



The Errors of Reformed Theology (What Presbyterian and Reformed Churches Really Believe)

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Presbyterianism is a theological system historically linked to the Protestant Reformation (Luther, Calvin). In general, conservative Presbyterianism has been a God-honoring movement which has preached Christ, detested sin, acknowledged that God rules on His sovereign throne, and proclaimed the glorious doctrine of justification by grace through faith according to the Scriptures. We rejoice in the truths that the Reformers taught such as justification by faith, the absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the universal priesthood of all believers. These are very basic truths of the Bible. Of course, we should commend Reformed Theology today, regarding their positions on the person and work of Christ and their faithfulness to various historic doctrines. However, there are various teachings in Reformed Theology that are amiss and which do not square with the Bible. This short summary on Presbyterianism or Reformed Theology is designed to bring these errors out into the open, so all who are considering attending a Reformed Church will understand what a Reformed Church actually believes. Many of the Reformed Churches, *in varying degrees*, will adopt the teachings stated in this booklet.

Everyone says that we should go back to the Reformation but our motto should be that we go back to the Bible!

George Zeller has written:

“We need to remember that the LIGHT does not come from the Reformation, it comes from the Scripture: "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Psalm 119:95). The Reformers were enlightened in many ways but it was only because of the light of Scripture. The Reformation in many respects was a "back to the Bible" movement. So also today, our goal should always be to go back to the Bible, not back to the Reformation. This is not to say that we should ignore what the Reformers wrote and taught, but we should always test all things by the Word of God to see if what they taught was in harmony with Biblical truth.”

Acts 17:11 declares:

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

Presbyterians believe in Reformed Theology which is teaching based upon the writings of the Reformers and Reformation Period. This may sound good on the surface but there are various flawed conclusions that the Reformers adopted regarding Bible doctrines. Some of their teachings run contrary to Scripture and many in the Christian community are not aware of this. The Reformed/Calvinistic/Presbyterian Theology embraces various errors which need to be brought out into the light.

1. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe in the literal interpretation of many prophecies found in the Bible.

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches follow the Augustine/allegorical method of interpreting Bible prophecy (eschatology) and reject a literal Millennial Kingdom (a 1,000 year reign of Christ over the earth). Reformed or Presbyterian doctrine does not accept the literal, 1,000-year reign of Christ on the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Revelation 20:1-3

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the

thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Amillennialism

This passage (Rev. 20:1-3) among many others that refer to the Millennial Kingdom (Isaiah 11:6-9) are not taken literally by Reformed teachers. Instead, the Reformed Presbyterian views the Millennium as a *spiritual rule of Christ in our hearts today* as our King (a spiritual kingdom of God). This unbiblical view is called *amillennialism* (no literal millennium). According to the amillennialist the references to the Millennium in Revelation chapter twenty cannot refer to a literal time when Christ will return to earth and set up a kingdom, since the Church is said to fulfill the kingdom concept, as a result of Christ ruling through the hearts of His people.

Presbyterians deny the literal reign of Jesus Christ on the earth for 1,000 years. In following Augustine, the founder of the Roman Catholic Church, they believe that the Church of today is the fulfillment of the Millennium, in that the Church is a spiritual kingdom of people over which Christ rules, as their King. The old teaching of a literal kingdom is allegorized and replaced with the new concept of a spiritual kingdom of people over which Christ rules. A variation or combination of views exist among amillennialists when interpreting Revelation 20 and the Millennium. Most claim the passage refers to a present spiritual form of the kingdom that Christ rules today (the Church) while other amillennarians suggest that it may additionally refer to the saints reigning in Heaven within the heavenly Jerusalem.

Postmillennialism—Dominion Theology

Some Presbyterians embrace *postmillennialism* (Christ returns after the Millennium is established). This errant view turns the 1,000 years of Revelation 20:4 into a symbolic or allegorical kingdom over which Christ rules today in the hearts of His people (the Church). But there is an added twist to this view. The idea is taught that Christ rules today as King through the hearts and lives of people so that His people can, as vice-regents, take dominion of the world and bring in the eternal kingdom and state on earth. This view claims that God’s people will Christianize and then take over the earth, so the eternal kingdom can begin with Christ’s return. This is a view of wishful thinking. First, the world is not prophesied to get better (2 Thess.

2:7; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-8) and the Kingdom will be established immediately when Jesus Christ returns to earth (Matt 13:41-43; 25:31-34).

In a September 1994 plenary speech to the Christian Coalition national convention, Rev. D. James Kennedy, a Reformed pastor, who is now with the Lord, said: "true Christian citizenship involves an active engagement in society to take dominion over all things as vice-regents of God." This is an imaginary dream of some Reformed pastors and teachers. One would think that after two world wars and the increasing threat of terror, nuclear war, unrest, and sinful degradation on the earth that this aberrant view on the Millennium would die out and never resurface again. Jesus Christ is returning with His saints someday to take back the earth (Rev. 19:11-14; Jude 14; Dan. 7:22), until then, we are called upon to "hold fast" (Rev. 3:11) - not overtake the earth. Here are some questions you can ask a Presbyterian.

- Do you believe in a literal one thousand year reign of Christ over the earth? (Rev. 20:1-6).
- Do you believe in the change of the nature of wild animals during a future time period? (Isa. 11:6-8)
- Do you believe in a future sacrifice of animals during a Millennial kingdom (Ezekiel 43:19-27; Isaiah 56:6-7; Isaiah 60:7; Zechariah 14:16-21) and a millennial river running out of Jerusalem? (Ezek. 47:8-10)
- Do you believe that Isaiah 9:6 is referring to Christ's literal birth but reject that Isaiah 9:7 is referring to Christ ruling as King during the earthly Millennium?
- Do you believe that Christ was born as a virgin in Luke 1:31 and then reject that He will fulfill David's covenant and sit on the throne in Jerusalem ruling over Israel in Luke 1:32?
- Do you reject that Jesus Christ and His disciples will someday rule over the twelve tribes of Israel as predicted in Matthew 19:28?
- Do you believe that the saints will overtake the earth without Jesus being here as the King?

Presbyterians for the most part do not believe in the literal reign of Jesus Christ on David's throne in Jerusalem during the Millennium even when the Bible clearly teaches it.

Luke 1:32

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.”

Neglected Bible Prophecies

Presbyterians not only reject the literal 1,000 year reign of Christ over the earth, they also reject many other important prophetic teachings, such as the Rapture of the Church, a secret coming for the Church (John 14:1-3) – God’s called out assembly. Presbyterians believe in the Second Coming of Christ but not the Rapture, when Christ will take His children back to Heaven to live with Him (1 Thess. 4:13-18), while a time of terrible judgment occurs on earth. They also reject the teaching of a literal, future, seven-year Tribulation Period that the Bible predicts will come upon planet earth, bringing many worldwide, catastrophic judgments (Revelation 6-19).

Revelation 3:10

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

Matthew 24:21

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

The Reformed Churches in general, reject the literal interpretation of many Bible prophecies by allegorizing these prophecies. The Roman Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, major sections of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches, certain branches of the Lutheran Church, Methodist Church, Southern Baptists and even various segments in the Church of God, embrace this kind of spiritualized theology. This results in a person missing God’s prophetic plan for the end times. On the other hand, a church who believes in the literal interpretation and fulfillment of Bible prophecies will not overlook such things as a coming seven-year Tribulation Period of God’s judgment and Millennial Kingdom to be established over the earth.

"About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation,

in the midst of much clamor and opposition" -- Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727).

Here are some more questions to ask a Presbyterian.

- Do you believe in a literal Tribulation Period that will come upon planet earth and do you interpret the three and one half years (1, 260 days, or 42 months) of Daniel and Revelation literally? (Dan. 12:7; Rev. 11:2; 13:5; 12:6,14; Dan. 9:27). If not, why not?
- Do you believe in the coming of a personal man called the Antichrist (1 John 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:3). If not, why not?
- Why don't you believe in the literal fulfillment of these Bible prophecies?

Preterism

Many Presbyterians, in some form or another, promote the teaching of Preterism. This is a Latin term that refers to something that is past. Preterism understands certain eschatological passages dealing with the Tribulation Period and end times, as presented in the Book of Revelation, as *already fulfilled*. Of course, all Biblical interpreters understand that certain prophecies have been fulfilled, but preterists differ in that they interpret a greater portion of Scripture as already having come to pass. There are various types of preterists.

Mild or *partial* preterism holds that most of the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in either the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) or the fall of the Roman Empire (A.D. 476), but the Second Coming of Christ is yet future. This form of preterism is at least orthodox in that it believes in the Second Coming of Christ. However, this view is unbiblical in that it does not acknowledge a future Tribulation Period, the coming of a personal Antichrist, the mark of the beast, and specific judgments that God declared He will bring upon planet earth during the end times. It does not view the Book of Revelation as a futurist Book of Bible prophecy but as a historical fulfillment of the AD 70 judgment upon Jerusalem, claiming that Revelation is filled with symbols depicting this AD 70 judgment upon the Jews and God's abandonment of these people.

Among other things, preterism rejects the teaching of the Rapture and the Millennium by allegorizing the promises and covenants given by the

prophets. Moderate or mild preterism has become, in our day, mainstream preterism. Today it appears to be the most widely adopted version of preterism held by Presbyterians and Reformed Churches. Simply put, moderates see almost all prophecy as fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, but they also believe that a few passages still teach a yet future Second Coming (Acts 1:9-11; 1Cor. 15:51-53; 1Thess. 4:16-17) and the resurrection of believers at Christ's bodily return. In addition to R.C. Sproul, some well-known moderate preterists include Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., and Gary DeMar.

Nevertheless, the *full*, *extreme*, and *consistent* preterism holds that all the prophecies of Revelation have already been fulfilled and that we are in some sense currently living spiritually in the "new heavens and new earth." They deny a future bodily return of Jesus, since it already occurred in AD 70. Extreme preterists believe that the Second Coming must have already occurred. Furthermore, there will be no bodily resurrection of believers, which is said to have occurred in A.D. 70 in conjunction with the Second Coming. Full preterists believe that we already have been spiritually resurrected and will live forever with spiritual bodies when we die. Full preterists say we are now living in what we would call the eternal state or the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21-22. Champions of this view include J. Stuart Russell, Max R. King, David Chilton, Ed Stevens, Don K. Preston, John Noe, and John L. Bray. This view is not only unbiblical but is outside the realm of orthodoxy and is heretical. Of course, no conservative Presbyterian would embrace such a view as this.

Many Reformed Churches also view the Book of Revelation as only providing a panoramic view of the history of the church from John's day to our own day. In other words, the Book of Revelation teaches more history than prophecy. It does not contain prophecies related to the end-times (the Tribulation Period, Israel, Antichrist, and Millennium). These things are not taken in any literal fashion. Rather, the Book of Revelation is designed to teach the general trials of the Church throughout its historical existence on earth. *Reformed Christians see the current day in which we are living as equal or synonymous to a tribulation period and the trials that we are facing today.*

In other words, it's asserted that we are already living in the Tribulation Period today and as the church we are experiencing tribulation and persecution. Thus, the literal prophecies dealing with the future are

spiritualized or *allegorized* in some way (their meaning is changed) and they are seen to be fulfilled today in the world. In fact, Reformed teaching concludes that Satan is already bound today (Rev. 20:1-2) in the sense that He is a defeated foe and cannot override God's saving purpose of the elect. However, this binding is future, during the Millennium, and a general overview of Scripture will teach us that Satan is not bound in any fashion today (Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19).

Other Presbyterians and Reformed Churches view the Book of Revelation primarily as an idealistic book. This approach sees the book of Revelation as only portraying in symbolic terms the age-old conflict between the principles of good and evil. Many view the Book of Revelation in a genre or as an artistic format of symbolism designed only to teach spiritual lessons but not literal events.

The old adage is still true:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense!”

Here are a few more questions to ask a Presbyterian friend.

- Are you a preterist?
- Do you believe that most Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled?
- Do you believe Jesus will rule on the throne of David in Jerusalem for 1,000 years?
- Do you believe the Book of Revelation is describing prophetic events that will take place in the future?

2. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe that God has a future plan for the Jewish people – national Israel.

Zionism vs. Anti-Zionism

Reformed Theology is against Israel. This denomination as a whole is anti-Zionist. Its anti-Semitic roots date back to Marcion (AD 160), which are seen in his rejection of the Jews, as God's people. St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) later wrote in his *Confessions*, 12.14: “How hateful to me are the enemies of your Scripture! How I wish that you would slay them (the Jews)

with your two-edged sword, so that there should be none to oppose your word! Gladly would I have them die to themselves and live to you!”

This Anti-Zionist attitude toward Israel was passed along to the Reformers through Augustine. The total rejection of God’s plan for Israel is the prevailing attitude and teaching of most present-day Presbyterianism. Its roots stem from the Reformation and the Reformers themselves, which is a fact that cannot be denied.

Martin Luther, a key Reformer, articulated the position very clearly when he wrote: “For such ruthless wrath of God is sufficient evidence that they [i.e., the Jewish people] assuredly have erred and gone astray. Even a child can comprehend this. For one dare not regard God as so cruel that he would punish his own people so long, so terrible, so unmercifully ... Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God” (“On the Jews and Their Lies,” Trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther’s Works* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], p. 265).

Luther continues to comment: “Let me give you my honest advice. First, their synagogues should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered or spread over with dirt... And this ought to be done for the honor of God and of Christianity in order that God may see that we are Christians, and that we have not willingly tolerated or approved of such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of His Son and His Christians... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. For they perpetrate the same things that they do in their synagogues. For this reason they ought to be put under one roof or in a stable...”

Calvin also states: “Their [the Jews] rotten and unbending stiffneckedness deserves that they be oppressed unendingly and without measure or end and that they die in their misery without the pity of anyone” (*The Jew in Christian Theology*, Gerhard Falk, McFarland and Company, Inc., Jefferson, NC and London, 1931).

The incredible irony of all this anti-Semitism in the church today is that only a few centuries earlier, the Church, in Acts 2, had been almost exclusively Jewish! The Messiah was Jewish; the writers of the Bible were Jewish; the apostles were Jewish; the earliest Christians were Jewish; the first congregation was primarily Jewish (located in Jerusalem); and the first

missionaries were Jewish! It must break the heart of God to see the professing Church (the Reformed Church) turn on His beloved Jewish people and explain away their destiny and future.

Because of their non-literal approach to Bible prophecy, Presbyterians reject the Biblical teaching that God will someday bring the Jews (God's chosen people) back into Palestine to bless them during the Millennial Kingdom. This unbiblical conclusion leads to another unbiblical conclusion.

Replacement Theology

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches embrace a system called "Replacement Theology" (the Church of today has replaced Israel in God's plan and becomes the new Israel). According to Presbyterianism, God has abandoned Israel (the national Jewish people) and the Church of today is God's chosen people.

Here is a good question to ask a Presbyterian. Do you believe the Church has replaced Israel even when the Bible says that God has not cast away His national people Israel?

Romans 11:1-2 asks:

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew..."

The answer is rhetorical. It's understood. Never! God has not abandoned His national people Israel.

The Bible does not teach that the Church is an extension of Judaism (spiritual Israel). It is a new entity entirely (Eph. 2:15; 5:32). The Bible nowhere states that the Church *replaces* Israel and that Israel's covenant promises have been revoked and transferred to the Church. The Church is not Israel (1 Cor. 10:32; 1 Cor. 9:4-5). Furthermore, God's promises for His national people (the Jews) will yet be fulfilled in the future (Rom. 11:1-2; 26-27).

Even Charles Spurgeon, a Calvinist, acknowledged Israel's future: "I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the

Bible it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel...May that happy day soon come!" --Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) [C. H. Spurgeon, *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, I, no. 28, 1855 (Albany, Oregon: Ages Software, 1998), 382.]

When one interprets the Bible literally, he will embrace *dispensational theology* (God works with different people in different ways and has different goals throughout history) and *premillennial theology* (Christ is coming back before the Millennium to establish a literal Kingdom over the earth for 1,000 years). Dispensationalism (different plans through the ages) and premillennialism (a literal and future plan for Israel in the Millennial Kingdom) are the result of rightly dividing (correctly interpreting) Bible texts (2 Tim. 2:15).

Literal interpretation when consistently applied will bring a person to believe premillennialism (Christ returning to establish a literal Millennium on the earth in the future) and not amillennialism (no literal Millennium in the future – what Presbyterians doctrine teaches!). Literal interpretation will conclude that God is not finished with national Israel but has a future plan for His beloved people (Isa. 49:14-16), that the *original* and *literal* covenant promises given to Israel have not been revoked (Ps. 89:34; 105:9-10), and the Millennium is still in the future (Zech. 14:9; 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Rev. 20:1-6), when Jesus Christ will rule over His national people Israel on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32-33), fulfilling the covenant promises (2 Sam. 7:16). In short, Israel will not be replaced in God's program.

So here are some more questions you might ask you Presbyterian friend.

- Do you believe that God is finished with His Jewish people, the nation of Israel?
- Do you believe God has a future plan for Jews?
- Are you Anti-Zionist?
- Do you believe the church replaces Israel?
- Should we be the friends of Israel or foes with Israel?

3. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe that children need to possess faith in order to be saved.

Infant Baptism

Reformed Theology and some (not all) Presbyterians teach and promote infant baptism, which allegedly brings infants into a covenant relationship with God, much like the Abrahamic Covenant did for Israel. According to this tradition, the baptism and covenant relationship with God (the seal of the covenant of grace) assures them of their salvation, since they are one of God's elect. This error rests on the notion that the Church replaces Israel in God's plan and becomes the new spiritual Israel with baptism being the New Covenant sign that replaces the Old Covenant sign of circumcision.

Jesus blessed children (Mark 10:16) but He did not baptize them!

M.R. DeHaan once said:

"There is not a single instance in the Scripture which gives the slightest support to the doctrine of baptizing infants."

Reformed theologians teach that babies can actually be regenerated or born again since they believe regeneration precedes faith. Some will actually state that a baby can be regenerated as an infant without coming to faith in Christ until years later. This is a Biblical absurdity. The Reformation Study Bible (formerly called The Geneva Study Bible) claims to be a clear statement of Reformed theology. On page 1664 there is an article on Regeneration. It is a shocking statement relating to infant salvation: **"Infants can be born again, although the faith that they exercise cannot be as visible as that of adults."**

Born Again in the Womb

R.C. Sproul (general editor of Geneva Study Bible) made the following statement about infant regeneration or salvation, which is even more shocking: "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 mine]. Two Biblical examples of infants who were born again are seen in Psalm 22:9-10 and Luke 1:15."

This is ludicrous to say the least. According to Sproul's teaching a child can be born again or regenerated as an infant and not come to faith in Christ until years later! We can't be sure if this was the exact teaching of the Reformers, but it certainly is not the teaching of the Word of God. However, there are Reformed teachers promoting this very thing today. Curtis Crenshaw writes that "John the Baptist was even regenerated while in his mother's womb" [Curtis I. Crenshaw, *Lordship Salvation*, p. 34]

Some Calvinists teach that infants, when yet unborn, are regenerated, even though they have no knowledge of Christ; and that, upon birth, infant baptism is to be practiced as a sign that the child is regenerate. John Calvin believed that all the children of believers were spiritually regenerated in the womb. To complete the salvation process Calvin also suggested that God granted a unique, supernatural faith to these infants in the womb. This would certainly add a new twist to the term "child-like faith." But how is this all possible?

John Calvin writes:

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

The "automatic" salvation of the children of the elect is taught by many Calvinists. John Calvin suggested that all the children of the elect will be saved. Calvin writes: "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." [John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Vol.11; (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), p.525]

This is pure philosophy, speculation, and unbiblical. No person can be born again and saved based upon human genealogy ("Which were born, not of blood" - John 1:13).

George Zeller comments in this way:

“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. Furthermore, Scripture stresses that children are not saved because the parents were elect but because children themselves possessed faith in Jesus Christ unto salvation (Acts 16:31-32, 2 Tim. 3:14-15).”

The salvation of infant children is a serious breach of Bible doctrine, the way people are saved, and when people are saved. First, infant children do not need to be saved according to what Jesus said, since they are obviously covered by grace up to the age of accountability. Matthew 19:14, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Second, faith and regeneration take place at the same point in time (John 3:16; 6:47; 1 John 5:1). Third, no person is saved in the womb or in eternity past. The salvation of an elect body is determined before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4 – “chosen us in him before the foundation of the world”) but the bringing to pass of this salvation happens when a person expresses faith in Christ (Eph. 1:13 - “after that ye believed”). Lastly, baptism does not bring children into salvation’s blessings (Acts 16:31).

Here are some pertinent questions you can ask a Presbyterian.

- Do you believe in baptizing infant children?
- Can babies be born again without expressing faith in Christ?
- Are babies saved in the womb when the Bible says they are born in sin (Ps. 51:5)?
- When were you saved?

4. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe in many clear dispensational distinctions found in the Bible.

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches do not adhere to some of the plain distinctions that are found among God’s people, prophecies, and prophetic Word. In a word, they are *non-dispensational*, which means they do not properly divide the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15) in relationship to the way God has chosen to work with people and carry out His purposes.

The word “dispensation” appears in the Bible and refers to the specific ways that God chooses to work out His programs and purposes with mankind (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25). The word “dispensation” simply refers to the way God works, or chooses to do something, at a given point of time. God works in different ways throughout history. He does not always do the same things. As time progresses God chooses to change His methods and ways in which He deals with mankind. He is a God of rich variety and purpose. He is a God of change and variety as He brings His eternal purposes to pass (Eph. 1:9). Adam, Abraham, Israel, and the Church today have been given different responsibilities to carry out in relationship to God’s dispensational programs. The stewardship and the purposes related to each of these individuals were different. The dispensational approach to studying Scripture has always maintained clear distinctions between God’s people, programs, and plans.

Here are some basic examples.

- Israel had a priest but everyone in the Church is a priest (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Heb. 13:15).
- Israel had a temple but the Church is a temple (1 Cor. 6:19)
- Israel lived under the Law but the Church is free from the Law and its curses (Rom. 6:14-15).
- Israel was primarily given earthly promises but the Church is given heavenly promises (Heb. 12:22; Eph. 2:5).
- Israel had *indirect* access to God through the blood of animals while the Church has *direct* access to God through His Son (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Cor. 5:7).
- Israel is identified as the wife of Jehovah in Hosea but the Church is called the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8).
- Israel was brought into covenant promises (Deut. 6:7-9) while the Church is baptized and brought into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
- Israel traces its origin to the Jewish fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) but the Church traces her origins to Pentecost and Christ (Acts 2).
- Israel looked ahead to the Second Coming to earth but the Church is given the promise of the Secret Coming (the Rapture - to take us back to Heaven – 1 Cor. 15:51-52; John 14:1-3).

Tunnel Vision

Dispensationalism teaches that God has worked with man in different stages and ways throughout human history. This Biblical approach to understanding and studying Scripture correctly divides God's Word ("not handling the word of God deceitfully" - 2 Cor. 4:2) because it sees differences between God's people, purposes, and programs, whereas, Reformed Theology tends to see one unifying people, purpose, and program of God, throughout history, which is designed to bring salvation to God's elect. Based upon this proposition, it attempts to limit God's other purposes and prophecies, through allegorization, in order to support its main thesis.

Reformed teaching and Presbyterians have tunnel vision. They attempt to lump together the people and prophecies that God gave and squeeze them into a pigeonhole, glossing over many clear distinctions and great truths found in the Bible, between God's changing programs with various peoples, the concepts of Law and Grace, the Kingdom and non-kingdom program of God, Israel and the Church, and in general, the promises and prophecies that revolve around Israel and the Church.

Dispensationalism does not destroy the unity of the Bible as Reformed Theology teaches. It sees the unfolding program of God's salvation and Kingdom programs through the Biblical covenants and the *variety* and progressive character of God's purposes in the world as they move toward His intended end (Eph. 1:10). It also sees God's glory as the primary goal that is reflected in every dispensation and change that God makes throughout history and prophecy (Ps. 8:1; 113:3; 148:13). However, Dispensationalism does divide the Scriptures into different courses of time and creates different purposes and programs of God related to history (His-story) and prophecy (His future).

The word *division* is the key word related to Dispensationalism as one studies the Scripture and observes the flow of history and prophecy. Dispensationalism "rightly divides" (2 Tim. 2:15) all of history and prophecy into segments of time showing that God chooses to work in *different ways, in different times, with different people*, even though He is moving the world toward His intended goal and end (Rev. 20-22). During God's administrative times, He has specific ways He has chosen to work with man and makes many distinctions and differences between people,

programs, prophetic details, and the outworking of His various purposes. To ignore these distinctions is to overlook God's varying purposes and prophetic programs with mankind.

General Dispensations

In general, the Bible reveals at least seven major dispensations, stewardships, economies, or changes in the outworking of God's programs and purposes throughout history (History). There is a Dispensation of **Innocence** (Adam and Eve before the Fall – Gen. 2), a Dispensation of **Conscience** (what man received after the Fall – Gen. 3), a Dispensation of **Government** (God establishing government over the earth – Gen. 9), a Dispensation of **Promise** (Promise given to Abraham and his descendents – Israel – Gen. 12), a Dispensation of **Law** (Mosaic Law given to Israel as a nation – Ex. 19), a Dispensation of **Grace** (God's new outworking of grace through Christ's actual death and the formation of the Church with her union with Christ – sometimes referred to as the Church Dispensation – Matt. 16:18; 27:51, the New Testament epistles), and the Dispensation of **Kingdom** (1,000 year reign of Christ which turns into the Eternal Kingdom or eternal state – 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20-21).

God chose to work in *different ways at different times of history*, in order to bring His sovereign purposes to pass for mankind. God changes His economy; God changes His dispensations! The Bible teaches that God works with man in a progressive way and gives to man different responsibilities throughout the course of human history. Adam and Noah certainly did not have the same responsibilities that we have today; neither did Abraham and the Jews. Not all the people and programs of God are the same. Dispensationalism stresses that all of history and prophecy can be seen through a dispensational grid (God's administrative work). God's dispensational plan or program for history and prophecy has been called God's plan of the ages which is moving toward an end ("the dispensation of the fulness of times" - Eph. 1:10). Dispensationalism helps us to understand the overall flow of the Bible and God's plan throughout the ages of time. Bible history and prophecy should be viewed through a dispensational approach (making necessary divisions in Scripture) in order to properly interpret and understand the Bible.

Presently, Paul taught that he was committed to serving and living in a special dispensation called "the dispensation of the grace of God" (Eph.

3:2) where God was forming the Church, which is a manifestation of God's grace that would save both Jews and Gentiles by placing them together in a new body called the Church (Eph. 3:10). Paul speaks of the new working and wisdom of God as the formation of His Church (Eph. 1:10). The Church is a marvel of God's grace and a new manifestation of God's grace (Eph. 3:2). Grace always existed, even under the Law (animal sacrifices). But with the actual death of Christ and the formation of His new body, the Church, God's grace was displayed in a new and spectacular way. This is why Paul equates the Grace Dispensation with the Church Dispensation ("the dispensation of the grace of God"). It is also the great dispensation! The Church was a new display and working of God's grace that was never previously known.

The change of the seasons reminds us of the changes found in the dispensations and the different ways God chooses to do things. In the old dispensation, God chose to work according to the dictates of the Mosaic Law. During this time God wanted His saints to bring lambs to the altar. He wanted the animals killed, and their blood to be shed, in order to provide forgiveness (Leviticus 1). In the past, God had chosen to work through *figures* (Heb. 9:9, 24) and *patterns* (Heb. 9:23) which portrayed the work of Jesus Christ through types, temples, and tabernacles.

In the past, God had many ceremonial rituals and laws that He required His people to follow, which taught typical truths regarding salvation, separation, and service. They were object lessons or pictures designed to teach practical holiness in the life of God's saints (Lev. 11:44-47; 19:1-2; 22:31-33) and worship (Lev. 23:2-4). The intricate laws, between the clean and unclean, and the entire Mosaic code was a perpetual reminder of God's holiness (Lev. 19:2; 20:7, 26). In the past dispensation, under the Mosaic Law, God has chosen to display His teachings regarding salvation, service, and sanctification, through animals, priests, buildings, and rituals.

Today God has canceled out all these methods and has chosen to work in a different manner. God's economy or dispensation has changed from law to grace (Rom. 6:14-15). Instead of teaching salvation and separation through rituals and animal sacrifices, God has chosen to discard the pictures and demonstrate His salvation and sanctification through the new operation and features of His wonderful grace (Titus 2:11-12). God now manifests His saving plan through Christ's actual death on Calvary (1 Cor.

15:1-3) and His sanctifying plan for our lives through our victorious union with Christ (Rom. 6). These are grace features instead of Law features.

Theonomy and Reconstructionism (Governing by God's Mosaic Law)

Reconstructionism (reconstructing society) through theonomy (Gk. - to use God's Mosaic Law) is an idea that is taught in some Reformed movements, which essentially says that the Church is going to reconstruct society and take dominion over the world (Dominion Theology), through instituting God's Old Testament Law on society, and then Jesus Christ will come back to earth to start eternity (postmillennialism). However, since we are no longer under the Law (Rom. 6:14), the Bible teaches that neither states or Christians are bound to the civil penalties of the Mosaic Law (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22; 28:15-68 Numb. 15:32-35), which governed Israel.

If we followed the civil laws of Israel, as some Reformed, Dominion Theology thinkers suggest, or those who want to reconstruct society based upon the Mosaic Law, then those who blaspheme God, homosexuals, adulterers, Sabbath day breakers, and children, who harm or curse their parents, should be publicly stoned and put to death (Ex. 21:15; 35:2-3; Lev. 20:9-10, 13; 24:11-16, 23). If we governed our land according to the year of Jubilee, which commanded that all debts be returned, the banks would be broke and the stock market would crash (Lev. 25:10-11). God changes His dispensational programs and the way He does things.

Blurring the Lines

There are many distinctions that Reformed Theology and Presbyterianism bypass by failing to study the Bible dispensationally, or refusing to view God's divisions and changes, throughout history. For instance, they embrace the teaching of one *general judgment* and *general resurrection* for both the saved and unsaved, while the Bible clearly reveals that there are separate judgments (2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15) and resurrections (1 Cor. 15:22-23; Rev. 20:4-5) for these classes of people. They fail to see the differences between Christ's Second coming to earth with His saints (Rev. 19:11-16) and the Rapture, when Christ takes His saints back to Heaven (John 14:1-3). They blur the lines by failing to distinguish between what is literal and figurative, interpreting many of God's literal prophecies, as

figurative, or being fulfilled historically, and having no future significance (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24-25; Rev. 6-19).

In Reformed Theology distinctions are blurred and truth is lost between:

- Israel (Jews) vs. the Church (Jews and Gentiles in one new body)
- Law vs. Grace (in the outworking of one's sanctification)
- The Second Coming (to earth) vs. Secret Coming (in the air)
- Literal understanding vs. allegorical understanding of the prophecies of the Old Testament
- The literal Kingdom of God vs. a spiritualized kingdom
- Literal fulfillment of God's covenant programs vs. a non-literal fulfillment.
- The judgment for Christians (Bema Seat) vs. the judgment of the unsaved (Great White Throne)
- The timing of God's resurrection program for Old, New Testament, and Tribulation saints
- End time prophetic events (literal vs. historical/idealistic)
- Zionism (a future for Israel) vs. Anti-Zionism (abandoning Israel).

We can observe that Christians, who are reformed in their thinking, do believe in some basic dispensational teachings and distinctives set forth in the Bible.

Let's ask some additional questions to our Presbyterian friends.

- Did you bring a Lamb to church on Sunday to kill?
- Is there a priest that serves in your local church?
- Did you stone anyone for breaking the Law?
- Are you depending upon the Law or your grace relationship with Christ to sanctify your life?
- What are you relying on for victory in your Christian life – keeping the Law of Jesus Christ?
- Do you observe a difference between God's program with Israel and His program with the Church today?
- Do you believe you are living in a unique dispensational period of time?
- Do you believe in a literal interpretation of prophetic events, as they apply to the Tribulation Period, Antichrist, and Millennium?

Sanctification

Another area of needed distinction that directly affects our spiritual lives is the area of sanctification. The writings in some Reformed Theology teach that one experiences sanctification by observing or keeping the Mosaic Law and that the law should be the primary rule that governs a person's sanctification. J.C. Ryle says that we are to make every effort to obey the law "**as a rule of life.**" To him, the law still has a "spiritual use" to help a Christian in their sanctification or holy living. The Westminster Confession of Faith agrees: "Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet it is of great use to them...**as a rule of life**" (Chapter XIX, Section VI). Berkhof adds, "They (Reformed men) devote even more attention to the law in connection with the doctrine of sanctification. They stand strong in the conviction that *believers are still under the law as a rule of life*" [Footnote #4b--L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 613-15, italics added).

These conclusions are not according to the Biblical teaching on sanctification. The believer's rule of life is rooted in Christ and His sanctifying work (Romans 6). *Stressing external observance of the Mosaic Law can result in man's self determination over the power of God* (Phil. 2:13). Some (not all) Reformed Theologians miss the distinction between law and grace on this point. The Bible teaches in Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Our new grace relationship with Jesus Christ, a dying and now living union with Him, is what provides us with victory over sin (Rom. 6:1-13). Our reliance upon the work of Calvary and Christ's resurrection power taking place in our hearts (Phil. 3:10) gives us the promise of victory (Gal. 2:20).

In Romans 7:14-25 we see how a Christian can struggle to obtain holiness by using the law as a rule of life and resolutely attempting to compel his old nature to be subject to it. The Law as a system or rule of life cannot sanctify us (Gal. 3:1-3); we need the wonder of God's transforming grace to change us which is the expression of Christ's life being communicated to us (Romans 6). Our motivation, inspiration, and power come from the new living and loving relationship we have with Christ ("married to another" - Rom. 7:4). Our motivation and rule of life does not come from our determination or self effort to follow the Mosaic Law ("the oldness of the

letter” - Rom. 7:6) but through Christ’s life being experienced in our inner human spirit (“newness of the spirit” - Rom.7:6) which would include such things as experiencing Christ’s grace, love, intimacy, power, and victory in our daily lives. We have a new life, new nature, new motive, and new power to live everyday of our lives. The Law does not inspire me; Christ does (Phil. 1:21). The Law does not empower me; Christ does (Phil. 3:10). Legality cannot help me to grow (2 Cor. 3:6); I need Christ’s abiding presence to advance spiritually in life (“without me ye can do nothing” - John 15:5). There is no room for the law in the school of sanctification (2 Pet. 3:18). The law reveals sin but does not deliver us from the power of sin (Rom. 7:6; 14-25; 8:3). Today the moral law is actually stamped or written upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4) and it’s the Spirit’s enablement that grants us victory in life (Gal. 5:25). Christians should never emphasize law as a means to sanctification or the primary rule by which they govern their lives. *This raises the external standard above Christ and His delivering power. We need the eagle’s wings of grace to deliver us (Exodus 19:4) from sin’s power since legalism (man’s attempts to comply to a set of rules) will never grant him victory (Exodus 19:8).*

The beloved old writer, William Newell, made the following observation: “Neither in *doctrine* nor in *walk* did the Reformation go back to the early days of the Church. In doctrine they did teach (thank God!) *justification* by faith apart from works. Luther’s ‘Commentary on Galatians’ is in many respects the most vigorous utterance of faith since Paul. Yet the Reformers did not teach Paul’s doctrine of *identification*,--that the believer’s *history*, as connected with Adam, *ended* at Calvary: that he died to sin, federally, with Christ; and died to the law, which gave sin its power. All the Reformation creeds kept the believer under the law as a rule of life; and ‘the law made *nothing* perfect.’ Whereas, Scripture speaks of a *perfect* conscience, through a *perfect sacrifice*; of faith being *perfected*; of being made *perfect* in love; of *perfecting* holiness in the fear of God.” [William Newell, *Revelation--A Complete Commentary*, p. 63 (see his comments under Rev. 3:2).]

Here are some more questions for our Reformed friends.

- Are you relying only on Christ to sanctify your life and make you holy?
- What motivates you to live the Christian life?
- Can you honestly say that Christ is all you need?

5. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe the Church is a unique group of people that began on the Day of Pentecost.

Since Presbyterians do not accept the dispensational teaching of the Bible, they fail to view the Church as a unique, New Testament body of people, which has never existed before. This is a significant departure from Biblical truth. Reformed/Covenant Theology teaches (with some variation in details) that the Church is made up of the elect of all ages, and therefore the Church must have begun with the first person who was saved (Adam, Abraham). This is one common view, although some begin the Church with the nation Israel. In either case, Reformed teaching unanimously concludes that the Church was present in the Old Testament period and that the Church of today is only a continuing extension of what began in the Old Testament. In other words, the Church today was the same as the Church in the Old Testament times.

Reformed/Covenant Theology stresses that throughout all history there is but one people of God (the Israel of the Old Testament and the Israel of the New Testament), and that these elect, saved people comprise the Church of all the ages. However, the Bible teaches that the Church was nonexistent in the Old Testament and therefore could not replace Israel in any sense. This is supported by the use of the future tense in Matthew 16:18, which shows that it did not exist in past history. The Church could not be formed until the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, since this is when He became head of the Church (Eph. 1:20-23).

The Bible also declares that the Church was a mystery or a hidden truth (sacred secret) not previously revealed (not merely unknown) until the New Testament (Eph. 3:3-5, 9; Col. 1:26-27 - "hidden"). The Church is also defined as a "new man" (Eph. 2:14-15) - not the rehash of something or someone (Israel) that existed before. The Church could have no functioning Head (Jesus Christ) until after the resurrection (Eph. 1:20-23); therefore, the Church could not have previously existed in the Old Testament as Israel. According to the clear statement of the Bible, the Church could not exist until after Christ's ascension and His bestowment of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:7-12). Jesus said: "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). He did not say that He would continue to add to something that was already in existence, but that He would do or start something that had never occurred before in the history of the human race.

Tom Constable correctly observes:

The term “Israel” always refers to physical Jews everywhere in the New Testament (65 times). Strong confirmation of this position [i.e., that Israel refers to Jews in the New Testament] comes from the total absence of an identification of the church with Israel until A.D. 160; and also from the total absence, even then, of the term ‘Israel of God’ to characterize the church. The conclusion is that the church is never called 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. In fact, even after the Cross there remains a threefold distinction. First, there is a distinction between Israel and the Gentiles as in 1 Corinthians 10:32 and Ephesians 2:11–12. Second, there is a distinction between Israel and the church in 1 Corinthians 10:32. Third, there is a distinction between Jewish believers (the Israel of God) and Gentile believers in Romans 9:6 and Galatians 6:16.”

The Bible teaches that the Church is separate and distinct from Israel because it was a unique body of believers that began to be formed on the Day of Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:18; Act 1:5; 2; 11:14-16; 1 Cor. 12:13) and a body of saints that will be removed from earth on the day that Christ comes for His own (the Rapture – 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). The Bible teaches that the Church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles united together into one body and enjoying equal status in the body of Christ (Eph. 3:5-6). Again, this is the “one new man” of Ephesians 2:15 and the “one fold” of John 10:16. The Church did not exist in the Old Testament and it is a new entity in God’s saving program.

Covenant Theology

Presbyterians and Reformed Churches believe in an interpretive system called “Covenant Theology” which views history through the lens of two covenants, which remarkably are *not found* in the Bible – a covenant of grace and works. This system of interpretation wants to see the spiritual blessings of salvation given to one people throughout history and therefore rejects the New Testament Church as a unique assembly or group of people. It also rejects the other covenant programs of God given to the Jews, which promise a future for national Israel. Reformed or Covenant Theology sees all the covenants of the Bible, such as the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New covenants, as an extension of the

so-called *spiritual* blessings of the covenant of grace, which was *allegedly* given to Adam and every elect sinner down through the ages of time.

As far as the Abrahamic Covenant is concerned, amillennialism teaches several different theories. First, since the covenant was allegedly conditional and the conditions were never met by Israel, it will never be fulfilled literally by Israel. She will never experience her blessings during the Millennial Kingdom. Of course, the blessing of this covenant is expressly declared to be eternal and therefore unconditional in numerous passages (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19; 1 Chron. 16:17; Ps. 105:10). The Palestinian Covenant, an extension and reaffirmation of the land promise in the Abrahamic Covenant, is likewise declared to be everlasting (Ezek. 16:60). The Davidic Covenant is described in the same terms (2 Sam. 7:13, 16, 19; 1 Chron. 17:12; 22:10; Isa. 55:3; Ezek. 37:25). The new covenant with Israel is also eternal (Isa. 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Heb. 13:20).

Second, according to amillennialism the *land* promises of the Abrahamic were already fulfilled in the time of Joshua (Josh, 21:43-45) or under King Solomon (1 Kings 4:21) and therefore there are no future land promises to be fulfilled. This is certainly not the case since Joshua never possessed all of the land that God promised nor did he possess the land of Canaan forever as God promised! Solomon's kingdom was extensive, but he did not reign over all the territory promised to Abraham, nor did he do it eternally.

Third, the physical promises given to Abraham are now being fulfilled as spiritual promises through the Church today or by those saints living in the heavenly Jerusalem. In addition, the Davidic covenant is also allegorized as teaching God's rule over His people today (the Church) and is also viewed as a picture of the eternal state (bypassing the Millennial Kingdom or 1,000-year reign of Christ). Of course, it's rather absurd to believe that the promises of the Old Testament were written to be allegorized and reinterpreted by Augustine. These allegorizing theories ignore the literal understanding of words and Bible prophecy and become erroneous to the Bible student who wants to honor the truth of God's Word. The Bible declares that the Son of God will rule before the eternal state begins (1 Cor. 15:24-25 – "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet"). All kinds of theories are created to destroy the literalness of God's covenant programs with Israel.

Covenant Theology wants to convey the overall picture of salvation by grace through all of God's covenants, which this system claims is the one unifying theme of Scripture. Therefore, we should view God's eternal and unchanging program as consisting of only one people (Israel) and one message (salvation through the covenant of grace). In short, every group of people and event should be viewed through the lens of the covenant of grace and saving the elect. To achieve this goal one needs to allegorize the meaning of the *Church* (making it the same as Israel), the *Church Age* (bypassing a new people and different work of God), the *Tribulation Period* (identifying it as the trials we face today as God's elect), *Millennial Kingdom* (as symbolically portraying Christ ruling in the hearts of the elect), and allegorizing the prophetic events of the *Book of Revelation* (relegating the prophecies to history or as the symbolic struggle between good and evil today).

Why does covenant Theology do this? It's because different people and prophetic programs do not support its primary thesis, which concludes there is only one people of God and one purpose that God chooses to display throughout time, mainly, salvation. Covenant Theology has a very narrow view of God's covenant and prophetic programs that He wants to bring to pass on earth, which will ultimately bring salvation to many people, result in His Kingdom coming to earth, and through it all, bring glory to Himself.

According to Covenant Theology, the original Church in the Old Testament (mainly Israel) failed and is now forsaken by God, but the continuing Church of today (the new Israel) is blessed by God. In essence, there is only one Church (Israel), one purpose (salvation) and one emphasis in all the covenants, the spiritual blessings related to salvation, which God wants to give His people (not physical blessings). In fact, the physical blessings stated in the covenants for Israel are allegorized and transferred to the Church today (the new Israel) and are now linked to the spiritual blessings related to salvation. Therefore, the promise of the Millennium must be spiritualized to mean Christ ruling in the hearts of His people today (the new Israel) as their King. The literal promise related the earthly kingdom is now spiritually transferred to the Church, who itself, is a spiritual kingdom of people that Christ rules.

Arriving at these unbiblical conclusions, through unsound interpretive measures, Reformed Theologians miss the clear distinctions of Scripture

between Israel and the Church (1 Cor. 10:32), God's different goals related to these groups of people (Matt. 19:28; Rev. 2:26), God's prophetic purposes of the Tribulation Period (Isa. 3:1-15; Dan. 9:27; Hosea 5:15; 6:1-3; Zech. 11:15-17; 12:2, 10-13:1; Rev. 19:11-20:3), and His desire to restore the earth under a theocracy - the Millennium (1 Cor. 15:24).

Reformed teaching presents Covenant Theology at the expense of the literal fulfillment of the historic covenant programs of God (the land promises given to Israel), claiming that Israel (the old Church) is now abandoned by God. Therefore, Reformed Theology repudiates the literal features and fulfillments of these covenants (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, New) in relationship to national Israel being saved (Rom. 11:26), and the prophetic significance of Israel possessing the land of Palestine (Deut. 4:27-31; Isaiah 11:11-16; 14:1-3; 27:12-13; 43:5-7; 48:8-16; 60:20-21; 66:20-22; Jer. 3:17-18; 16:14-16; 23:5-8; 30:3, 10-11; 31:8, 31-37; Ezek. 11:17-21; 20:33-38; 34:11-16; 37:1-4; 13-14, 21, 24-25; 39:25-29; Hosea 1:10-11; 3:4-5; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:4-7; 7:20; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 8:4-8; Matt. 24:31; Rom. 11:25-26), during Christ's literal Millennial Kingdom over the earth (Rev. 20:1-6).

Replacement theology tries to teach that because Gentile believers are described as the "seed of Abraham" (Gal. 3:29) that this is equivalent to saying that they are Israel. This is clearly not the case. *Similarity does not mean identity*. The Church receives the spiritual blessings of the messianic salvation promised through the Abrahamic (Gal. 3:26-29) and New Covenants (1 Cor. 11:25) without replacing the people (Israel) to whom the covenants were given. The Church is referred to "Abraham's seed" (Gal. 3:29) only in a saving sense but not a replacement sense. The church today is a *spiritual recipient* of the promise of salvation through Abraham but not a *spiritual replacement* of the Jewish nation. The same is true regarding Old Testament descriptions which are used to identify the Church (1 Pet. 2:9-10). A similar description does not mean the church originates from Israel, even as similarity does not convey a common source and evolutionary process among the species.

John MacArthur asks a valid question:

"You show me ... in the Old Testament, which promises a kingdom to Israel, where it says that it really means the Church--show me! Where does it say that? On what exegetical basis, what historical, grammatical, literal, interpretative basis of the Scripture can you tell me that when God says

'Israel' He means the 'Church'? Where does it say that? That's where the burden of proof really lies. A straightforward understanding of the Old Testament leads to only one conclusion and that is that there is a kingdom for Israel."

Here are a few more questions for the Presbyterians.

- Do you believe the Church has always existed in the Old Testament?
- If the prophecies concerning Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension were literally fulfilled, then why wouldn't the prophecies about His earthly Kingdom be literally fulfilled?
- Where in the Bible does it teach, unmistakably and exegetically, that Israel's land promises are transferred to the Church and that God has abandoned Israel?

6. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe that only Christ's death results in our justification but also Christ's legal observance of the Law.

Romans 5:19

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Romans 5:19 is often misinterpreted by Reformed theologians. They make the claim that the obedience of Christ mentioned in this verse refers to His obedience throughout His life and how he kept the law perfectly. They equate Christ's redemptive act as including His obedience throughout His life in compliance to the Mosaic Law. This theory is sometimes referred to as "vicarious law-keeping." It teaches that Christ not only died for us as our Substitute (on Calvary's cross) but that Christ also lived for us (during His pre-cross days) and kept God's commandments for us as our Substitute.

It is asserted that the sin debt man owed to God was paid and fully satisfied, not only by Christ's substitutionary death on the cross, but also by the obedience of His life (Christ's active righteousness). In essence, many Presbyterians teach that justification is not only grounded in Christ's death on the cross but also Christ's lifelong obedience in which He fulfilled the precepts of God's law for us (In the *Reformation Study Bible*, see note under Romans 3:24).

Most Reformed Theologians believe that Christ's perfect lifestyle was absolutely necessary and essential in producing our righteous standing before God. They claim that when we are saved, God imputes to us the law-keeping righteousness of Christ.

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.) 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 (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."

This statement and the conclusion of many in Reformed Theology perpetuates the erroneous idea that our justification is based upon Christ's *legal obedience* as well as His death and resurrection. Of course, it is absolutely true and necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ lived a perfect, sinless life and that He perfectly obeyed God's commandments, always doing those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29). He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). No Bible believer would ever deny the flawless and sinless life of Jesus Christ.

This statement and the conclusion of many in Reformed Theology perpetuates the erroneous idea that our justification is based upon Christ's *legal obedience* as well as His death and resurrection. Of course, it is absolutely true and necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ lived a perfect, sinless life and that He perfectly obeyed God's commandments, always doing those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29). He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). No Bible believer would ever deny the flawless and sinless life of Jesus Christ. However, Christ's sinless life is what *qualified* Him to be our sacrifice, but His death is

the *basis* of our justification. Romans 5:9 declares that we are “**justified by His blood**” and not by Christ’s pre-cross obedience. The obedience that matters in relationship to our justification is Christ’s obedience to the Father’s plan to die on the cross - His willingness to die on the sinner’s behalf (“became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” - Phil. 2:6-8).

Why did Jesus keep the Law? He kept the Law to prove that He was God (Matt. 5:17-18) and demonstrate that He was worthy to be offered to the Father without spot as the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19). However, Christ was perfect from eternity past (Isa. 7:14; John 1:1) and therefore our salvation does not depend on His perfect obedience to the Law. Like the miracles of Christ (John 20:30-31), the perfect law-keeping of Christ has to do with His own impeccable life and deity – not our justification. The righteousness by which we are justified does not flow from the earthly Jesus and His obedience; it becomes ours because of the risen and glorified Son of God and our union with Him. Please notice that Romans 4:25 does **not** say: “Who was delivered for our offenses, **and who obeyed the law for our justification.**” The Bible says Christ was “raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). Reformed theology looks for righteousness on the wrong side of the cross. We do not find our righteousness in the law or even in Christ’s keeping of the law, but we find our righteousness only **in Him**, the risen Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

We are saved by His resurrection life (Rom. 5:10) in view of our union with Christ and God crediting His righteousness to our account. Our righteous standing in Christ is due to the fact that Christ has risen from the dead, in order to *deliver* the justification payment He made on the cross, and so we might be *united* to the risen Christ, who becomes our perfect righteousness before God because of our union with Him (1 Cor. 1:30). The righteousness of God, which we receive by faith, is "without [apart from] the law" (Rom. 3:22), and has no legal basis whatsoever in our justification before God. In Romans 3:24 we learn that the basis of our justification is found at Calvary: "Being justified freely by his grace **through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**" The Bible says nothing of Christ’s law-keeping as being the basis for our justification.

7. Presbyterian/Reformed Churches do NOT believe in a Biblical and balanced view of the sovereignty of God.

Presbyterians embrace an extreme view on the sovereignty of God and base this view on what they term the “doctrines of grace.” Of course, all conservative and Bible-believing Christians accept the teachings of the sovereignty of God (John 15:16; Eph. 1:3-14) and that salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). However, Reformed Theology and Presbyterians stress that grace also involves God choosing certain people to be saved, while neglecting the salvation of others. It teaches that God only loves certain people, and only died for certain people. This teaching is represented by the famous tulip acrostic.

T – total depravity – The Bible teaches the total depravity of man in sin and unbelief (Rom. 3:9-20). However, the Calvinist contends that total depravity means that no person, even with the Spirit’s assistance and aid, can make a choice regarding their salvation. Total depravity is said to be total *inability*, which means a person cannot believe or exercise faith, since man has no choice in the matter of his salvation. Calvinism teaches that man cannot believe or exercise faith in Christ for salvation because he is so wicked and perverted. However, the Scriptures teach that man does have free will and the ability or capacity to interact with the Spirit’s ministry upon His heart (John 3:15-16; 4:24; 5:25; 6:47; Acts 16:31; Rom. 4:3, 5).

With God’s aid or help upon the human heart man is brought to a *pre-salvation* place where he can make an individual choice regarding his salvation. People are chided for not coming to Christ for salvation (John 5:40) and not believing on Jesus Christ (John 3:36) and resisting God’s call for salvation (Acts 7:51). This speaks of freedom of choice regarding the matter of one’s salvation. They could come but refuse to embrace salvation. In short, total depravity or wickedness does not mean total inability for man to respond to God’s initiating salvation call upon his heart (Rev. 22:17). Man’s freedom of choice enters into the salvation picture. Man can’t believe without God’s help, but with God’s assistance upon his heart, he can make a valid and autonomous choice regarding his destiny and salvation.

Strict Reformed Theology teaches that man is so depraved that regeneration must precede a person’s faith, since an individual is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-2), and cannot express faith, without God first giving him life. Of course, this is unbiblical as well. The Bible says faith comes first and then spiritual life follows (John 1:12; Rom. 4:3; Acts 16:31). In Reformed Theology the teaching on the depravity of man’s nature is used to deny

man's responsibility in responding to the Spirit's conviction (John 16:8-10) and therefore presents a false view of man's depravity.

U – unconditional election – The hyper or extreme Calvinistic/Augustinian doctrine teaches that God elects some people to Heaven and gives them the faith to believe, while others He selects to hell (double predestination) without giving these people the opportunity to believe, or accept, His offer of saving grace. Others teach that God bypasses certain people (moderate Calvinism), which is a nicer way of saying that in the end God still wants to damn the non-elect to hell, without giving them any opportunity to repent and believe on Christ. In other words, God's election bypasses a person's faith and ability to choose or reject Christ. This is why Calvinists call this part of their teaching unconditional election. God elects certain people to salvation without considering a person's faith. In short, God places faith in the hearts of only the elect (those that God chooses to save), essentially believing for them, and does not give the non-elect any faith to believe, bypassing them or predestinating them to hell.

Election is unconditional in the sense that God *thought* of us (Eph. 1:4), *sought* us (Luke 19:10), and *brought* us (John 6:44) to Himself. Man, left to himself, would never seek after God (Rom. 3:11). However, the Bible teaches that God has *corporately* elected the Church, as a community of people (1 Pet. 2:9 – “a chosen generation” and 1 Pet. 5:13 - “elected together with you”), like Israel was elected in the Old Testament (Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:4), and has conditioned or based His election of the corporate Church on His overall sovereign plan, which includes saving all those who believe and participate with His free and gracious offer of salvation (Rom. 10:13; John 3:16; 6:47; Rev. 22:17). Those who become part of the corporate body have from eternity past been called and predestinated, to be conformed to Christ's image (Rom. 8:29-30). No person is said to be predestinated to hell and everlasting damnation! Predestination is to Christ-likeness – not to hell fire.

In summary, election comprehends all men potentially but no one unconditionally. It is open to all. It's not the “dreadful decree” as Calvin assumed. Those who respond to God's sovereign and foreknown plan of salvation (1 Pet. 1:2) actually become part of His elect group, or the community of people called the Church, when they are saved in this life and believe on Christ (2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:13). In short, election is not arbitrary. *Election is open and not closed.* People become part of the

growing, elect body, as they come to faith in Christ (John 1:12). God does mark out the earthly destiny of people (Rom. 9:9-13) but He does not hate the souls of people and individually choose some people over others in relationship to salvation. God begins the program of election in eternity past (John 15:16; Eph. 1:4) and also brings it to pass in eternity present, in the way He has planned (John 7:37), not the way of strict Calvinism.

L - limited atonement – the Calvinist and many Presbyterians teach that Christ did not die for everybody in the world of mankind or that His death was limited to only a select group of people called the elect. However, the Scriptures clearly teach that Christ loves everybody (John 3:16), that Christ died for all people (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:2), and that He wants all people to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9; Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17). The theory of limited atonement does not stand the test of Scripture.

The Bible clearly and unmistakably teaches that Christ died for everyone in the world (Heb. 2:9; 1 Tim. 2:6). Christ died for Paul (Gal. 2:20), He died for Israel (John 11:51), He died for the Church (Eph. 5:25), and the sheep (John 10:11, 15). But it's equally true that Christ died for all mankind without exception (John 3:16). All these conclusions are true and you cannot exclude any person or group. Christ dying for His Church and sheep refer to His purpose of saving a corporate body of people for His glory (Eph. 1:6). Those who embrace salvation become part of the corporate, elect body of believers (Eph. 1:4). Christ's death is *sufficient* to save all but only *efficient* for those who come to faith in Christ.

The fact that God loves some people and died for them (His sheep or corporate or chosen body – the Church) does not mean that He excludes other people from His love and Son's death. This is simply the assumption of Calvinism. This is not what the Bible teaches. One truth does not exclude another truth. In fact, the invitation given by the Church ("the bride") is a universal invitation ("whosoever") for all people to "come," which means that all people can take part in the corporate or collective body, which Christ has chosen to save (Rev. 22:17).

I - Irresistible grace – the Calvinist teaches that the elect (chosen of God) are irresistibly drawn to salvation without having the ability to reject the call of God to salvation. Only the elect are irresistibly drawn by God's grace and the rest of mankind does not receive this call to salvation. But the Bible teaches that God wants to call everybody to salvation (Matt. 11:28; 1 Cor.

1:2; Rev. 22:17) and it also teaches that man can resist God's call to salvation (Acts 7:51; John 3:36; 5:40). The Bible does not distinguish between a general or efficacious call as the Calvinist contends. The truth is this; man can resist God's call to salvation, reject His offer of salvation, and be condemned for rejecting this call (John 3:18, 36).

God certainly works on the heart of people through His convicting, convincing, and compelling ministry (John 16:8; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2) so faith can be spawned or produced within the heart (Acts 16:14). However, God does not selectively, electively, or arbitrarily put faith in the heart of people. God brings people to the threshold of salvation seeking to inspire faith in their hearts. However, it's a person's own responsibility and act of their human will, interacting with God's movement upon their heart, which brings them to the place of faith. God inspires faith but does not force it upon man or coerce man against his own will. A person's choice determines whether or not he will express faith in Christ (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:40; Acts 7:51). A person's choice determines his eternal destiny – not the arbitrary selection of God. Once again, a person's faith is an act of their will made possible by the work of God on the human heart. This is the Biblical truth taught in Scripture.

Most Calvinists/Presbyterians teach that grace, as it pertains to drawing a person to salvation (John 6:44), bypasses a person's own responsibility to believe or express faith in Christ. In essence, there are Calvinists who teach that God implants elective faith in the heart of the elect ("the faith of God's elect" - Titus 1:1) and bypasses any true volitional choice on the part of the individual. It's asserted that if an individual can make a personal choice regarding his eternal destiny (heaven or hell) that this would be a form of works and therefore salvation would no longer be of grace (the doctrines of grace), since a person would be contributing to his salvation by believing. This Calvinistic/Reformed conclusion is not Scriptural reasoning; it's philosophical reasoning. What saith the Scripture?

First, a person's faith is never viewed as a form of "works" in Scripture but is contrasted to works (Eph. 2:8-9). Second, grace *enables* a man to believe ("believed through grace" - Acts 18:27) but at the same time it does not take away his *responsibility* to believe ("his faith" - Rom. 4:5). Grace *awakens* a sinner to his need of Christ ("After ye were illuminated" - Heb. 10:32) but does not *override* his will ("ye will not come to me, that you might have life" - John 5:40) in the conversion response ("ye do always resist the

Holy Ghost” - Acts 7:51). The grace of God working in connection with a person’s heart (“I will draw all men unto me” - John 12:32) brings an individual into a savable state by giving that person a valid opportunity to believe in Christ with the added promise that “him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

The fact that salvation is all “of God” (John 1:13) means that God is the planner, provider, and pursuer of a person’s salvation, but it does not mean that man is excluded from making a valid choice regarding his eternal destiny. The Calvinist believes that salvation can no longer be “of God” (John 1:13) if a person can choose to believe on the Son of God or go against God’s saving purpose for his life. But this is not the case at all. God is always sovereign or in control of the destiny, calling, and events associated with a person’s salvation.

The Sovereignty of God

- God chose a collective group of people to be saved in eternity past (Eph. 1:4; Romans 8:29-30). Is this not sovereign?
- God sought out this collective group of people (Luke 19:10) so they could be saved in eternity present (Acts 16:31). Is this not sovereign?
- God devised a plan to grant people enabling grace (Acts 18:27) so they can make a valid choice regarding their eternal destiny (Rev. 22:17). Is this not sovereign?
- God has chosen us (John 15:16) so we could choose Him (Isa. 1:18). Is this not sovereign?
- God does whatever He wants to do (Ps. 115:3) – not what Augustine or Calvin says He does. Is this not sovereign?

The fact that God sometimes chooses to limit the direct intervention and display of His sovereign power over the lives of people does not make Him less sovereign or less in control of the events of history (Matt. 26:53-54). Reformed Theology paints a different picture than Biblical theology does regarding the way God presents Himself, as a sovereign God, and the way He has chosen to implement His sovereign ways over mankind and the earth.

P – perseverance of the saints – It is true that all Christians will continue to believe in the cardinal doctrinal truths (Heb. 3:6; 14). Nor will they constantly live in sin (1 John 3:7-10), without bearing some fruit in their Christian lives, as a result of God’s indwelling life (John 15:1-8; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6), if they are part of God’s elect community of people called the Church (2 Pet. 1:10). However, modern-day Calvinism and Reformed doctrine, which Presbyterianism embraces, promotes an extreme and unbiblical position on the perseverance of the saints in faith and good works.

The Calvinist teaches that all of God’s elect will always persevere in their belief and overall Christian living or conduct. This leads many Calvinists to *reject the Biblical teaching of carnal Christians* (1 Cor. 3:1-3) and that Christians no longer possess an old nature (Rom. 7:15-25). The Bible teaches that some Christians do not always exhibit the kind of testimony and fruit as the Calvinist thinks they should (1 Cor. 3:1-3 - the examples of the carnal Corinthians, Peter, Lot, Demas, etc.). In fact, some Christians are taken out of this world prematurely because of their sin (1 John 5:16; James 3:20).

It’s evident that not all Christians persevere in good works faithfully until they die. Believers can resist, oppose, or limit God’s sanctifying work in their lives (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). Perseverance in good works is not automatic for the Christian. The New Testament writers consistently urged believers to persevere recognizing that some Christians will struggle living the victorious Christian life (Titus 2:11–13; Heb. 2:1; 4:1; 6:1–8.). Even some of Paul’s fellow Christians and workers did not persevere faithfully in their Christian teaching and living (1 Tim. 1:18–20; 2 Tim. 2:17–18; 4:10).

In addition, Calvinism or Reformed teaching will often stress that perseverance in good deeds is the *sole indicator of a person’s salvation*. This leads to excess examination and *doubting the assurance of one’s salvation*. The Reformed way of faith can be summed up this way: “Seeing is believing.” Although works can become a secondary confirmation and added encouragement to demonstrate that a person has been saved (2 Pet. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:6-10), works should never be elevated to the point that they become the sole confirmation and underlying premise of a person's faith and salvation.

Works and obedience *follow* faith (Eph. 2:10; James 2:14,17); they are not *part* of faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Reformed Theology often stresses the quality of a man's faith (works) instead of the object of a man's faith (Christ). Instead of only looking to Christ ("Look unto me, and be ye saved" - Isaiah 45:22; John 3:14-16) for the *confirmation* and *assurance* of salvation the Calvinist is looking at his perseverance in human performance or works ("What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life" - Matt. 19:16). For this reason, those who strictly follow the Puritan and modern-day Reformed teaching on perseverance in works can only have "an assurance" of salvation but not positive assurance that they have eternal life.

R. C. Sproul says:

"Well, my question is, can even the one who is walking with the Lord and knows the Lord and is submitted to the Lord and is full of God's Spirit have such absolute certainty? He will have ***an assurance*** but that is not to say that there will never be any questions of doubt."

The strict Reformed/Puritan Calvinist does not know if he's one of the elect. Therefore, he can't look at his faith for evidence of his salvation, since he does not know if his faith in Christ is genuine. In addition, the Calvinist perceives of the possibility of falling away in the future to prove the unreliability of his faith in Christ. His only recourse is to look at his works for assurance to ascertain if he's one of the elect and truly saved. However, for every good work he might take as evidence of his election, the Calvinist will find just as many sins that he has committed, which may suggest he is reprobate. This leaves him with nagging doubts about his salvation. Even the Calvinist John Piper admits, "... why I sin against my wife the same at age sixty-two that I did at age forty-two causes me sometimes to doubt my salvation" (See "Why God is Not a Megalomaniac in Demanding to be Worshipped").

Lordship Salvation

Growing out of the extreme teaching of "the perseverance of saints" is also the Reformed teaching of "Lordship Salvation," or should we say, "Lordship Legalism." In recent years many Reformed people have been strongly promoting what has been called Lordship Salvation. Essentially, Lordship salvation teaches that simple faith in Jesus Christ is not enough for salvation. Something else is needed. A solid commitment to Christ is needed. A person needs to surrender to the Lordship (mastery) of Christ.

Obedience to Christ's commands is a necessary condition for salvation. Also the sinner must be ready to fulfill the demands of discipleship in order to have eternal life. This is legalism (salvation through human works).

The Bible teaches that for our salvation God requires **belief** and not **behavior** (John 3:16; 5:25; 6:47). However, belief (trust in Christ alone for salvation) cannot take place without a change of mind and heart about one's sinfulness before God. This change of mind involves a *willingness* to turn away from those things the Spirit convicts us about and which separates us from God ("turned to God from idols" - 1 Thess. 1:9). This is **repentance** (a desire to depart from sin) and God requires this for the forgiveness of sins and a person's salvation (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). A person cannot be saved if he is in rebellion against God.

Repentance paves the way for belief to occur. It is the doorway that opens the heart to faith alone in Christ alone for salvation. The two (repentance and belief) are distinct responses dealing with our conversion experience but they work harmoniously together like a wheel on a hub. One does not work without the other. A person is not ready to believe on Christ if their heart is not repentant. Likewise, no individual will repent if they do not see their need to cast their faith upon Christ alone for the salvation of his soul.

Repentance is NOT Lordship Salvation which essentially teaches a person must **meet** the requirements for discipleship, **become** a follower of Christ, **commit** himself totally to Christ, step out to **obey** His commands, **make** Jesus Lord over area of his life, take the initiative to **serve** Christ, and **comply** with the conditions that Jesus requires for salvation, if he wants to be saved. In this errant teaching a person must PROMISE something, BECOME something, and DO something in order to be saved. This is not faith (reliance on Christ alone for salvation) nor is it repentance (a change of mind and heart about one's sin that causes a person to want to depart from sin).

We should never present to poor lost sinners a list of things they must do, become, or conform to in order to be saved. This is legalism/works and not grace. We present the Gospel of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4) to sinners and then get out of the way allowing God to work repentance (Rom. 2:4) and faith (Acts 18:27) in their hearts. No coaxing is necessary, no commitments are required, no compliance to rules is

demanded, no conditional promises must be met, and no carnal works of legalism are promoted (Eph. 2:8-9).

Isaiah 55:1

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk **without money and without price.**”

The price was already paid (“**It is finished**” - John 19:30). Therefore, all that is required of the sinner is that he comes to Christ in simple, childlike repentance and faith. The sinner comes broken, bruised, and as a beggar ready to receive salvation freely and forever.

Romans 3:24

“Being justified **freely by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

“Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan!
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary!
Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty at Calvary.”

George Zeller concludes:

“We must never forget that a person is saved because he throws himself upon the mercy of a loving Savior who died for him. It is not our COMMITMENT that saves us; it is our CHRIST who saves us! It is not our SURRENDER that saves us; it is our Savior who does! It is not **what I do for God**; it is **what God has done for me**. We need to avoid the dangerous error of taking what should be the RESULT of salvation and making it the REQUIREMENT for salvation.”

Here are some more questions to ask.

- Must you become a 50, 70, 99, or 100 percent follower of Jesus Christ in order to know that you are saved?
- How much perseverance is necessary to know that you are saved?

- Does your faith and confidence rest in your works or in Christ alone?
- Do you have the assurance of your salvation?
- Why do you doubt your salvation?

Fellowshipping with Presbyterian and Reformed Churches

Based upon the teachings of Reformed Theology and what Presbyterians generally believe, regarding the teachings of **soteriology** (a lopsided and extreme view of election), **eschatology** (allegorizing and rejecting many of the great prophecies of the Bible), **ecclesiology** (denying the uniqueness of the New Testament Church) and **Israelology** (claiming that God has abandoned His Jewish people and the promises He gave to them), I would refuse to join and directly participate with these types of churches. Why? It's because I do not want to condone or promote the errors of this belief system (Eph. 5:10-11), which in various ways, run contrary to Biblical revelation. We are called upon to "prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21) or test what people teach and only embrace those things that are true and beneficial for our lives.

A system that claims God hates certain people, that He has decreed to damn certain people to hell, which He deliberately chooses to not love, that Israel is forgotten by God, that the Church today is Israel, and that the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy does not matter, is not a church that I want to associate with and endorse!

Sound or healthy doctrine matters and is extremely important to embrace during these last days (1 Tim. 1:10; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1; Jude 3). To superimpose erroneous and allegorical interpretations upon various Bible texts and to accept the extreme, unbiblical positions and teachings of present-day Augustinian/Reformed/Calvinistic/Presbyterianism can result in a lack of Biblical balance and understanding regarding God's sovereignty, God's character, reaching the lost, and the prophetic Scriptures, which gives an accurate picture of God's prophetic calendar.

While attending a Presbyterian/Reformed Church, one will not hear sermons and teachings on the Rapture, the Blessed Hope, seven-year Tribulation Period, Daniel's seventieth week, Israel's future, the end times, the *literal* Millennial Kingdom (1,000-year reign of Christ), and the Book of Revelation, as a futurist prophecy of the end times. These are great

subjects of the Bible that deal with the ending of human history. In addition, one will eventually be exposed to extreme views on election and the sovereignty of God, which the Bible does not support. As a result, you may eventually develop “Calvinistic eyeglasses” that misinterpret the clear meaning of Bible passages, such as John 3:16 (Christ dying for everyone), in order to fit the philosophy of Calvinism (Christ dying only for the elect).

Here are some final questions to ask Reformed Presbyterians.

- Are you an extreme (hyper) Calvinist?
- Do you believe God loves everyone?
- Do you believe Jesus died for everyone?
- Do you believe God hates certain people (even some children) and wants to predestinate them to hell?
- Do you believe God bypasses some people, not giving them the opportunity to be saved?

In many Reformed Churches the “whosoever will” (Rev. 22:17; John 3:15-16) messages of the Bible will be relegated to only the “elect” (the people God loves and chooses to save over other people) and this can have a stifling effect on personal evangelism. It’s far better to believe the Scriptures, to know that God loves everyone and desires all to repent and be saved (2 Pet. 3:9), so they can become part of His corporate, elect body, the Church - the “chosen generation” (1 Pet. 2:9). How wonderful to look in the eyes of the unsaved, even little children, and say with confidence, “Jesus loves you and wants to save you!”

“Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world,
Red and yellow, black and white
They are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children of the world.”