previous to that date, and so intense was their faith that the universal Church was in a ferment of excitement about and shortly after 1000 A.D. in expectation of the outbreak of Satanic influence. Wickliff, the reformer, believed that Satan had been unbound at the end of the 1000 years, and was intensely active in his day. That this period in Church history is past, or now runs its course, has been the belief of a roll of eminent men too long to be chronicled on our pages of Augustine, Luther, Bossuet, Cocceius, Grotius, Hammond, Hengstenberg, Keil, Moses Stuart, Philippi, Maurice." Source Cited; <http://www.preteristarchive.com/StudyArchive/h/hengstenberg-ernst.html>, Citing, Alexander Brown, *Great Day of the Lord*, p. 216.

- **Quote** - "Nor can you say that the coming the Lord bids us watch for is not a real and personal one, except by such a mode of interpretation as would throw all Scripture into confusion, and all ordinary language too. . . . Yet, brethren, how many of you give ear to the exhortation? You have suffered Satan to rob you both of the comfort and the admonition of your Lord and Saviour's words. And hence a multitude of errors, and of what He will judge as evil and dishonoring ways." Source Cited; <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/pretrjv02.htm>, Citing; F.W. Grant, *Leaves From The Book*, pp. 399-400

- **Quote** - In regard to our destiny after physical death, we no longer go to Hades to await a resurrection and judgment. Death and Hades were done away with at 70 A.D. when the "death" that reigned over man (Rom.5:14) was reversed by the eternal "life" provided through Christ (Rom.5:17,21). Hades was a conscious waiting place for the biologically dead. At the AD 70 resurrection, souls in Hades were resurrected out of that waiting state, the righteous into the presence of Christ in His kingdom, and the wicked to eternal conscious punishment "outside" the gates of heaven (Rev. 22:15). Since then, when the righteous die biologically, they immediately receive their new immortal bodies and go directly into heaven to live forever in the presence of God, while the wicked go away to eternal conscious punishment. (see Matt. 25:41, 46 and Rev. 22:15) Source Cited: <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp#question18>, Citing, Edward E. Stevens, *International Preterist Association Preterist Questions and Answers*.

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Kingdom Now Theology

Denying the Literal Thousand Year Kingdom

Special thanks given to George Zeller of Middletown Bible Church
Excerpted with permission from: <http://middletownbiblechurch.org/doctrine/danger07.htm>

As we have noted earlier, the book of Revelation is basically a chronological framework of the events that occur after 95 A.D. John the Apostle, who was exiled on the island of Patmos, was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and had an extensive vision of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The book opens in Revelation 1 with the disclosure of our Lord in His glorified state. He tells John to write the things he has seen (the glorified Christ, Revelation 1), the things which are (the seven churches representing the Church age, Revelation 2-3) and the things that must take place after these things (the events after the Church age, Revelation 4-22). The events after the Church age can be further subdivided into the Tribulation (Revelation 4-19), an outline of Kingdom events (Revelation 20) and the eternal state (Revelation 21-22).

Before examining the Reformed view of the Millennium, we need to look at Revelation 20 to see what God says about the Millennium. Notice the phrase 'thousand years' is mentioned six times. Remember that throughout the book of Revelation, accurate and clear numbers are used by John. When the numbers are too large to count, phrases like multitudes and myriads are used. Here we see that 'thousand years' is mentioned six times and is not once substituted with a different phrase which would indicate that 'thousand' would be referring to something other than thousand.

Revelation 20

[Revelation 20:1-15](#) *KJV Emphasis added*

Satan Bound

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time..

First Resurrection

⁴Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Satan Freed, Doomed

⁷When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Second Resurrection at the Great White Throne of God

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire This is

the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

These verses in Revelation teach that there will be an actual thousand year rule of Jesus Christ during the kingdom age. The Reformed believe in Christ's kingdom rule, but re-explain its duration and position in history. They generally place the inception of the kingdom in the past that has been ongoing for more than a millenium. The Bible establishes the general pattern of 1) Church Age, 2) Tribulation, 3) Second Coming and 4) Kingdom which the Reformed hold to, but slide back in time. They say the Tribulation happened in 70 A.D. and the kingdom began sometime later. They also continue the Church Age through the Kingdom Age. They also place the second coming of Christ indefinitely sometime in the future.

Notice the order of events below. These orders of events are somewhat the same but notice that some events are left out and many of the events are redefined.

General Order of Prophetic Events

Reformed View

1. Church Age (Beginning with Adam, then Israel, then Gentiles)
2. First Coming (Jesus' first advent)
3. Tribulation (past, 70 A.D.)
4. Second Coming (past, in the clouds of 70 A.D. battle)
5. Satan Bound (progressively as gospel advances)
6. First Resurrection (individually upon being born again)
7. Kingdom (past and present, figurative, indefinite time)
8. Judgment (future, end of time)
9. Second Death
10. Eternal State

Dispensational View

1. Israel (began with the calling of Abraham)
2. First Coming (Jesus' first advent)
3. Church Age (current, Jew and Gentile Believers)
4. Rapture (future, ends Church age)
5. Tribulation (future, after Church age)
6. Second Coming (future, at end of Tribulation)
7. Satan Bound (future, end of Trib at Second Coming)
8. First Resurrection (future, after Trib, before Kingdom)
9. Judgment of the Nations (future, after Tribulation)
10. Millennial Kingdom (future, 1000 yrs, after 1st resurrection)
11. Great White Throne Judgment (future, after Kingdom)
12. Second Death
13. Eternal State

Various Views of the Kingdom

The three main views found within Protestant circles are Amillennialism, Postmillennialism and Historic Premillennialism. Generally, the belief that the church is in the Kingdom now can be traced back to the founders of the Reformation and from them back to Augustine.

They (as e.g. Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox) occupied the Augustinian or Popish position. . . that the church, in some sense, was the Kingdom of God (preparatory to a higher stage), and that the millennial period (one thousand years) included this dispensation or gospel period (some of the millennial descriptions being applicable only to a future period either in heaven or the renewed earth), and hence was nearing its close. ^[1]

Augustine's View

It is interesting to note that Augustine claimed Revelation 20 was a recap of Revelation 1-19 and the thousand year kingdom was administered with the inception of the reign of the Catholic Church.

The first Protestant Reformers inherited the traditional Augustinian eschatology developed in his City of God. The millennium of the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation was seen as a symbolic representation of the whole span of time from before Christ to the Last Judgment and the Kingdom of Christ was institutionalized in the visible Roman Catholic Church. From the Council of Ephesus (431), which condemned belief in a literal, future millennium, the Augustinian interpretation was dominant in Roman Catholicism and later mainline Protestantism. [2]

"...kingdom of God (was) already manifest in the Church...the age between Pentecost and the return of Christ was the very millennium itself, marked by the ever increasing influence of the church in overturning evil..." [3]

"...he (John) used the thousand years as an equivalent for the whole duration of this world, employing the number of perfection to mark the fullness of time." [4]

"Therefore, the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, even now His saints reign with Him..." [5]

. . . the statements in the Book of Revelation were interpreted allegorically by Augustine. No victory was imminent in the struggle with evil in the world. On the really important level, the spiritual, the battle had already been won and God had triumphed through the cross. Satan was reduced to lordship over the City of the World, which coexisted with the City of God. Eventually even the small domain left to the devil would be taken from him by a triumphant God. [6]

Luther's View

Augustine's view of eschatology influenced Luther's view, which can be seen in the following quote. Luther was an Augustinian monk as has been noted earlier.

Martin Luther, a traditional Augustinian, believed that he was living at the close of history and interpreted prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to certain forecasts of events relating to his time, such as the decline and overthrow of the Papacy. The Lutheran Augsburg Confession contains a rejection of the premillennialism of the Anabaptists. [7]

Calvin's View

Augustine's views also influenced Calvin's view of Revelation 20 where we learn of the thousand years. Calvin has a somewhat different view of the kingdom than Luther did. Calvin's beliefs can be summarized as follows.

Calvin likewise had an Augustinian approach to the thousand years of Revelation 20. Its time reference was to the whole of Christian history rather than to events at the end of the age. Calvin stressed the Ascension and the Return of Christ as the two decisive appearances of the Lord by which the life of the Church and the Christian in the intervening period are to be determined. The date of the return is unknown to us that we might be expectant and ready for it. The Church must nonetheless proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. Only at

the second Advent of Christ will the glory and power of His Kingdom be fully manifest. He will come to judge the godless and to complete the redemption of the faithful who now live in hope of the resurrection and of the blessed life of the world to come. The return of Christ and the general resurrection have as their purpose full redemption and share in Christ's triumph over his and our enemies in the ultimate establishment of the rule of Christ or its culmination in the eternal Kingdom of God.^[8]

Denying the Literal Thousand Year Kingdom

With all the scriptural support found in the Bible for a Millennial Kingdom, one would think there would be no trouble interpreting the Kingdom as a future event. The word 'millennium' is a word derived from Latin that means "one thousand years." The Reformed claim the word for one thousand years is an indefinite period of time because of the Greek word 'chilioi.' However the root of this word is 'chilias' which is a definite 1000 year period. They cast doubt on the length of the millennium to assert that we're spiritually in the kingdom now. So this simple word with its simple meaning becomes something different in the context of a spiritualized kingdom. And from that point, different interpretations of the thousand-year reign of Christ have resulted in more "-isms" than most of us care to think about: Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, and Preterism.^[9] And remember that Augustine used Revelation 20 as a recap of the previous tribulation events...which could mean that any of the tribulation events could be spiritually placed anywhere in history! He spiritually deduced that the Roman Catholic (universal) Church was evidence that the kingdom had begun!

Postmillennialism and Amillennialism (see below) consider the world to currently be in an allegorical millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. Isaiah drew a mental picture for us when he described what life would be like during the millennial kingdom. In Isaiah 11:6-9 he tells us,

"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

This is a vision of an Eden-like utopia. How can anyone look at the world in which we live and describe it in these terms? How can anyone think that Satan is in chains in the abyss rather than running loose in this evil world?

There are suggestions being made in academic circles which propose a complete synthesis of the Protestant eschatological views of Preterism, Premillennialism, Amillennialism, and Postmillennialism. This proposed preterist-idealist solution to the problem of conflicting and confusing end-time views is actively being developed for presentation and outworking in forthcoming books and articles.

Premillennialism

For background, the earliest interpretation of the millennial reign of Christ is that of Premillennialism. As previously mentioned, this is the oldest known interpretation of the Millennium Kingdom. For the first two centuries, Premillennialism was the accepted view of the church. Papias was a companion of Polycarp, who was discipled by John, the author of Revelation. Papias believed in the literal earthly premillennial doctrine. Many other second and third century scholars held to this belief which included Irenaus, Appolinarius, Victorinus, Tertullian, and Lactantius. Even Augustine held to a chiliastic view of the kingdom very early in his Christianized life.

Belief in a future kingdom holds that after a period of tribulation, Christ will return physically to establish His Kingdom on earth for a period of one thousand years. The Premillennialist believes this Kingdom is yet to come. During this time, Satan will be bound and unable to deceive the nations for 1000 years. After the Millennium, Satan will be set free for a time during which he will incite a rebellion against Christ and His kingdom. This rebellion will be quickly vanquished by fire from heaven. See chart titled, [Overview of End Times Events pg. 276](#).

There are two subsets to Premillennialism. First, [Covenantal Premillennialism](#), also called Historic Premillennialism, which places both the rapture of the church and the start of the millennium as part of the same event. This is also known as Post-Tribulationism which contends that believers must endure the figurative tribulation throughout church history prior to the glorious reappearance of Jesus Christ. This position is essentially the Reformed Dispensational view. Here we see that the wrath of God is confused with the persecutions of the world. See chart title, [Various End Times Events pg. 277](#).

The second subset to Premillennialism is [Dispensational Premillennialism](#) which holds the belief of either a pre-tribulation or mid-tribulation rapture of the church, followed by the tribulation, and finally, the glorious reappearance of Christ and the start of His millennial reign. The Dispensational Premillennial view adheres to a literal interpretation of the Bible.

On the basis of scripture, the Premillennialist view is the only one mentioned that can pass the intellectual scrutiny because only the premillennialist view takes a literal interpretation of Revelation 20. "While the Bible does speak allegorically at times, it is pretty clear when it is doing so. If a passage can be taken literally, it should be. One thousand years is mentioned six times specifically in Revelation 20:1-7. Other mentions of time in Revelation are specific (ten days - Revelation 2:10; forty-two months - Revelation 11:2, 13:5), or otherwise vaguely noted (a little while - Revelation 6:11; a short time - Revelation 12:12)." ^[10]

Pre-Tribulation Premillennialism

This position is articulated in the chapters [Dispensationalism pg. 39](#) and [The Rapture pg. 199](#). Generally, this position believes in literal interpretation, a distinction between Israel and the Church, the Seventy Weeks of Daniel prophecy, the pre Trib rapture of the church for rewards and marriage, birth pangs are either before the first half of the Trib, a future tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ with His bride, the first resurrection of OT saints, Satan being bound for 1000 years, a future Millennial Kingdom, the second resurrection before the Great White Throne judgment, and finally the Eternal State.

Mid-Tribulation Premillennialism

The mid-tribulation premillennial view holds to a more dispensational view of the Bible but confuses the 70th week of Daniel. Verses are misunderstood to mean the Holy Spirit is taken up in the rapture of believers when the man of lawlessness sets himself up as God in the temple, the last trumpet of Revelation 11 is the trumpet spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15, the birth pangs are the first half of the trib, the church must suffer part of the trib, the Day of the Lord begins at the midpoint of the Trib, and the wrath of God is only the bowl judgments.

Post-Tribulation or Historic Premillennialism

Historic Premillennialism is generally synonymous with post-tribulation premillennialism, also known as 'Post Trib' for short. This view teaches a Tribulation - Rapture at the Second Coming - then Kingdom scenario.

Historic Premillennialism is not dispensational, although it may appear to be so. Because proponents take an allegorical approach to scripture, the Tribulation has been ongoing through history, persecution of the world is confused with the wrath of God, and the kingdom is perhaps longer than one thousand years. It was a popular interpretation among Protestant Christians until the rise of

Dispensational Premillennialism (which is associated with pre-trib and mid-trib views) in the 19th century.

Historic premillennialists place the return of Christ just before the millennium and just after a time of great apostasy and tribulation. After the millennium, Satan will be loosed and Gog and Magog will rise against the kingdom of God; this will be immediately followed by the final judgment. While similar in some respects to the dispensational variety, they are merely the reformed view of Premillennialism. They believe the church has replaced Israel. The church is currently not in the reign of Christ now. The kingdom is yet future, although its duration is uncertain. They are unsure about whether to interpret Revelation literally or metaphorically.

The historic premillennialist view interprets some prophecy in Scripture as having literal fulfillment while others demand a semi-symbolic fulfillment. As a case in point, the seal judgments (Revelation 6) are viewed as having fulfillment in the forces in history (rather than in future powers) by which God works out his redemptive and judicial purposes leading up to the end.

Historic Premillennialists also reject an imminent return of Christ because they reject Pre-Trib rapture and because they believe we're in the tribulation now. They therefore also reject that the tribulation is for the Jews and therefore reject the tribulation as the 70th Week of Daniel. The Jewish nation, while perfectly able to join the church through true faith in Christ, it has no distinct redemptive plan as in the dispensational perspective.

The Church is the fulfillment of Israel and therefore they hold to some degree of Replacement Theology. The Kingdom is present through the Spirit spiritually now, but will be a physical kingdom in the future. The future kingdom will have Christ physically reigning and temple worship will be accompanied by sacrifices as a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. Interpretation is literal and figurative; covenantal not dispensational.

Major proponents of this view are George Eldon Ladd, Walter Martin, John Warwick Montgomery, and Theodore Zahn. Institutions that teach this viewpoint are Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Evangelical Free), Fuller Seminary, and Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism is the teaching that Jesus Christ returns after His kingdom rule. The millennium is synonymous with transforming the world through gospel preaching. The Postmillennialist focuses on "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."^[11] They believe that the Lord's Prayer is the seminal prayer to be prayed by Christians, since it was given by Jesus and one which He will answer. Daniel 2 speaks of the rock that will grow into a large mountain that will fill the whole earth. The church is that mountain, built on the rock of Christ, which accomplishes this kingdom growth.

In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever: and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.^[12]

In this view, Christ's reign began at the Ascension (Acts 1) where He was seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. However, His reign also arrives and strengthens in degrees on earth by means of the gospel. At the end of His reign, having been victorious over all enemies, "...He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). Death is conquered and enemies defeated. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9).

Like Amillennialism, Postmillennialism denies a literal interpretation of Revelation 20. They believe the thousand-year reign of Christ is figurative, and represents a time when He reigns through the hearts of believers. They loathe the idea of the rapture as 'an epidemic of defeatist escapism,'^[13] preferring instead the taking of dominion of the whole earth and compelling the world to become disciples of Christ to glorify God in all areas of living. Their hope and goal is "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15). Unlike Amillennialism, Christ returns to a saved earth rather than saving the earth.

This view was developed in the 16th century, reflecting the belief that conditions will gradually improve over time and evolve into a world that has become 'Christianized' and ready for the second coming of Christ. Since Postmillennialism believes that the world is improving by degrees, they have had difficulty reconciling two world wars, the Great Depression, unabated moral decay in the world, terrorist threats, corrupt politicians who claim Christianity, potential economic collapse of world economies and globalism. This view is not always popular because the world is getting worse, not better. This movement also fuels Dominion theology, Theonomy and Reconstruction movements. See [Supersessionism pg. 230](#).

Amillennialism

Amillennialism is the belief that we are currently living in the kingdom of God now and that there will be no future millennial kingdom on earth. It is believed that the entire interlude between Jesus' first and second coming is the kingdom. "Though the term suggests ...a distinct millennial period in the history of redemption, amillennialism emphasizes rather the present reality of the millennium. For this reason, what is known as 'amillennialism' might be termed 'now-millennialism.'"^[14] The kingdom is spiritual in nature rather than physically present. Therefore, Amillennialists believe there will be no physical kingdom on earth over which Jesus reigns.

If the kingdom is a current reality now, then Jesus must be reigning from heaven in the hearts of believers rather than ruling here on earth. If the kingdom reign of Christ is now, then Satan must be bound. "This view holds that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ."^[15] When asked how Satan can be bound while the world has so much evil, it is explained that Satan is progressively bound as the gospel and good advances in the world. "The good in the world comprises the kingdom of Christ, and the evil in the world is part of Satan's kingdom. The kingdom of Christ is the church itself."^[16] Belief and discipleship in Christ is what prevents the nations from being deceived. Thus Christ is progressively receiving His inheritance of authority over the nations. "Old Testament promises regarding Christ's kingdom and the gathering of the nations under his lordship are being fulfilled."^[17] Now-Millennialism is the common view held among Reformed Protestant denominations. "The amillennialist holds that Christ will reign through his church until His second coming, which will mark – not the millennial reign – but the beginning of eternity for believers."^[18]

In this spiritual kingdom, there is tension between 'inaugurated' and 'future' events.^[19] "As the kingdom of God advances and the nations are disciplined, a characteristic opposition and intensification of resistance to Christ's lordship will continue unabated until Christ returns."^[20] Unlike the Premillennialist and Postmillennialists, there will be no golden age approximating a paradise or gospel advancement prior to Christ's return respectively. The only future coming of Christ is at the end of time before the Eternal State.

Therefore, since there is no anticipation of future fulfillment for a glorious kingdom age, the amillennialist focuses his attention on conforming to Christ's life, death and resurrection. Victory in suffering and in tribulation allows one to enter into Christ's kingdom in this life while awaiting future union with Him in glory in the next life. The pattern of victory over suffering allows one to participate in the sufferings of Christ. These trials are part of the groaning of all creation until the sons of God are revealed.^[21]

Instead of looking for Christ to return before a golden era of His kingdom on earth, the amillennialist looks for the rest promised to God's people at the final judgment. All prophetic events; the resurrection, judgment and second coming of Christ, tend to be lumped in one general event at the end of time before the eternal state begins. Amillennialism looks for one great consummating event in the future, the second advent of Christ.^[22]

"This view was first proposed by St. Augustine in the fourth century, and has been the favored position of the Roman Catholic church ever since."^[23] Augustine taught the binding of Satan during the earthly ministry of our Lord, that the first resurrection is the new birth of the believer and that the kingdom must correspond with the inter advent church age. He taught that Revelation 20 was a recap of the preceding chapters in Revelation instead of following the events chronologically. Amillennialism is Augustinianism which teaches we are currently in the Messianic Age.

Amillennialism is based upon a forced interpretation of the Word of God, in order to maintain a theological system which originated in a particular historical situation (the Roman Catholic Church), instead of with the Word of God. In view of the then newly formed Roman Catholic Church instituted by Constantine, Augustine postulated the church was in the millennium of Christ. This required spiritualizing the scriptures (eisegesis) to 'find support' for this belief. The early reformers never totally freed themselves from the allegorical interpretations and church/kingdom concept of Augustine, who was influenced by Origen. Most Reformed theologians are still trapped and crippled by these approaches to the prophetic word. In contrast, the dispensational approach insists that Biblical prophecies be interpreted in their plain, obvious and normal sense.

Preterism

Preterism is the tribulation event for all Reformed eschatologies. It often goes hand in hand with postmillennialism, and holds that the bulk of the prophecies in Revelation were fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The preterist believes in a final judgment following a metaphorical kingdom, but believes that all other prophecy has been fulfilled. See [Preterism pg. 235](#).

No Millennialism

Most skeptics and very liberal Christian theologians largely interpret the contents of the books of Daniel and Revelation as having no prophetic information for our future at all. Many regard Revelation as being composed of visions, hallucinations or imaginations of the author, and have little meaning for Christians today. Some believe that the purpose of the book of Revelation was to stiffen resolve in the early Christian movement to withstand persecution by the Roman Empire. Thus, its purpose was to predict persecutions and other events that happened to the early Christian church. They also reject the prophecies in the Book of Daniel. They believe that Daniel was written early in the 2nd century BCE, long after most of the events had actually happened. They find no other way to explain its accuracy other than to say it was merely history recorded rather than history prophesied by Daniel.

Conclusion

The world in which we live is not the world as God created it. However, the promised kingdom portrays an overall picture of paradise on earth with few remaining traces of the Genesis curse. Man chose sinful rebellion and was cast out of that paradise. The Millennial Kingdom will provide Jesus

Christ our Lord, Savior and Messiah His rightful place as Ruler over a world that will be an approximation of what life on earth was meant to be. Satan will be bound and unable to exercise his influence over God's creation. The blood of the martyrs will have been avenged, and all saints will be joined with our Savior, in a preview of Heaven to come. It will be a glorious time unparalleled in human history. In Revelation 22:20, Jesus said, "*I am coming soon.*" John's words are appropriate in closing; "*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*"

Quotes

- **Quote** - "While it is possible that others before him may have held this view, Augustine was the first one who ventured to teach that the Catholic Church was the Kingdom of Christ and the City of God, and that the Millennial Kingdom had begun with the first appearing of Christ and therefore was to have no future fulfillment." **George E. Ladd**, *Crucial Questions About The Kingdom Of God*, p.24)

- **Quote** - "Through the combined influence of Origin and Augustine, and of the Christianizing of the empire in the time of Constantine the Great, the Chiliastic view of the Kingdom was gradually eclipsed by the representation of the Kingdom as a present reality." Source Cited: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/religion/740285/posts>, Citing; **L. Berkhof**, *The Kingdom Of God*, p.113.

- **Quote** - "Augustine, the father of the Amillennial view." **D. H. Kromminga** (Millennium In the Church, p.259)

- **Quote** - "According to Albertus Pieters (The Millennial Problem, In Intelligence Leader, March 5, 1943, p.17), the term 'Amillennialism' originated with Abraham Kuyper. But whether this be so or not, the doctrine is old: 'Saint Augustine was a true Amillenarian, even though he did not call himself so.'" Source Cited: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/religion/740285/posts>, Citing; **Oswald T. Allis** (Prophecy And The Church, p.286)

- **Quote** - The promised Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ has been inaugurated. Its advent marks the focal point of human history. This kingdom of the Messiah is continuing to realize its fullness as believing Jews and Gentiles are added to the community of the redeemed in every generation. The same kingdom will be manifested in its final and eternal form with the return of Christ the King in all his glory. The present secular state of Israel, however, is not an authentic or prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in "the land," by its constituency, or by its ceremonial institutions and practices. Instead, this present age will come to a climactic conclusion with the arrival of the final, eternal phase of the kingdom of the Messiah. Source Cited: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/openletter.html>, Citing; Knox Open Letter, Seminary of D. James Kennedy (he didn't sign), Signatories include **R. C. Sproul, Gary DeMar, Michael S. Horton, Bruce K. Waltke**, 2002.

- **Quote** - "I personally agree with the great Presbyterian theologian B. B. Warfield, who held that we are still living in the early Church, with thousands of years ahead of us. I expect future generations will be better able to answer some of these questions than I am." Source Cited: <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp#question18>, Citing; **International Preterist Association**, Preterist Questions and Answers, Biblical Horizons Occasional Papers No.4, page 16.

- **Quote** - QUESTION: What does the future now hold for the church, the unbelieving world and creation, according to the Preterist view?ANSWER: The word "church" might sometimes refer to the "calling-out" process of the transitional period from AD 30-70 when Christ was building His Kingdom. The Kingdom is the repository of all those who were "called out" of the dominion of darkness. However, I do believe the word "church" is used in more than one way in our NT, and that one of those uses is in reference to the ongoing body of believers, both universal (visible and invisible) and local. The Kingdom of Christ is here now. We enjoy all the spiritual blessings that were promised in the prophets. Source Cited: <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp#question18>, Citing; **International Preterist Association**, Preterist Questions and Answers.

- **Quote** - If you believe the millennium had to be a literal 1000-year period, then your statement would be correct. But many postmillennialists and all the amillennialists hold the idea that the millennium was/is/will be a period of indeterminable length and not necessarily a literal thousand years. It could symbolize a period of completeness, fullness, finishing. In Second Peter, chapter 3, Peter says God was not hasty in bringing the then-imminent judgment upon that generation. He waited until the harvest was ripe before treading the winepress. I believe Max King's suggestion (that the millennium was the period from 30 to AD 70) is the correct one. The term "thousand years" would then simply refer to the period of time while the kingdom was being built, before God came to judge His enemies. It was a time of completion. Jesus said in Matthew 24 that no man knew the day or the hour. All they could know was that it was getting close, by the signs He told them to watch for. Source Cited: <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp#question18>, Citing: Preterist Questions and Answers, International Preterist Association, **Edward E. Stevens**.

- **Quote** - In regard to our destiny after physical death, we no longer go to Hades to await a resurrection and judgment. Death and Hades were done away with at 70 A.D. when the "death" that reigned over man (Rom.5:14) was reversed by the eternal "life" provided through Christ (Rom.5:17,21). Hades was a conscious waiting place for the biologically dead. At the AD 70 resurrection, souls in Hades were resurrected out of that waiting state, the righteous into the presence of Christ in His kingdom, and the wicked to eternal conscious punishment "outside" the gates of heaven (Rev. 22:15). Since then, when the righteous die biologically, they immediately receive their new immortal bodies and go directly into heaven to live forever in the presence of God, while the wicked go away to eternal conscious punishment. (see Matt. 25:41, 46 and Rev. 22:15). Source Cited: <http://www.preterist.org/preteristQA.asp#question18>, **Edward E. Stevens**, Preterist Questions and Answers International Preterist Association.

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- [1] George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ as covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented in the New Testament*, 3 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregal Publications, 1972), 1:527. According to Peters, what is today called "amillennialism" was known as the "Anti-Millenarian" or "Past-Millenarian" view during the 19th century (see 1:459). Source Cited: <http://www.spurgeon.org/notes.htm#77>
- [2] *Eschatology*, <http://www.pcusa.org/today/archive/believe/wpb9901d.htm>
- [3] Augustine, *City of God*, Book XX, Chapter 7, Source Cited: <http://persweb.wabash.edu/facstaff/royaltyr/augustine.htm>
- [4] <http://persweb.wabash.edu/facstaff/royaltyr/augustine.htm>, *City of God*, XX,7
- [5] <http://persweb.wabash.edu/facstaff/royaltyr/augustine.htm>, *City of God*, XX, 9).
- [6] Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), s.v. Views of the Millennium by Robert G. Clouse. (716) Source Cited: <http://www.spurgeon.org/eschat.htm#3b>;
- [7] *Eschatology*, <http://www.pcusa.org/today/archive/believe/wpb9901d.htm>
- [8] *Eschatology*, <http://www.pcusa.org/today/archive/believe/wpb9901d.htm>
- [9] <http://www.contenderministries.org/prophecy/millennialPF.php>
- [10] <http://www.contenderministries.org/prophecy/millennial.php>
- [11] *An Eschatology of Gospel Victory*, biblical Postmillennialism, Rev. Gregg Strawbridge, Ph.D. All Saints' Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA. <http://www.wordmp3.com/gs/postmillu-turn.htm>
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- [15] *The Millennial Kingdom*, Contender Ministries, <http://www.contenderministries.org/prophecy/millennialPF.php>
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FINAL
REMARKS

Conclusion

Reference for Bible Versions

Conclusion

Reformed Theology is an outgrowth of the 16th century Protestant Reformation of Roman Catholicism. Both Roman Catholicism and its Reformation draw heavily from Augustine of Hippo, considered a doctrinal father of both movements. This Catholic neo-Platonist philosopher is not only responsible for nearly every error of Romanism, but many of the errors of Reformed theology as well. Vestiges of his early days in the Gnostic Manichean cult carried through his writings, influencing not only the theology of Catholicism's Reformation, but Reformed teachings of today.

Hence, Protestant theology is largely Augustinianism. This theology, because of its neo-Platonist underpinnings through Augustinian thought, spiritualizes much of the Bible using allegorical interpretations rather than a literal interpretation of the Word. Thus, scripture, its gospel, framework of theology, the nation of Israel, the covenants and promises, the nature of the Church, the Rapture, the Tribulation, future judgments and the Kingdom are all skewed to accommodate the perceptions of selective election and the Kingdom is occurring now.

Unconditional election, while producing great joy at the onset, devastates the faith of the believer once fully developed in their life. Salvation can never be ascertained because it can never be fully known if one believed with truly elected and gifted faith. The only measure of salvational assurance is outward deeds, which can never give a measure of certainty. Teachings about who is and is not saved, eventually point inward creating doubt about whether one is truly elected. The void left by lack of assurance is then filled by Lordship Salvation; a gospel of works added to faith which produces a fleeting measure of confidence one is really saved. Rather than producing the desired peace of salvation, this works gospel places the believer under the crushing weight of legalism that binds one to inescapable despair. Under these conditions, the believer cannot possibly trust Christ by faith on one level because the debilitating fear of not being elected to salvation and the feeling of helplessness to change their eternal destiny overtakes them. When returning to the Word for consolation, the redefined words of scripture only embed the problem further. The bars of this prison are verses of scripture, plucked from their context, which hold the captive of election against their will, while trotting freedom openly before them. The only semblance of security comes through moral Law keeping.

Moral Law observance is justified by interpreting the righteousness of Christ, given at salvation, to be His Law keeping righteousness, transferred to the believer to enable obedience to the Law. Therefore, the believer has no excuse for failure. The nature of the believer is redefined as only the one new nature of Christ, thereby denying the sin nature and leaving no room for sin. Any conviction of sin throws one back to fear of reprobation. Perfect love casts out fear, yet the Calvinist in the grip of Lordship Salvation can't take comfort because looming condemnation is overwhelming. This dynamic, though theologically rephrased, is the same entrapment of Catholicism.

Unconditional election is further justified by the Romanist rituals of infant baptism and consubstantiated Eucharistic communion, both considered means of grace. These supplant the gospel of salvation by faith in the cross alone, for a gospel of salvation by elected gifted faith in observance of rituals. These rituals, which also point to selective election, are additionally supported by the contrived covenants of Covenant theology; the Covenants of Redemption, Works and Grace. This complicated structure has been erected to further prop up God's sovereign prerogative to elect unconditionally. These covenants provide doctrinal justification for embracing not only the Law today, but also to espousing Replacement theology's deception that the Church is the New Israel of God. With God supposedly on their side, a militant anti-Semitic attitude can easily arise when one believes that He has abandoned the Jews.

Reformed theology's allegorical interpretation of scriptures has also contorted prophecy to accommodate a 'Kingdom Now' scenario, the Tribulation is past, the Rapture is a myth and the

church has been experiencing God's wrath for centuries, the resurrection happens when one is born again, and Satan is progressively bound as the 'Kingdom' advances. Such eschatological views, which place the world in is the Kingdom now, provide the seedbed for radical Reconstructionism and Theonomy, which work tirelessly to put society under the principles of the Mosaic Law, which will likely figure prominently in the global agenda of Antichrist.

All the irrational spiritualizing of the Biblical facts makes no sense unless one comprehends the inconceivable and all encompassing spiritual power driving the doctrine of unconditional election to deceive those within the visible church. This deceiving spirit twists the scriptures to say that God has predestined every event in history leaving man no choice but to submit to God's predestinated will; either eternal bliss through election or suffering in hell vicariously for His predetermined reprobation. Calvinists insist that questioning the spirit of election is tantamount to blasphemy because man invited to comment on let alone understand the mysterious purposes of God. This spirit of unconditional election, found in Augustine, the Reformers, the Manicheans, Plato and others, advocated and orchestrated in Catholicism and the Reformation the death of dissenters. The spirit of election superimposes on God the character of one who displays favoritism and insincerity. God's desire to save all men is redefined as desiring to save only some. His love for all mankind is redefined as love for only some. His plan of reprobation makes God responsible for sending men to hell without a choice, and as a result portrays Him to be a murderer. God's pleas for man to believe when He hasn't enabled them are dubious sport, thus making Him a liar. Consequently, the spirit of Calvinism ascribes to God, the characteristics Jesus ascribed to the devil in John 8:44. The god of Calvinism portrays is not the God of the Bible.

The God of the Bible has a character without defect. Questionable characteristics cannot be attributed to Him. His intentions are nothing less than perfect, pure, and good. He has made the way of salvation abundantly clear in His Word, because He has given man the responsibility to believe. Otherwise there is no point in inviting sinners to reason with Him to turn their scarlet sins as white as snow, as He does in Isaiah 1:18. His earnest intention is to save believers and have them worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. The Spirit of the Bible calls all to repent (change their mind) and trust in Jesus' death as the sufficient sin payment for salvation. He desires to give believers His resurrection life to know the liberty and joy of walking in truth. The Spirit of the God loves and draws all men to Christ without favoritism or pretense. The Spirit of the Lord convicts the world of coming judgment and wrath for not only rejecting God, but His truth and costly love. His attribute of love moved to provide Himself a sacrifice for sin so that He can be united with man forever.

The truly good news of the Bible is the believer can look to Christ and His cross to live, rather than look to the Law and be condemned. Reformation theology and Calvinism is Augustinianism. Dispensationalism with the gospel of personal faith is Biblical. The difference is too great to ignore. With an open Bible, with a poor and contrite heart and with an attitude of trembling before the living Word of God, may we continue in those things which are fitting for sound doctrine to adorn the gospel of true grace and magnify the Lord who purchased us with His life!

References for Bible Versions

All scripture references taken from Biblegateway.com

New International Version (NIV)
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984
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New American Standard Bible (NASB)
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995
by The Lockman Foundation

New King James Version (NKJV)
New King James Version (NKJV)
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King James Version (KJV)
King James Version (KJV)

APPENDIX

Overview of Biblical Salvation

Overview of Reformed Salvation

Timeline of Covenants

Timeline of Dispensational Theology

TULIP and Lapsarian Comparison

Timeline of Salvation

Overview of End Time Events

Various End Time Views

DIAGRAM OF BIBLICAL SALVATION

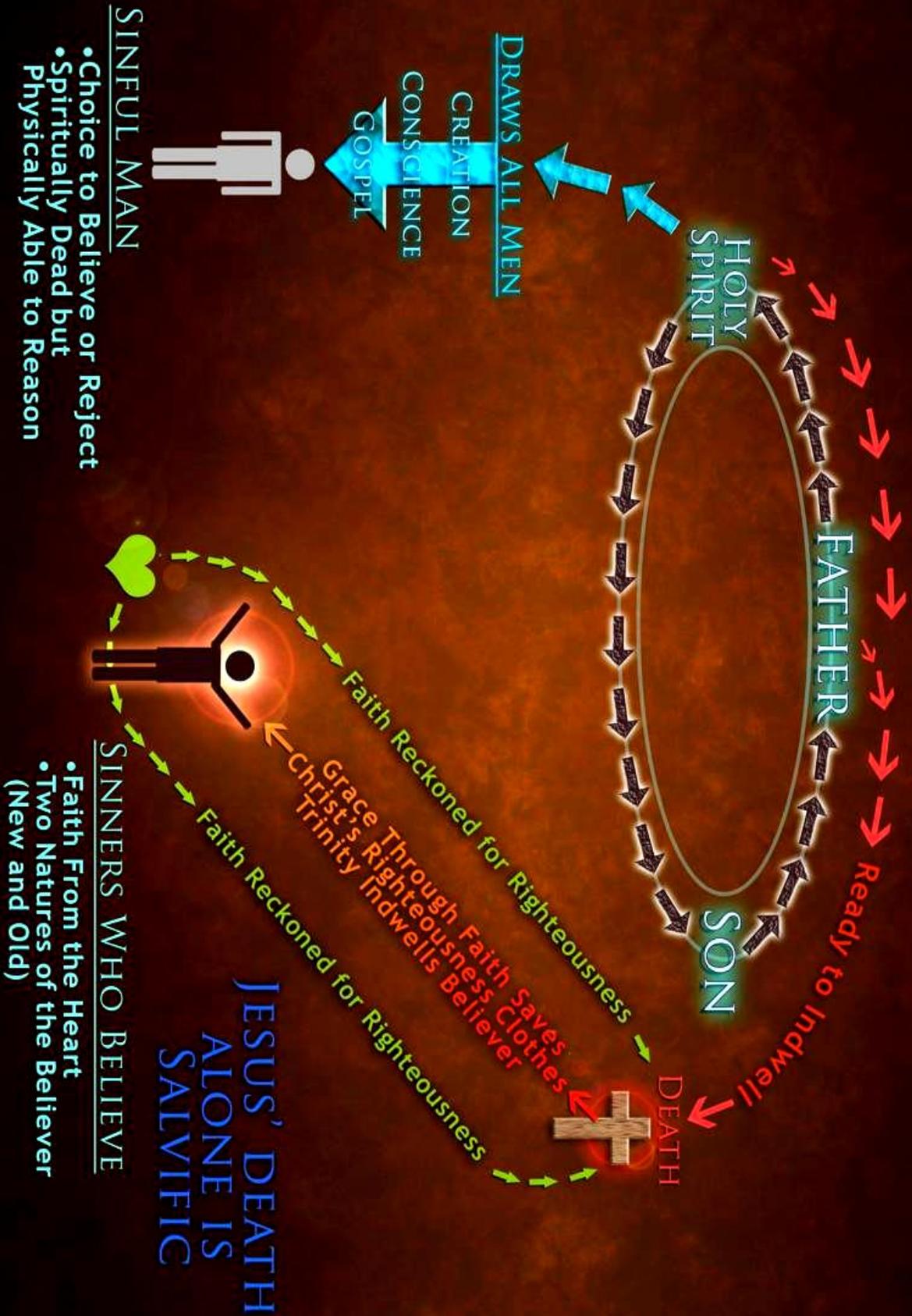


Diagram of Biblical Salvation

Explained

The Trinity Father, Son and Spirit, fellowship together within the Godhead before time began. No pre-time covenant taught in the Bible.

The Father Creates man with ability to make decisions, permits the fall, provides His Son as atonement for all mankind, elects those who believe the gospel, and works by the Spirit to sanctify men who have the choice to walk by faith or by the flesh.

The Son also Creator God, dies as a ransom for all mankind, gives the gift of salvation, His Godly righteousness and justification to believers by grace.

The Spirit draws all men through Creation, Conscience and the Gospel. There is no special internal equipping for only some. The indwelling Spirit assures believers of salvation and resurrection. Believers are gifted for service.

Sinners who believe the gospel, direct their personal faith from their heart to the death of Christ alone and are then chosen by God to be conformed into the image of Christ. Those who believe receive grace for salvation, placed in Christ, clothed with His righteousness, receive the Spirit as a guarantee of redemption, and fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit. Many other positional things happen as well.

Believers have two natures; the old man whose power has been broken and the sin nature which still resides in the body of flesh. The new man is come; Christ whom the believer chooses to live in by faith. The believer should produce good works in keeping with salvation by living out of Christ, but will still sin at times by living out of the flesh.

Salvation is provided by God for those who believe the gospel changing their minds about who Christ is and trusting in His work on the cross. Damnation comes by man's full choice not to believe. Man is fully equipped to believe or reject Christ.

DIAGRAM OF REFORMED SALVATION

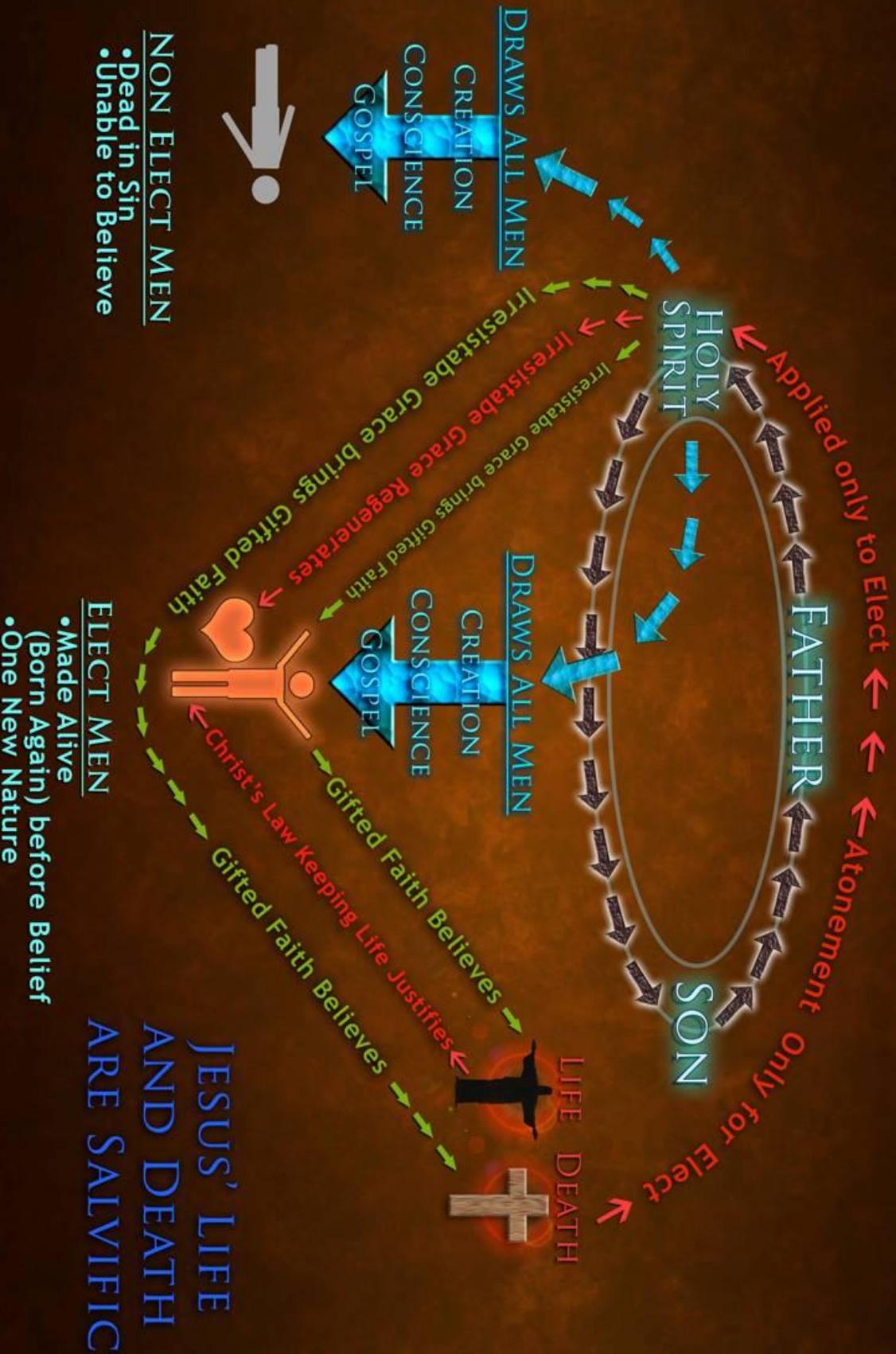


Diagram of Reformed Salvation *Explained*

The Trinity Father, Son and Spirit, fellowship together within the Godhead and enter into the Covenant of Redemption.

The Father decrees man's creation, decrees the fall, elects some to salvation (thereby reprobating others to damnation), decrees His Son atone for the sin of the elect only, and decrees the Spirit will apply Christ's atonement to the elect.

The Son (1) dies as a substitute for the elect and (2) lives a perfect life purchasing earthly Law-keeping righteousness for the elect.

The Spirit internally, by Irresistible Grace (1) applies the atonement to the elect causing regeneration before belief and (2) brings them gifted faith so they can respond to the gospel, not for regeneration, but for justification.

Elect men who have been swept up in the purposes of God, receive Irresistible Grace (1) receive regeneration before belief and (2) receive gifted faith that enables belief in the gospel for the acquisition of Jesus' earthly, Law-keeping righteousness for justification. Therefore Unconditional Election Irresistible Grace, gifted faith, Jesus' death and His life are necessary components of salvation.

The Elect (saved) Man has one new nature which is Christ's righteousness and is therefore expected to persevere in good works of faith.

If works aren't visible, the person is not saved.

Non-Elect Men are ostensibly drawn by the Spirit through creation, conscience and the gospel but can't believe because they are totally depraved, therefore dead, and without the Irresistible Grace that quickens and enables belief. Damnation is said to be man's choice, even though they haven't been equipped with Irresistible Grace to enable them to believe. Their only choice is to reject Christ.

Salvation is said to be God's monergistic work without participation from the elect. The elect are saved before belief by the cross shed for the elect only.

TULIP Comparison Chart

	<u>Hyper Calvinist</u>	<u>Strict Calvinist</u>	<u>Moderate Calvinist</u>	<u>Arminian</u>	<u>Biblical View</u>
T	Total Depravity/ Unable to Believe	Total Depravity/ Unable to Believe	Total Depravity/ Unable to Believe	Free Will and Human Ability to Believe	Free Will and Human Ability to Believe
U	Unconditional Election	Unconditional Election	Unconditional Election	Conditional Election	Conditional Election
L	Limited Atonement	Limited Atonement	Unlimited Atonement	Unlimited Atonement	Unlimited Atonement
I	Irresistible Grace <i>(brings regeneration and gifted faith before belief)</i>	Irresistible Grace <i>(brings regeneration and gifted faith before belief)</i>	Irresistible Grace <i>(only brings gifted faith to believe)</i>	Resistible Grace	Resistible Grace
P	Perseverance of the Saints by Grace <i>(Law keeping obedience)</i>	Perseverance of the Saints by Grace <i>(Law keeping obedience)</i>	Perseverance of the Saints by Grace <i>(Grace enabled obedience)</i>	Can fall from Grace to unsaved state	Perseverance of the Saints by Faith

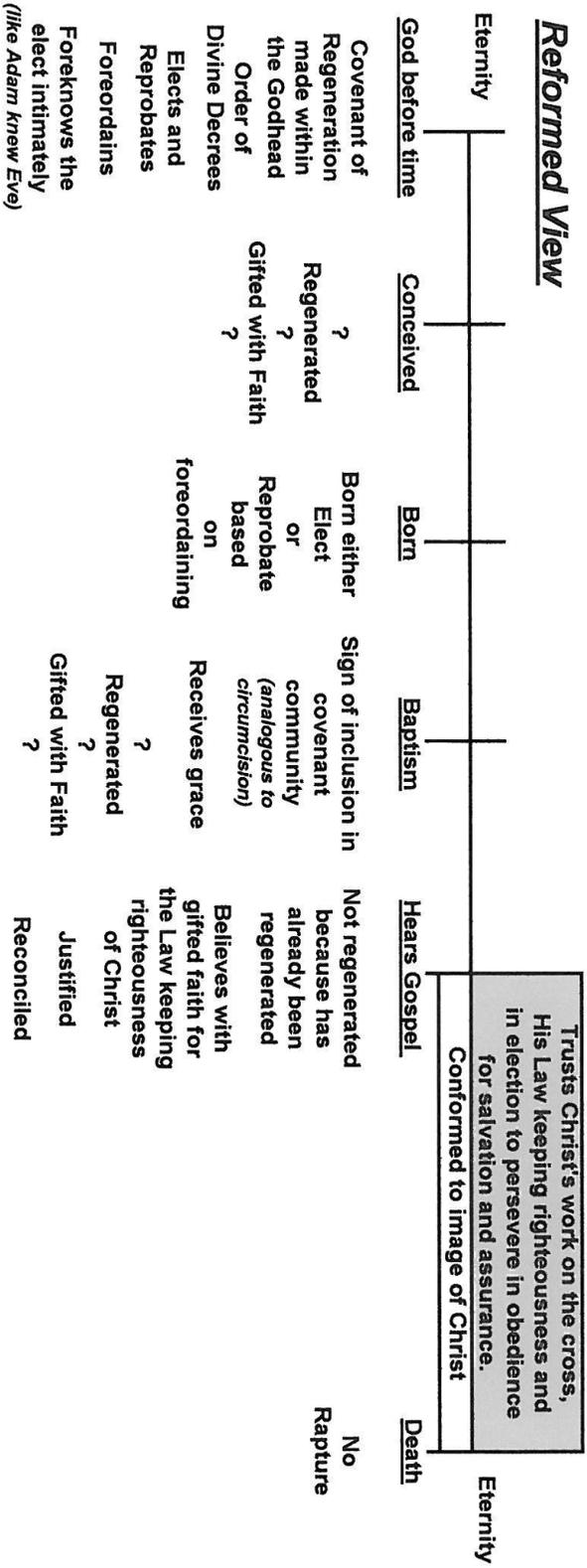
Lapsarian Positions

Order of Divine Decreases	<u>Supralapsarian (Before Fall)</u>	<u>Infralapsarian (Inside Fall)</u>	<u>Sublapsarian (After the Fall)</u>	<u>Arminian</u>	<u>Biblical View</u>
	1	Create Man	Create Man	Create Man	Create Man
2	<u>Elects & Reprobates (Double Predestination)</u>	Permit Fall	Permit Fall	Permit Fall	Permit Fall
3	Permit Fall	<u>Elects some and leave others to just condemnation</u>	Atonement for all men conditioned on gifted faith	Atonement for all men conditioned on faith	Atonement for all men conditioned on faith
4	Atonement for Elect only securing redemption	Atonement for Elect only securing redemption	<u>Elects some to receive ability and grace to believe and leaves others in just condemnation</u>	Predestine those foreseen will believe of own free will	Predestine those foreseen will believe of own free will <i>(God foreknows and conforms to Christ's Image)</i>
5	Gift of Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify	Gift of Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify	Gift of Holy Spirit to sanctify	Save all who cooperate with sufficient grace <i>(Can lose salvation)</i>	Sanctify all who cooperate with grace by personally choosing to walk by Spirit

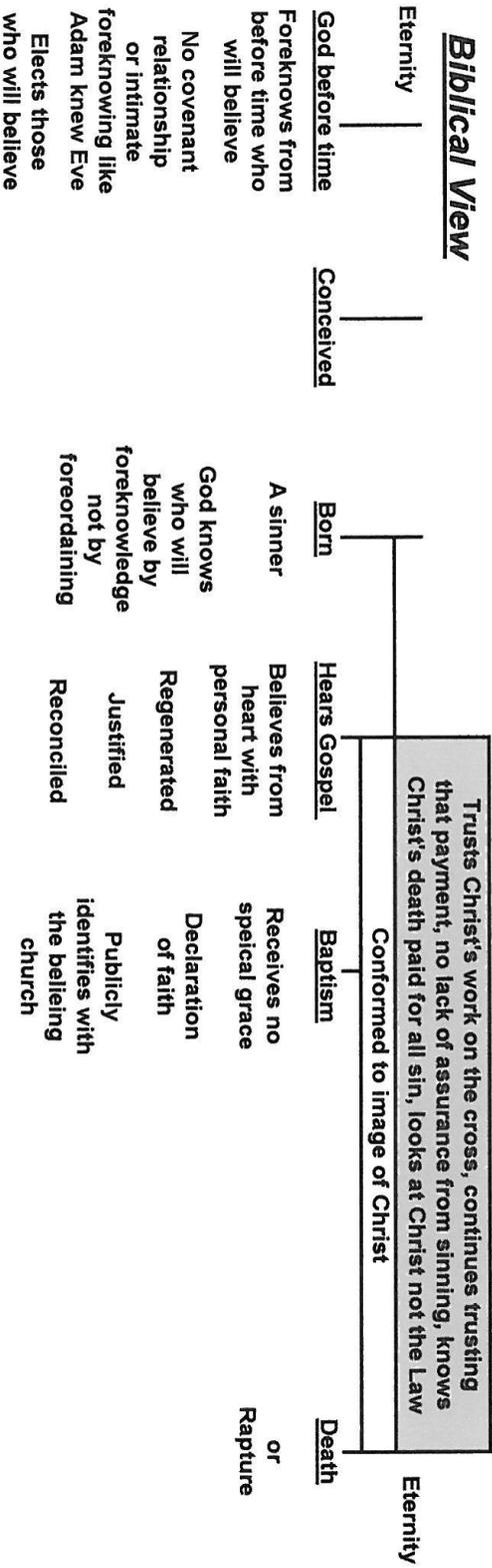
* Lapsarian means the fall of man Supra - above or before the fall of man Infra - within the fall of man Sub - after or below the fall of man

Timeline of Salvation

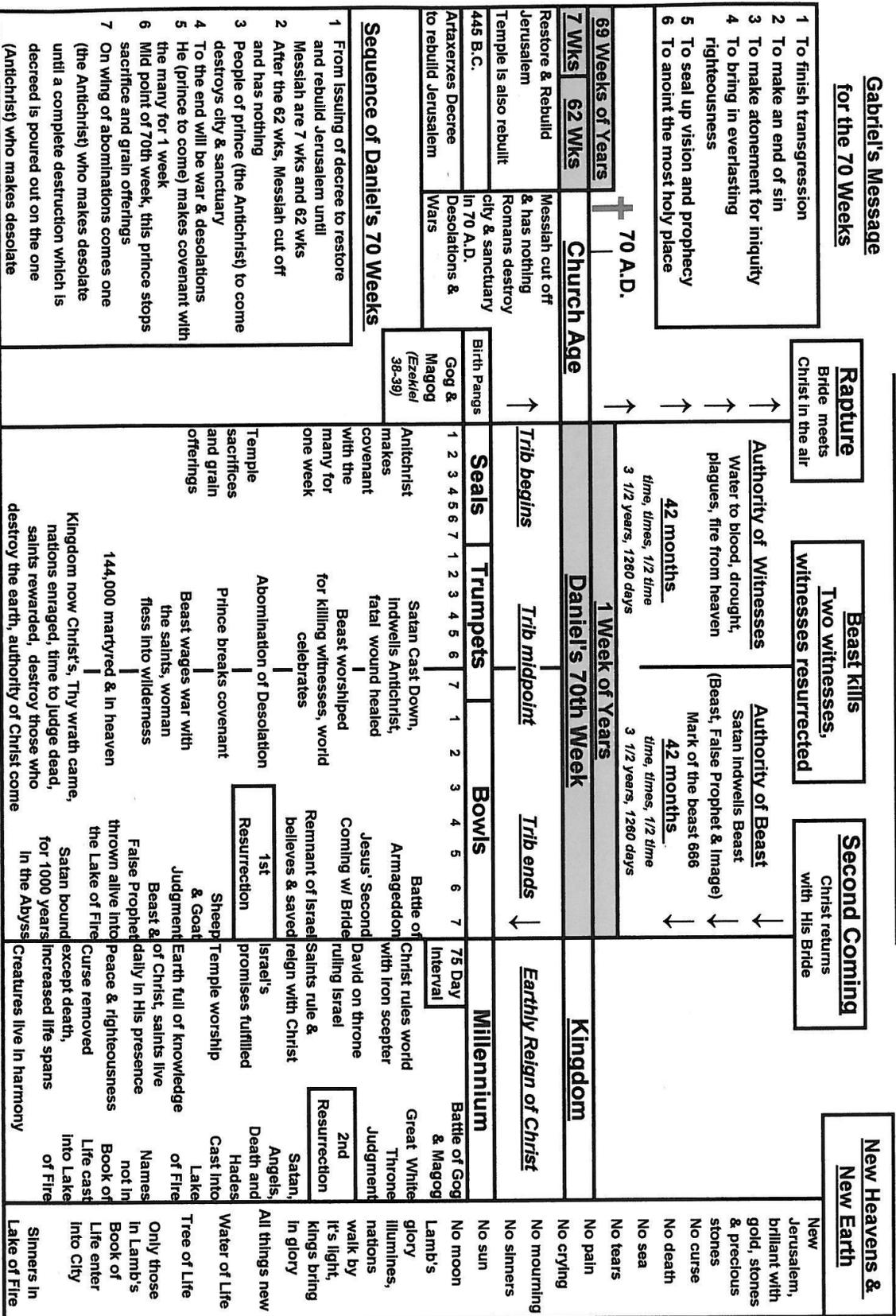
Reformed View



Biblical View



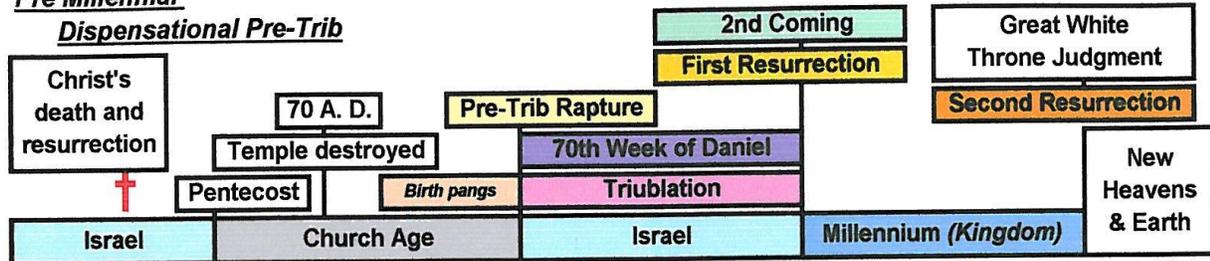
Overview of End Times Events



Various End Times Views

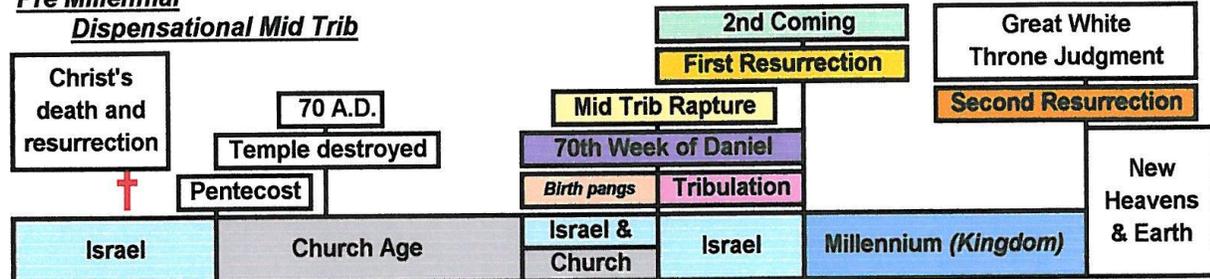
Pre Millennial

Dispensational Pre-Trib



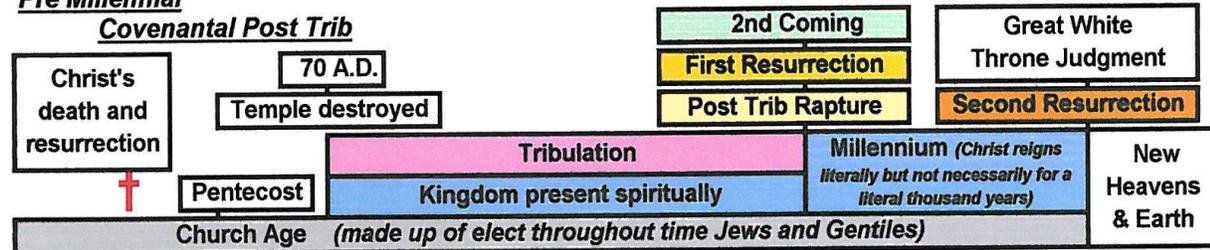
Pre Millennial

Dispensational Mid Trib



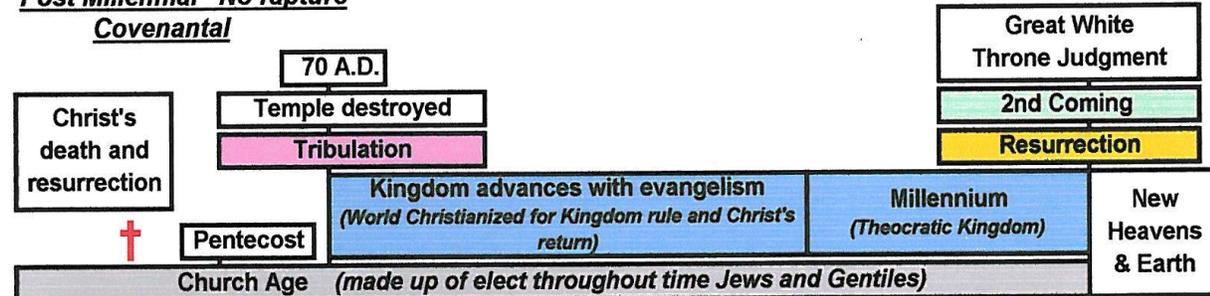
Pre Millennial

Covenantal Post Trib



Post Millennial No rapture

Covenantal



Amillennial No rapture

Covenantal

