

A Briefing Paper to inspire further research

Transcript of an

On-line Bible Study

Supercessionism, Replacement
Theology and A-millennialism

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A word to the Reader

Please note that what follows is a transcript of an online meeting from my home on the Wirral with a group of friends in Essex. This has been lightly edited to make it more suitable for reading, but, as such, may be a little 'rough' in places. For this, I ask the Reader's indulgence.

The idea has been to produce something with the immediateness of the spoken word, rather than an academic work. It is intended to provoke further study of the matters considered herein because, as always, the written Word of God takes precedence over any thoughts of man!

I have a number of very good friends who take a different line to me on many of the subjects covered, and for whom, I have a great deal of respect. So I am in no way denigrating their understanding of Scripture.

I would like to thank Pat Baird for struggling through an hour a half of listening to my voice (and others) in a rather difficult recording, to produce this transcript. I couldn't have done it without you, Pat!

Supersessionism, Replacement Theology and A-millennialism

The dominant thinking in Christendom for the last 1800 years has been that the church has replaced Israel; God has no further interest in or purpose for the nation and the land of Israel. This has come from the influence of pre-Christian Greek philosophers. It is nowhere taught in the Bible that the Jews have been replaced by the church, but it is argued from a very small selection of texts, and ignoring a whole lot of others. This is being challenged today by people like David Pawson and Chris Hill, Dwight Pryor, Steve Maltz, Calvin Smith of the King's Evangelical Divinity School and R Kendall Soulen from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington.

One of the main passages which is ignored or re-interpreted is Romans chapter 11. If you have got a Bible there and you want to follow, I am going to read part of Romans chapter 11. I'm going to read the first 15 verses. We will skip over the bit about being grafted in and those sort of things because that breaks the flow of what I want us to get out of this passage, although it is still important. The first 15 verses and then we will go down to verse 25 and read to the end:

¹I say then, has God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, descendants of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah? how he makes intercession to God against Israel saying, ³ Lord, they have killed your prophets, and dug down your altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. ⁴ But what says the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knees to the image of Baal. ⁵ Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (God's gracious election). ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. If it is work then no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. ⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks for; but the election [the elect remnant] has, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ (In accordance as to what is written, God has given them the spirit of slumber, eyes they should not see, and ears that they should not hear); unto this day. ⁹ And David says, Let their trap be made a snare, a trap and a stumbling block and a recompense unto them: ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always. ¹¹ I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall is salvation is come to the

Gentiles, to provoke them (that's the Jews) to jealousy. ¹². Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? (That's the fullness of God's blessing when God blesses them in fullness. How much more blessing is that going to mean to the Gentiles?). ¹³. For I speak to you Gentiles, since I am the apostles of the Gentiles, I magnify my office: ¹⁴. If by any means I may provoke to envy them who are my flesh, and might save some of them. ¹⁵. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

Now to verse 25:

²⁵. For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits (proud); that blindness in part is happened to Israel [key word] UNTIL, until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. ²⁶. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ²⁷. For this is my covenant unto them, when I take away their sins. ²⁸. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but concerning the election, they ARE beloved for the father's sakes. ²⁹. For the gifts and calling of God are unchangeable. ³⁰. For as you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: ³¹. Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. ³². For God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Caps are speaker's emphases

Paul then goes into this amazing doxology. Then, in the light of all he says in this doxology, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God." That's not a reference back to chapter 8 as is commonly said. It is a reference back to chapter 12.

A Christian wrote, "The Jews deserve the most severe penalties. Their synagogues should be levelled, their homes destroyed. They should be exiled into tents like gypsies." Someone else wrote, "Their rotten and unbended stiffneckedness deserves they be oppressed unendingly and without measure or end, and that they die in their misery without the pity of anyone." We will come back to that a bit later on. That came from theologians embracing Supercessionism. And I think we could say that doesn't sound like the gospel of God's grace at all. In fact these words were used by Hitler to justify what he did in the Second World War.

What Paul is saying in that passage is, yes, a blindness in part has come. They have stumbled because, yes, they have rejected their Messiah. They didn't obtain what they were looking for, what they were seeking for, which was the righteousness of, and right standing with, God, and they've stumbled. But in Paul's days there is still a remnant of grace. There are still those who believe. When we get down to verse 11, he said, "is that stumbling, the ones who have stumbled in blindness, is that permanent? God forbid!" Twice he says, "God forbid!" It is the strongest Greek negative expression he can use - comes twice in this chapter. Once saying, "Has God cast off his people?" and has he done it permanently. God forbid! And then he explains what the process is, that because it has happened to them, God's judgment, if you like, has come on them. Mercy has come on the gentiles. And in due course, through the mercy shown to the Gentiles, He'll show mercy on the rest of Israel and restore Israel.

This passage is reinterpreted. I've got a good friend, not sure if he is Post-millennialist or A-millennialist. But he certainly doesn't believe as we do (what we'll look at later – Pretribulation, those sort of things). And he has to reinterpret this. Look at verse 25 and 26. If you say, as they do, that Israel is the church, then they explain "blindness in part has happened to Israel", there they have to say that is Israel, not the church. In verse 25 "Until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in" which means everybody in the church gets saved. And the next verse says, "And so all Israel shall be saved." Suddenly Israel in verse 26 becomes the church in the Supersessionist camp. What those two verses then mean, is that "when all the church has been saved, all the church will have been saved", which is quite obvious and not the mystery that Paul says it is! It requires that you make Israel in verse 25 to be the Jews, and Israel in verse 26 to be the church. You have got to be consistent with your exegesis. So, that's a very brief taste of what we are going on to.

In order to understand this whole subject, and what we are going to go on to, it is vital to understand covenant. To understand all the purposes of God, especially for His people Israel and the land He promised them. Someone has written that the "stream of prophecy runs in the river bed of Israel." Someone else has written, "The church lost its way in the second century and has struggled since then under the curse that God pronounced in Genesis 12." In the second century the church turned against the Jews

and cursed the Jews. Genesis 12, God says, “Those who bless you I will bless, and those who curse you I will curse.” Someone else’s quote, not mine on that. But increasingly Bible teachers are taking that stand. They are standing against Replacement Theology. And the Supersessionists say, “Oh, this is the new doctrine. That God has got a future for Israel is a new doctrine. It has only been recently propounded.” Particularly, they like to do this with the Rapture. “This is a new doctrine that came out in the 19th century.” No, the early church fathers believed in it but it got lost down the centuries.

People say because it is new you can’t believe that. Can we think of another new doctrine that has been rediscovered in recent centuries? Think Reformation. Think Luther. Justification by faith? That doctrine was lost for over 1,000 years. The church laboured under salvation through works. So, are we to say that because Luther only discovered it in the 16th century we can’t accept it because it is a new doctrine? This is the inconsistency of those who hold to justification by faith and then who argue that the Church has replaced Israel.

Definitions

- Supersessionism – the Church has permanently superseded Israel as the vehicle for God’s purposes on earth
- Replacement Theology – ditto!
- A-Millennialism – Christ is now reigning in His Millennial kingdom; at some point, the Final Judgment will bring in the New Heavens and Earth
- Post-Millennialism – the only Kingdom of God on the earth is the Church, which will usher in either a figurative or literal Millennium bringing in the conditions for Christ to return

So, let’s define some of the terms then that we are bandying around here. **Supersessionism** actually defines that the church has permanently superseded Israel as the vehicle for God’s purposes on earth. So the mission that Israel was given, to make God known to the nations, has now passed permanently to the church. There’s a lot more to it but we’ll start off with that. **Replacement Theology**, ditto, they are interchangeable terms. The

people who hold those opinions say that these two terms are pejorative terms that are being coined by people who do believe that God has got a purpose for Israel in order to basically put them down and to stifle discussion which is a complete nonsense. We don't want to stifle discussion, we want to stimulate discussion! While the terms don't occur in those actual words in their writings (unless they are denying that is what they actually believe), what the terms mean comes up in a lot of their documentation. There are booklets by Michael Vlach¹ that document some of it. Anyway, we are only defining terms at this stage.

A-Millennialism is the idea, because there's no future Millennial reign of Christ, that Christ is now reigning in his Millennial kingdom; the Millennial started some point in the past – either at the cross or at Jesus' ascension or the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, or at the fall of the Roman Empire. There is different views around it. But at some point in the past Christ commenced his Millennial reign and at some point in the future the final judgment will bring in the new heavens and the new earth. And all that happens between then, between Jesus starting his Millennial reign and the very end, is that the church preaches the gospel or whatever. Some A-Millennialists believe that things will get bad towards the end. There will be a final rebellion which will bring in the final judgment.

And I have introduced another expression because it is relevant to what we are discussing – **Post-Millennialism**. They do believe there is a kingdom of God on the earth but that is in the church either figuratively, again through the church's existence, or a literal Millennium which may be 1,000 years or maybe another long period of time, during which the church will bring in the conditions for Christ to return. Sometimes expressed like this: "That's a happy thought. We can do the job of getting the world converted. Social institutions, political institutions and individuals which will bring in the kingdom conditions so that Jesus can come back." The only drawback it suffers, it is neither taught in Scripture nor is it borne out by experience. Anyway, that's Post-Millennialism.

¹ Quoting article at <https://www.tms.edu/m/tmsj20d.pdf> See also <https://www.pre-trib.org/articles/dr-michael-vlach/message/an-analysis-of-neo-replacement-theology/read>

Supercessionism

- Israel rejected Messiah so God has rejected Israel and replaced her with the Church as the People of God
- Nowhere taught in the Bible; assumed in Theology
- Predominant understanding for 1800 years
- Three variations
 - Punitive and Permanent
 - Economic – Prefiguration and preparation only
 - **Structural** – foundational to most Christians' understanding including those on both sides of the question

So, where are we going? To go into things a little more deeper then. **Supercessionism.** The word supercessionism comes from the English word “to supersede” where one thing supersedes another which in turn comes from the Latin word *sedeo* from which we get sedentary which means to sit down. *Sedeo, sederi, sedi, sessum* to sit, plus “super” which means “to sit upon” so it is “sitting upon.” It signifies one thing being replaced or supplanted by another. It is a relatively modern term. It occurs in a book by somebody called Sidney Thelwall in 1870 in his translation of Tertullian’s *Adversus Iudaeos* ... Tertullian wrote a book, against the Jews, or against Judaism. And although it is not in the original Latin, Tertullian doesn’t use the word, it describes what Tertullian was writing. But the term Supercessionism came into theological thinking around the 1980s among western academia to portray Christian views on the subject. As I say, the people who hold that view don’t actually like the title but it is a nice handle that sums it up. Yes, the basis of it is that Israel rejected the Messiah so God has rejected Israel and – here is the critical point - replaced Israel with the church as the people of God.

Replacement Theology – sometimes called Fulfilment Theology because they say well the church has fulfilled the people of God. The old people of God were the Jews, the new people of God are the church. But we are one and the same people and this is where you get the one or two covenant idea coming in but we will be talk about that when we come to talking about covenants.

Fulfillment Theology, according to this teaching, and I'm quoting from Kendall Soulen² here: "According to this teaching God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, called the New Israel." And that, notwithstanding what we read earlier, in Romans 11, "has God cast off his people forever? God forbid!" They are all going to come in and they are all going to be saved. There is a special role for them, it's told us in Romans chapter 11, and it is a mystery and we shouldn't be conceited, because we don't understand the mystery. In the bit that we didn't read, he talks about those gentiles grafted in not boasting against the natural branches who have been plucked out. And yet down the years the organised church, Christendom, we will call it Christendom, has continually boasted against the Jews that they have been cast out and we are now the people of God.

This is nowhere taught in the Bible, it's just assumed in theology; it's taken as a given in most theological handbooks and dictionaries. If you get hold of any Reformed Systematic Theology books you will find no discussion of it. It's not discussed, it's just assumed. They are starting to respond now because people in the non-Supersessionist camp have started arguing coherently and logically, and more importantly, biblically, against it so they are having to defend their viewpoint, But it is just an assumption that underlies Reformed Theology. And when I say Reformed Theology this is what came out of the Reformation, started by Luther developed by Calvin systematised by a chap called Zwingli, and taken forward by Swiss theologians. It has come down to us today through the Lutheran church, the Reformed churches. It characterises the Baptist churches in the UK but not in America, interestingly, and it is just taken as a given: 'when you read Israel in the New Testament, it means the church; the church has replaced Israel. So anything to do with Israel means the church.' Well, we just tried it out in Romans 11:25-26, didn't we? Blindness in part has happened to Israel, but when they are restored, when the fullness of the gentiles has come in then all Israel will be saved. The first Israel has got to be Israel, it can't be the church. The second Israel has to be Israel in the context, doesn't it? But that's taken to mean the church, and so when all the church is saved, all the church will have been saved.

² The God of Israel and Christian Theology R. Kendall Soulen Fortress Press 1996

David Pawson has counted the word “Israel” and it occurs 61 times in the New Testament. Only in one place could it possibly bear reference to an entity which is not the Jewish people or the land, and that is in Galatians 6:16, where he says, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy *and* upon the Israel of God.” If you have got ‘one thing’ *and* ‘a second thing’, it normally means the second is something else. They argue linguistically that the word “and” there could be translated “even,” which it can be in some circumstances, so the verse reads: “ ... peace be on them and mercy *even* upon the Israel of God.” (as it is in the NIV, demonstrating a theological bias) Well, even that doesn’t mean that the church has replaced Israel, I’ve got to say. It could be he is just talking about the Israel they spoke about, the Remnant, in Romans 11. But it has been the majority view since the second century and we will look at why it has been the case a little bit later on.

So the church is now seen as the sole vehicle for the fulfilment of God’s purposes for Creation and again as we shall see, in Greek thinking, that actually means going to Heaven in some ethereal domain, sitting on clouds in neat robes, playing harps for eternity [interrupted]

Q: A question coming up. In that second verse, I was actually thinking about what you were saying about the church and the church was defined as the church in the ... what, sixty years after Jesus’s death, is that right? Well, I was just thinking, the point you made about you can’t use the word Israel and the church is interchangeable? because the gospels, the early books were written at that sort of time, it seems to be fairly obvious that you can’t start using church in place of the word ‘Israel.’ So I am surprised that we have gone down that road

A: The first century readers certainly wouldn’t have understood it that way anyway. They would have understood Israel as Israel. We will see why they went down that route in a couple of minutes when we get on to the next stage here. But there was a concerted effort to distance the church from the Jews, particularly after the destruction of the temple and the final expulsion from Israel in the Bar Kokhba revolt in 137 AD and the church did not want to be associated with anything Jewish. The Romans put a special tax on the Jews after that, so anybody who appeared to be Jewish had to pay a tax. So the church wanted to say, “We’re not Jewish,” and they stopped celebrating the Jewish festivals and they stopped thinking the way

Jews were thinking. And then they were trying to defend themselves against various theological or intellectual attacks. So there was a deliberate distancing that was finally sealed by Constantine. Particularly the Council of Nicea 325AD when it became punishable on threat of death to celebrate any Jewish festivals. At that point Easter became a separate festival, worked out according to a pagan calendar. Christmas became a festival because it had never been a festival before, again based on a pagan calendar. And all the festivals were separated from their Jewish roots. So there was a deliberate distancing for various reasons. We will see in a minute how they came to those conclusions, what the theological driver that was before it became institutionalised. The various forms of supercessionism are identified by Kendall Soulen in the book, “The God of Israel and Christian Theology,” three variations of it.

The first one is what’s called **Punitive Supercessionism** or permanent supercessionism. This was particularly taught by Luther towards the end of his life. In the early part of his life he was quite pro-Jews and wanted to preach the gospel to them. He got very disappointed when they wouldn’t believe his gospel and he turned against them. And he wrote a book that was a real invective against the Jews, “The Jews and Their Lies” which was adopted by Hitler into *Mein Kampf* and underlaid his final solution for The Jewish Problem. Hitler and Luther were by no means the first. Go back to the third/fourth centuries to ‘Saint’ John Chrysostom, the ‘golden-mouthed’ preacher. He was a wonderful preacher, but my goodness, what he said about the Jews – “they were rejected, they became dogs”. This was where the pigs and the apes things, that the Muslims keep pushing about the Jews. It came out of John Chrysostom’s mouth – “they’re no better than pigs or apes. They should be burned. They should be mercilessly persecuted to the ends of the earth” because they were guilty of killing the Messiah. Anyway, that’s another story. So, this line, the punitive and permanent, is that their rejection of Christ eliminates them from God’s covenant love and provokes divine retribution from which there is no possibility of return, despite what we read in Romans chapter 11. Anyway, as I say, that was the sort of teaching that led to Luther’s ranting against the Jews and then ultimately to the Holocaust. Ultimately it is anti-Semitic. And I remember hearing Derek Prince saying, or read somewhere, that he understood the spirit behind anti-Semitism is actually anti-Christ.

A slightly more modern version – **Economic Supersessionism**, and this doesn't mean financial. The Greek word that underlies our word "economic" or "economy" is *oikonomia* which is, literally, the rules of the house. *Oikia* is a house and *nomia* is the way of running the house; it's the way you run the house. So when we are talking about an economy it just means the way things fit together in a particular period of time. So Economic Supersessionism tells us that Israel prefigures and prepares the way for the church and some of them go on to say that it is actually subsumed *into* the church, losing her specific identity in the process. Galatians 3 says in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile and yet elsewhere he says the gospel is for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. In Galatians 3 it simply means that regarding the grounds of justification, there is no difference: Romans 3 says the same thing – we are justified before God whether you are Jew or Gentile, it's the same. But when you get to the New Jerusalem you will find there are Jews there, there are nations mentioned there. The distinction comes out again in Revelation at least. Again, that is another rather long story. And under this view, and under the previous view as well, this is an interesting one. The church inherits all the blessings that are promised to Israel in the Old Testament. Fortunately, for the church, it doesn't inherit all the curses! The curses in the Old Testament are left to Israel but the blessings are transferred to the church under this view. And if you get an original version of the King James, anything printed before say, the 18th century or maybe 19th century, you will see the chapters in the Old Testament, say Isaiah, where he is talking about the blessings are about to come upon Israel in the Millennial reign of Christ. They didn't call it that then, but in the End Times, it will say, blessings on the church. And then you turn the page over and there is a whole lot of curses – if you don't do this then you will be expelled from that – curses on Israel. So quite how we can determine which bits of the Old Testament apply to the church and which apply to Israel, is really quite arbitrary. And there is a root behind that thinking and we will look at that hopefully a bit later on.

And you get expressions coming in like 'the church is the True Israel or the New Israel; and Jesus is the True Israel. Again, non-biblical expressions which are used to describe some of these things.

And then there is **Structural Supercessionism**. In Liverpool last year, I delivered some of this material: “The Structural Supercessionism of the Standard Model” we talked about then. The Standard Model, is the way most Christians – the people who are Supercessionists and those who are not – understand the big story of the Bible. The way most of us understand the Bible is in four steps:

- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Consummation

God created everything, Adam fell, eventually Christ came and redeemed us, and eventually we’ll all go to heaven. It’s called ‘the Scarlet Thread of Redemption.’ It underlies lots of texts and understandings of the Bible and I would guess most born-again believers, probably 95% of believers, see that as THE storyline of the Bible. Again, as we shall see, this sells God short of what His entire purposes are. And more importantly for our discussion there is absolutely no place for Israel in that, *except* Israel produced the Messiah. Well, it could have been anybody, couldn’t it? Any nation could have done it, it just happened to be Israel. But once the Messiah was produced we are back to Economic Supercessionism and there is no need for Israel any more. They just pass out of the picture. Or, under Punitive Supercessionism, they are judged for having killed the Messiah and are permanently excluded from God’s purposes. And so, we end up with these non-biblical terms coming out of this. The ‘New Israel’, which is said to be the church, again non-biblical, and the ‘True Israel’ which is said to be Christ. In Galatians 3, He **is** the Seed who inherits the promise to Abraham and because we are in Him, we inherit all the promises to Abraham as well. Paul then, goes on to define what he means by that in Galatians 3, which is the promise of the Holy Spirit.

But once you see it in the Supercessionist light, you’ve got to see that God is finished with Israel. You wouldn’t gain that understanding from reading the New Testament. Well, I don’t believe you would anyway, given the passage we read tonight, in particular. And it is a huge subject and the articles by Michael Vlach referred to above are only scraping the surface of it.

They've given it new titles because they don't want to be associated with "Oh, the church has replaced Israel." We are trying to move away from that as a handle summarising the teaching. So you get Fulfilment or Enlargement or Covenant theology. Fulfilment says, "Yes the church has come in. It has been grafted into the olive tree which is Israel, and we fulfil Israel. The promises are all fulfilled with us. Or Enlargement. God's promises in the New Covenant was with the House of Judah, the house of Israel, it has been enlarged to incorporate the gentiles. This is nothing new, this was in the New Testament. Or covenant which, given that structural view we just looked at:

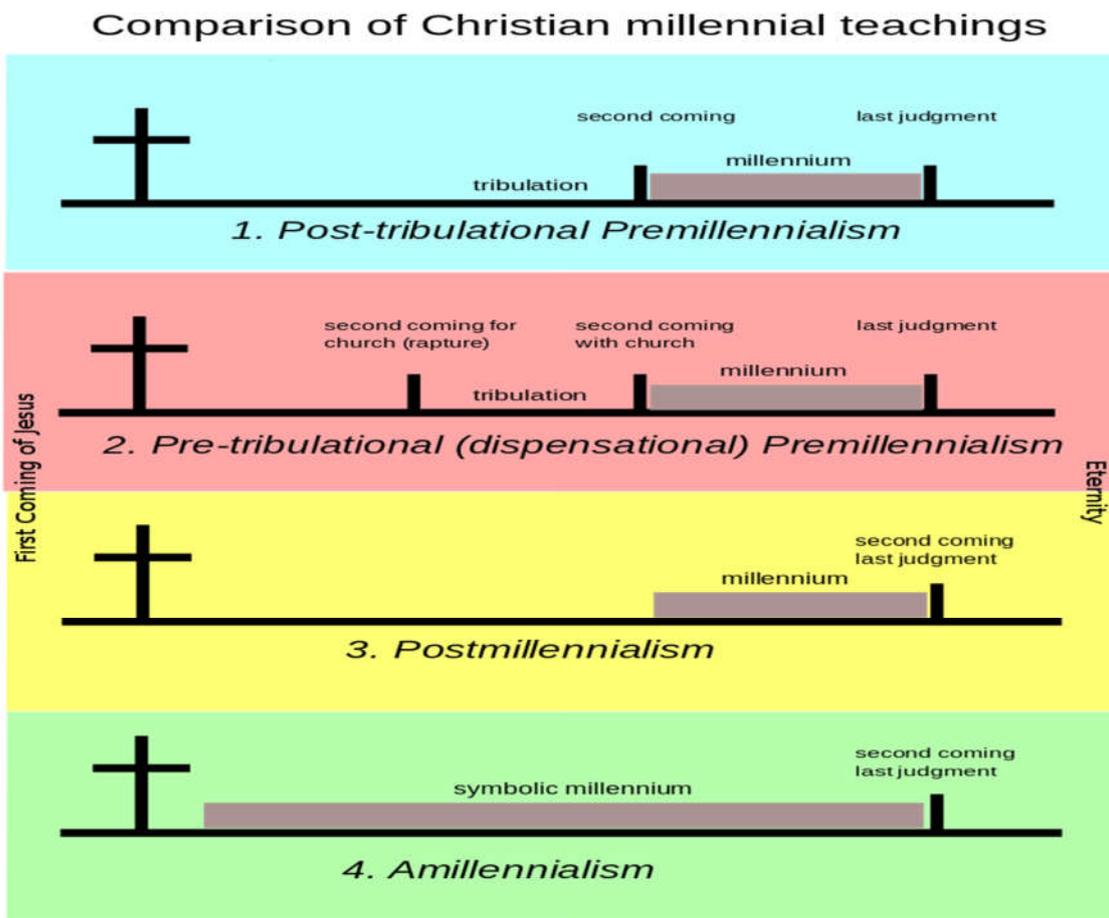
- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Consummation

Covenant theology says up to the Fall man was under a covenant of works. By not eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and evil, Adam would have lived forever. When that finished due to Adam and Eve's failure, God had organised a covenant of grace, and under the covenant of grace, everybody was/is saved, from the earliest days of the Old Testament right through to the final return of Christ and the New Heavens and the New Earth and the Final Judgment.

There was a whole series of articles by the late Pastor Andrew Robinson of Hazel Grove in the Prophetic Witness magazine. It is a very scholarly series of articles, at least 12 articles. They were actually going to put it out in a book and it's fully annotated with references (you get a two page article in the magazine followed by a whole page of annotations showing his sources!). And it is an eye-opener, I tell you, if you start reading that. You will be aware of the 39 Articles which are in the prayer book of the Church of England. The 39 articles? You'd have to get an old prayer book. They were originally 42 articles before the prayer book was finalized in 1661. There were 42 articles and in the articles around 41 they declared an anathema on anybody who believed or taught Jewish fables, by which they meant what was then known as Chiliasm or Millennialism – that there would be a 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth with Jesus at the head and the Jews as the top people in the world. King James who was

responsible for the King James version or the translation of it, had someone put in the Tower of London because they dared to suggest that at some point in the future all the kings of the earth would have to come and bow the knee before Christ in Jerusalem. You can read that for yourself in Revelation 21, “the kings of the earth shall bring their treasures into the New Jerusalem.” So the King James version was translated so that it didn’t give you the impression that the kings were going to be subject to a literal reign of Christ on the earth. Anyway, you will find all that when this book comes out and it will be quite an eye-opener, and it is embedded in Reformed Theology.

Along with its sister doctrine that we are now going on to go on to look at, bearing in mind Supercessionism and Replacement Theology are interchangeable terms so hopefully we have cleared that up. To supersede simply means to replace.



So we will go on to our third topic, which is focusing in on this area and here I hold my hand up.

Pre-tribulational Premillennialism

The pink section is basically my position. My position is that from the time of the first coming of Jesus there is a period, which is the church age in which we are now living. At some point Jesus will come back and take the church to heaven. That will be followed by a seven year period of trouble on the earth, known as the Tribulation. Jesus will then come back to earth to reign at the beginning of the Millennium, let's take it as 1,000 years. 1,000 years was quite a big number in Roman writing so it might just be a big number but we have no other reason to say it is anything other than 1,000 years. During this time, mankind will be living under perfect conditions with Satan locked away in the bottomless pit so that he can no longer deceive the nations. At the end of Revelation 20, he is released and he goes round and raises a final rebellion which results in the Last Judgment with Christ coming back to the earth – the heavens and earth will flee away, the Last Judgment and the new heavens and the new earth. So, that's the Pre-Tribulational or otherwise known as Dispensational Pre-Millennialism, that's what I believe is going to happen.

Post-Tribulational Pre-Millennialism.

You need to understand these terms so that you know what A-Millennialism and Post-Millennialism are. And a lot of people like David Pawson take this view. People who believe there is a second coming of Christ at the beginning of the Millennium take this view that the church stays on the earth through the Tribulation. And at the end of the Tribulation Christ comes back, He gathers the church, and Matthew 24, they say that is where it says he will send his angels to the four corners of the earth to gather the elect, He gathers His church together. That's on his way down, He catches us up to heaven, and then brings us back straight down to the earth to reign with him for 1,000 years. A number of problems with that. Jesus said when I come back I'm going to take you to My Father's house, not bringing us back to the earth immediately. The elect in Matthew 24 is more likely to be Israel than it is to be the church as it is a composite quote from three Old Testament scriptures, all relating to Israel. But some people take that view.

Another problem with that view: Jesus says, I haven't appointed you to wrath but to salvation. Anyway, that is another big discussion.

They are the two classical points: Pre-millennialism. Pre-Millennialists like me believe there will be a Millennium. Jesus will come back before the Millennium and will set up his kingdom. He may come back sometime before that to take his bride to heaven so that He can marry His bride, so Revelation 19, when he comes back He has got His bride with Him. Or some people may say, no that will all happen when he comes back.

Post-Millennialism.

Now many people in the Supersessionist camp take this view – that there is no return of Christ before the Millennium. Essentially the church carries on right through to the end. There is no place for a nation or the land of Israel in this view of God's purposes and therefore no future Millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem. In the millennium that we've got here, Christ is not reigning on the earth. This is a figurative reign of Christ through whatever agency. Maybe through the church, I don't know. Christ is not actually reigning on the earth and is a figurative period which leads up to Jesus' Second Coming and the Last Judgment, all happening together. That is in direct contradiction of Revelation 20, which – you will be surprised to know! – follows chapter Revelation 19. I know that is a bit of a revelation for you. In chapter 19 Jesus comes back to deal with his enemies and in chapter 20 he reigns for 1,000 years. At the end of chapter 20 we get the Final Judgment. How you can make that mean anything other than Jesus's coming back and reigning for 1,000 years and then judging the world finally is beyond me. At least not doing justice to, not being honest with, the text. But I have spoken to someone who holds this viewpoint and he actually says, well chapter 20 is actually a recap vision, and actually the events in chapter 20 occur before chapter 19. Now there are a number of places in Revelation where things that are recorded later happen before things that are recorded earlier. I fully accept that. But if you look at the text in Revelation 19 and 20, seven times over John says, 'And I saw,' 'And I saw,' 'And I saw,' one continuous vision with seven revelations in it. And if you read them in the order in which John says, 'And I saw,' you end up with the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, reigning for 1,000 years, followed by the final rebellion and the Last Judgment. But, you know, scholars disagree on these things, some very good scholars. People who are much, much more clever than I am, hold this viewpoint. But that's the Post-Millennial position.

So, under this view, all the prophecies in the Old Testament, all the covenants that God made in the Old Testament, are all part of the one covenant that gets transferred to the church as we said earlier. Of course that's the blessings of those covenants not the curses. Curses are inherited by Israel. Under this view the church proclaims the gospel in all the world resulting in nations, institutions and individuals becoming Christianized. And Christ's coming is seen as occurring after all this. Two schools of thought under that. The next two slides actually cover all of this. I'll tell you what, I'll go into a bit more detail after this, but let's just quickly look at this one.

A-Millennialism

Under A-Millennialism, again no place for Israel and the land. The Millennium started, as I said earlier, some way back at or after the cross. Satan was bound and locked in the bottomless pit at the cross according to this view. And Jesus in His ascension, at some point, entered into his Millennial reign, which is a figurative Millennial reign that represents the whole of the church period. And at some point, somewhere in the future, He comes back and institutes the Last Judgment and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Let's skip on. We have covered quite a lot of this. Just going back on those last two viewpoints then.

Post-Millennialism

- No place for a nation or land of Israel in God's purposes, therefore no future millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem
- All prophecies in Old Testament fulfilled in the Church (the blessings, that is – the curses are inherited by Israel)
- The Church will proclaim the Gospel in all the world, resulting in nations, institutions and individuals becoming Christianised
- Christ's Second coming is seen as occurring after this. Two schools of thought:
 - **Revivalist Postmillennialism:** the millennium represents an unknown period of time marked by a gradual Christian revival, followed by widespread successful evangelism. After these efforts is the return of Christ foreseen.
 - **Reconstructionist Postmillennialism:** the Church increases its influence through successful evangelism and expansion, finally establishing a theocratic kingdom of 1,000 years duration (literal or figurative) followed by the return of Christ.

Post-Millennialism. No place for the nation or the land of Israel. No future reign of Christ. The promises are inherited by the church. The church proclaims the gospel in the whole world resulting in the nations and the institutions becoming Christianized. It is a very popular in the house church movement. It is the driving theology behind Ichthus and, I think, New Frontiers and Pioneer. And not just in those movements. There are classic movements— there is the Latter Rain movements and various Pentecostal, which are all aiming and angling for their huge worldwide revival which brings in the end. So, they do have Christ coming back. It happens after the world has become Christianized, and there are two schools of thought here:

- **Revivalist Post-Millennialism.** The Millennium represents an unknown period of time marked by a gradual Christian revival, followed by a widespread successful Christian evangelism and after those efforts, that's when Christ returns. You will recognize that from some of those movements I've just spoken about.
- There's **Reconstructuralist Post-Millennialism.** I suspect New Frontiers is more down this line. New Frontiers is very much a restoration church. That's got its own meaning which is outside the scope of this talk. And under this the church increases its influence for a successful evangelistic expansion. Finally establishing a theocratic kingdom of 1,000 years duration, it might be a literal 1,000 years or it might be figurative, which is followed by the return of Christ

A-Millennialism

- No place for a nation or land of Israel in God's purposes, therefore no future millennial reign of Christ from Jerusalem
- All prophecies in Old Testament fulfilled in the Church (the blessings, that is – the curses are inherited by Israel)
- All prophecies of New Testament, e.g. Olivet Discourse, Revelation, have been fulfilled:
 - Fall of Jerusalem AD70
 - Fall of Roman empire 4th/5th Century
- Jesus' reign as pictured in the book of Revelation is viewed as Christ reigning at the right hand of the Father now
- Satan was bound at the Cross and is now chained in the Bottomless Pit (on a very long chain!)
- The Millennium is coexistent and coterminous with the Church
- Society will, through growing rebellion, continue to deteriorate, resulting in final judgement

So, let's look at **A-Millennialism**. Again no place for Israel, neither as a nation nor land in God's purposes. Again the church inherits all the blessings, Israel inherits all the curses. But this one, I started to touch on this. All the prophecies in the New Testament, all the Olivet discourses, Revelation all those things are fulfilled. They take what is known as the Historicist viewpoint. And you get on to some of the internet chatrooms and you will find people arguing vehemently that things like Matthew 24 – the Abomination of Desolation was describing the destruction of Jerusalem, and was completely fulfilled in AD70. What they make of the signs of the stars and the sun not giving its light and the moon refusing to shine and the powers of the earth being shaken, to do with AD 70 I am not quite sure. Some will take those as being figurative of the fall of the Roman Empire, the fourth century. The fall of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the church came into ascendance. The church took over the divine right effectively to rule. And for the next 1,000 years the church of Rome, in particular, ruled over the whole European continent. All the kings had to swear loyalty to the pope. I mean they had their arguments and there were different popes and fighting popes and who knows what, but this is how it was seen. That the church ruled over the popes, and the pope's divine right to rule came through the church. And this is another whole teaching on that which we can't possibly go into again to-night: how the church actually took over the roles and the responsibilities, and the political and temporal power of the Roman emperors. The Pope to this day is called the *Pontifex Maximus* which was the title given to the Roman emperors, and there is a whole load of things there that became ... and this where – there is no Millennium. The church came into ascendancy. Remember we said in A-Millennialism the church comes into the ascendancy and it's a figurative millennium.

In the pictures of the book of Revelation Christ reigns at the right hand of the Father now, and you read this in all the Replacement and Supersessionist literature, this is what they are saying. You don't have to take my word for it. I haven't gone into sources tonight because we haven't got [time]. You will find some of the sources in that Michael Vlach book as well, but this is all open information. A lot of this I culled and just pulled my thoughts together from Wikipedia. Now I know people say you can't believe everything you read on Wikipedia, but if you look again at the footnotes and the annotations, this is all straight stuff, I am not twisting

anything. We are not building a straw man so I can knock it down. That's what people do in theology, they ridicule the other person's viewpoint and say how ridiculous it is and knock it down, when they haven't properly represented the other person's viewpoint either. I'm trying to be fair here, but obviously I'm coming from my own viewpoint, I hold my hand up to that.

But I can't say this one with a straight face, because I was actually told this by a friend of mine who is an A-Millennialist. He said that Satan was bound at the cross and is *now* chained in the bottomless pit. Well, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12, that Satan is manifested as an angel of light and was deceiving the Corinthians. Peter says your adversary the devil goes around as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. So my dear friend said, "Yes, but he's on a very long chain." In Revelation chapter 20, the devil is locked in the bottomless pit. He is actually locked in. He is bound with a chain and locked *in* the pit and the angel effectively throws the key away for 1,000 years. So that ... well, I just can't make any sense, I can't represent that impartially because it doesn't compute, does it?

Okay, under this view, the A-Millennial view, that the millennium is coterminous and co-existent with the church. (This is something similar to what Jehovah's Witnesses believe and the Jehovah Witnesses believe the Millennium started in the 1920s by some mysterious calculation of their founder, Russell. I remember an evangelist saying he kept two Doberman dogs in his backyard and he had some Jehovah Witnesses come to the front door and they were insisting, 'Yes, we are now in the Millennium.' It says in the Millennium the wolf will lay down with the lamb and the sheep and the bear will sit together and the child will play with the viper. 'Would you like to come round and meet my two Dobermans?' and these two guys legged it!) So they are obviously not interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures literally here, everything is being interpreted figuratively. And that's where we really come on to the next stage. Before we get there some people might believe that society will grow in rebellion and continue to deteriorate, which will bring in the Final Judgment.

We'll take a break there. If you want to ask anything ... We have now defined what we know as Supercessionism, Replacement Theology and A-Millennialism with passing references to Pre-Millennialism and Post-Millennialism.

Q: A-Millennialism says that Satan was bound at the cross. Why do people then have so much of a struggle with sin?

A: Well, presumably the answer to that is because of your nature. So you can't blame the devil for your sins. For the temptations that are all around you. It is interesting that the Church of England is basically A-Millennial. Their creed, the 39 Articles, is basically A-Millennial, and yet it is the Prayer Book that talks about our enemy as being the world, the flesh and the devil, so there is a measure of inconsistency here, that I personally can't reconcile. And I am sure that people who hold this position would be able to reconcile it quite happily. If you go on to an A-Millennial website with a chatroom I am sure you could ask the question, but I can't explain that one.

Q: From your answering, it suggests that I just can't pass any of this on to the devil. I am just naturally wicked.

A: Well you have got the old nature there which we know has been crucified with Christ. You have got to push off the old and put on the new as we've been taught many, many times. But yes, that presumably is the answer, or, in my friend's view, he is on a long chain. He can actually get out and snap at you. And he has got all his minions, of course. A third of the angels who followed him can come round and tempt us, so maybe that's the resolution of that question. But it does say in Revelation 20 that he's been locked in to the bottomless pit that he should deceive the nations no longer, so if he is not deceiving the nations, why are his minions allowed to deceive the nations? The picture there surely is that he's being locked away so that he can't do that. He would be doing it via his agents, all the demons, who are still around. The point of that is that at the end of 1,000 years he is released and he goes out and does deceive the nations again. And he does cause a final rebellion against God.

Q: Bearing in mind that we've looked at the various points of view, some of which are held by very experienced Bible teachers, I just wonder why God should make it so complex that we can't really understand a definitive view.

A: The answer to that question is that God hasn't made it complex, it's the church that has made it complex, and that is the next topic that we are going to come on to. If you just read the Bible with an open mind believing

what it says, you might not necessarily work out Jesus is coming back before the Tribulation, but you'd work out that the devil is still around, and things are moving towards a time when there will be a whole load of trouble on the earth; following which Jesus will return and deal with the situation: Matthew 24, Luke 17 and Luke 21, Revelation 19, and that He will reign on the earth and a time of peace for 1,000 years with Satan bound in the bottomless pit. And you'll be unsurprised to learn that's exactly what the church fathers believed. If you go back to the time of Justin Martyr and Tertullian and a number of other famous folks from the second and third centuries. Polycarp who was a disciple of John. Papias who was a disciple of Polycarp, they are on record as saying this is what's going to happen. And some of them even believed that Jesus will rescue the church before the Big Trouble happens, it is there in their writings, from the second and third century. But, at the same time, this alternative view was developing in the second and third century for reasons we will look at in a minute. And it has now been established and regularized and systematized by some of the brightest theologians on the planet.

Beware of Greeks bearing Gifts!

So, how did we get into this mess that we've just outlined? Why is it so complex? Why are there so many different views on the same pieces of Scripture? And, essentially, and this is Steve Maltz's argument. This is what he is saying in his books, "How the Church Lost the Way," and "How the Church Lost the Truth." That essentially we threw off our Hebrew thinking, our Hebraic thinking. We took the Hebrew Scriptures, and bearing in mind all the books in the Bible bar one were written by Jews, and that one was Luke the apostle. He was probably a proselyte anyway. And it is couched – the New Testament, of course – is couched in Middle Eastern first-century culture and thinking. And a thinking which, to be honest, is holistic thinking. We threw all that off in favour of Greek thinking.

Beware of Greeks bearing gifts!

- Plato and Aristotle?
- Marcion -> Justin Martyr -> Irenaeus -> Augustine -> Thomas Aquinas -> Reformers -> today
- Spiritual = good
- Physical = evil
- Pursuit of intellect
- 'This world is not my home'

And it is all thanks to Plato and Aristotle. Apparently, in the Vatican, amongst all the other saints there is a picture, a huge painting, probably by Michelangelo, of Plato and Aristotle. Now Plato was some 400 years before Christ and Aristotle was some 300 years before Christ. What are they doing being celebrated in the Vatican along with the other saints and apostles?



Greek thinking came into the church, and unrecognized, camouflaged like the Trojan horse, from which the title of our slide gets its origin, 'Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.'

I'm just going to pick a few highlights out of Steve Maltz's book, "How the Church Lost the Truth," but I'm going to precede it with one of my own. You might remember from church history, a man called Marcion? He was one of the first heretics. Apparently he went to Rome to try to buy the

bishopric of Rome in 140 AD. So we are very early here, 40 years after John had died. John's successors, people who knew him are still alive. But he came in, and he was highly influenced by Plato. Now what does that tell us? What does that mean? Plato was a Greek philosopher who basically said that anything material or physical was bad, evil, and anything spiritual – the world of ideas – is good. And the objective of humankind basically is to so detach itself from the physical that it can be merged in with the spiritual and thereby become good, clean, live eternally. It sounds so close as to what the Buddhists believe – everything around us is illusion and your objective is to become one with the karma of the universe or something. But that was his basic thinking. Anything material in the universe was evil. Well, you and I are living on a material earth, so therefore earth is evil. Work is evil. The Greek view of work is that it is an evil to be avoided as much as possible and get other people to do for you so that you can float along without having to do any work until eventually you achieve eternity in this heaven which is actually a state of doing nothing. Heaven for the Greeks was a complete absence of work, a permanent holiday, we might say!

So that was Marcion's view. If the world is evil, it cannot have been created by a good God, can it? The world had to be created by someone who wasn't God. And he looked at the Old Testament, and he looked at the New Testament and said that the Jehovah, or Yahweh, of the Old Testament is not connected with the God of the New Testament, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So he came up with this person who has been named by the philosophers as a demiurge. I have no idea of what a demiurge is, but it seems to be a lower level god with the power of creation and he has created this earth, and basically he has made a mess of it. And that's what the Old Testament is all about. And then we get to the New Testament and the good God comes in and his purpose is to redeem us from this bad earth and take us into his good heaven, his spiritual heaven, and to get us out of this mess basically. So the god of the Old Testament is not the god of the New Testament. So he produced his own list of the books that he considered the Christians should have in their Bible, the first list of the canon, the books that belonged in the Bible. So the Old Testament was out completely, nothing to do with us. He got about a dozen of Paul's epistles he found that were in circulation and put those together, but he carefully edited anything of those that validated the Old Testament Oh, I forgot to

say, the god of the Old Testament is the god of the Jews, therefore the Jews are evil and the Jews have to be excluded from his Bible and from anything that God does because they are evil. The Jews' hopes are, of course, of an early kingdom and an earthly Messiah, therefore evil. Christ can't possibly be an earthly Messiah. This went on ... this got developed in later centuries. You might remember the term, Docetism, which says basically, that Christ wasn't a real human being, he just *appeared* to be a human being. Because as a spirit, a good spirit, he couldn't possibly occupy a physical human body. Well, John tells us in his First Epistle that anyone who says Jesus hasn't come in the flesh is anti-Christ.

Anyway, so this Marcion started that sort of thing. So he, in his Bible, no Old Testament. In his New Testament just a dozen of Paul's epistles carefully edited to remove anything that could possibly be Jewish, or interpreted as Jewish, or anything that could possibly be interpreted as an earthly Millennium, so the book of Revelation was out. He discounted Matthew, Mark and John's gospels. He took Luke's gospel and the Acts and again carefully edited those. We can credit him with having caused the church to come up with the books of the Bible as we know them now, because the church had to convene a council and to decide – this was probably about the 180s or the 170s, I think, to decide which books were actually in the New Testament canon. And they produced the list basically of the 27 books so there were question marks over Second Peter, Jude and Revelation, as I recall. And James possibly. But eventually they got included. But Marcion, you see, his view was: "Old Testament – Jewish, evil, earthly, physical, get rid of it. Take it all out." He brought this physical-is-evil, spiritual-is-good thing, into the church.

Next man on my list is Justin Martyr who in the 160s, 170s had a discussion with a Jew called Trypho and he wanted to prove that the church, or the Christian message was the development of the Old Testament. He was the one who developed the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation storyline of the Bible. He was trying to – bearing in mind that he didn't have a New Testament at that stage – he was trying to draw a picture of God's overall purposes, but he was the first one to actually suggest, I think, that the church had replaced Israel.

Then we come to a guy called Irenaeus who was in the next century. He was actually fighting with the Gnostics, the people who believed in this good-evil, physical-spiritual divide, and he substantially had most of both Testaments then, and he was trying to harmonize the Old and the New Testament, so he takes Justin's framework of Creation-Fall-Redemption-Consummation and develops it so he comes up with God's covenant with Israel pre-figuring the covenant with the church. And he is building in, what Kendall Soulen called, "Economic Supersession" right into the foundational teachings of the church in the third century. And if you want to read that there is a very long chapter in Soulen's book, which I won't go into, but he is actually embedding this idea that the church has replaced Israel; God has moved on from Israel [via] Economic Supersessionism. And in God's economy, it is now the church. He is bedding that right in to the church's understanding.

And we then come to Augustine in the fourth, fifth century. Augustine was much more influenced by Aristotle. We have not mentioned Aristotle yet. Aristotle's basic thing was the mind is supreme. Everything is judged according to your mind, what you think. Everything is submitted to your mind. So where the Jews took the Bible as revelation, he takes it as a text that we can analyse, dissect, our minds are superior to the Bible. The Bible is just a book. Of course that comes right through to the 19th century, Higher Criticism, where people, the religious philosophers of the day, were using their minds to judge the Bible. Miracles don't happen so we will strike all the miracles out of the Bible, you know. And Jesus couldn't possibly have risen from the dead so we spiritualise that and this approach characterises liberal theology to this day from the 19th century. This goes back to Augustine's school in Aristotelian thought. So he organised and developed what had gone on before. Well, when you cease to view the Bible as revelation and just view it as a text book that you can just go through and analyse, you can do what you like with it.

There were two schools of understanding that had developed during the two previous centuries. There was the Alexandrian School down in Egypt where they started to allegorize the Bible and to work out the underlying meanings. Then there was the Antiochian School up in Antioch in Syria who actually took the Bible literally. Augustine had been schooled in the Alexandrian way of thinking and so he organised and developed all this and

he came up with these rules for understanding the Bible and allegorizing everything so everything you read in the Old Testament is all allegory. Everything in the Old Testament allegorized. Basically you can make it mean what you want. So we have people making it mean what they want, and we then had a school developing and that training was in the hands of the priests. And so only the priests could interpret the Bible because the ordinary man in the street couldn't possibly understand that the wine and the oil that the Good Samaritan poured into the wounded man's wounds were actually the sacraments of the church. That the innkeeper was Paul, that the inn was the church. I forget who the donkey was. Obviously the Good Samaritan was Jesus. The man who was caught amongst thieves was the human race going down from Jerusalem, which was Eden, to the Dead Sea which was hell. He makes the parable mean all of that. Where the point of the parable comes into that interpretation is your guess. Because the point of the parable is, anybody who is in need that you come across is our neighbour. That's exactly what Jesus was teaching. And that's all he was teaching. He wasn't giving this immense allegory on which the church built a superstructure of religion basically. And then he came up with this book, "The City of God" which took the Greek idea of heaven further and made everything into spiritual reality and transferred our hopes from this world to the next world. So your people are living in absolute poverty but going into a church where there is gold, jewels, or whatever. They are paying in, if you like, in advance to the other world. It doesn't matter what you suffer in this world, it's the other world that matters after death. So the church can do what it likes to you in this world, it is only after this world that things really count. It tells us that **all** our hopes are other worldly.

Well, we move on about another 600 years to Thomas Aquinas who was a very great theologian but thoroughly schooled in the Aristotelian way of thinking. And his thing was he tried to argue that faith is reasonable, which is a good argument. Faith is not unreasonable, but he tried to understand faith *through* reason. So it is like trying to pull yourself up by your boot laces. You are using your reason to understand something to argue with that it is reasonable. I'd got another illustration of that just now. It was making the human mind again superior to the Scriptures and arguing from reason. He came up with lots of good stuff: the arguments for the existence of God being seen in the Creation and those sort of things. But he built up his whole structure and that is what is taught in the Catholic Seminaries

today; Aristotelian logic. As a module you will do more Aristotelian logic in a Catholic Seminary than you will do studying the Bible. And Thomas Aquinas his works are very much the basis of Catholic dogma right through to today. And he developed allegory into an art form. You can read about it in chapter 8 of “How the Church Lost the Truth.” All of that, apart from Marcion, is, I think, in Steve Maltz’s book, chapter 8, page 95.

These are the influences. Now Kendall Soulen follows these influences right through all the modern philosophers; people I have never heard of and people that I have, people like Immanuel Kant and Karl Barth, and a number of other modern philosophers who have developed this, what he has called “Structural Supersessionism,” the way the church has moved right away from its Jewish roots and everything now is based on our intellect, surveying the Scriptures. The illustration I was trying to remember: Immanuel Kant wrote a book called, “The Critique of Pure Reason.” Well, it is a critique of reason, but how does he do it? He uses reason! He is using reason to critique reason. There’s got to be a circular element, hasn’t there, or perhaps I am missing something, I don’t know. I’m no philosopher so ...

Actually, I did miss something on that second point down, the reformers today, I sort of just touched on that just then. This carries through into the Reformed church and many modern streams – Kingdom Now, Dominion Theology, Word of Faith, all of these have picked up all those influences and are moving away from the Jewish roots of Christianity.

So “this world is not my home” is so close to the biblical truth yet that undermines any understanding of Old Testament prophecies of being literally fulfilled and reduces salvation to you and me going into heaven. Someone has described that as – I’ve got a quote here somewhere – “an emaciated gospel,” which undermines and downplays God’s purposes. And it becomes the basis for humanism and individualism and Higher Criticism. These influences redefine salvation. Salvation is now all about the individual. In the Hebraic way of thinking salvation is about community, it is the body, the body of a family together. And the transformation of the universe. It’s not just us getting to heaven and the universe disappearing into thin air. God is creating a new heaven and a new earth – physical realities, not just spiritual.

- It's influenced how we read the Bible. From the Greek way of thinking we read the Bible to inform the head. From the Hebrew way of thinking we read it to inflame the heart, looking for revelations in the heart.
- As for Israel, there is no place for a kingdom on earth, because the physical earth is evil therefore an earthly kingdom is evil. Where the Hebrew mind sees God's purposes worked out in the material sphere.
- Heaven becomes an ethereal existence. As I've said several times, the popular view of heaven owes more to Greek thinking than to the Bible.
- Christian living. We get the secular versus spiritual. And church is somewhere we go and worship is something we do at a particular place, at a particular time, according to a particular form. That's all very Greek.
- Our education system is very Greek, where a teacher – not so much these days, I've got to say, but when I was at school and you were at school – the teacher stood at the front and told you what to write in your books almost. Today, I must admit, it is very much a teacher and pupils working together and exploring, which is very Hebraic.
- And there is no distinction in Hebrew thinking between secular and spiritual. In Hebrew thinking work is sacred because God is described as working and the best thing we can do is to join God in his work.
- And we just mentioned church – somewhere we go, to witness special events, on a special day, watch special people do special things that has little relevance to daily life. Whereas in Hebraic thinking, worship is something you do all the time.

Yes, this was the quote. Somebody called D. Bosch in 1980 in a book called "Witnesses to the Word" (1980) described this as "an emaciated gospel that focuses solely on personal fulfillment and internal healing for me and not for the transformation of the universe." No place for Israel, and, as Kendall Soulen argues in his book, "makes the Old Testament largely inconclusive or even irrelevant, for determining the Christian theology of God." Or, as Dwight Pryor says regarding the God of the whole Bible. "He has a name. It is Yahweh. He has an identity – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob. And his sovereign free and gracious election he has

chosen to identify himself with a particular family. And through that family to be a particular blessing to all the families of the earth.” And I would add, we play that down or ignore it to our peril. Because otherwise we just reduce the Old Testament to a storybook for Sunday school classes, or we make it just purely pictures, allegories to be interpreted, any which way you like. Has it been made obsolete by the New Covenant or is there more? Why has God caused the Old Testament to be preserved for more than three millennia, if it is completely irrelevant?

A Different God?

- Universal vs. Specific and Particular
- Abstract vs. Concrete and Historical
- Individual vs. Corporate
- Fulfil vs. Fill full
- **By their fruits ...**

In Supersessionist teaching you could actually end up with a different god. And we are talking about confusion. Have we got confusion? Are we talking about a different god? The Supersessionist position, whether A-Millennial or Post-Millennial, tends to think of God in terms of the Greek concept of a universal god.³

Where, looking at it from the other side of the coin, my side of the coin, we are talking about a particular, a specific God that we just mentioned. Our God is not the God of the philosophers, the unmoved mover, the first cause, but a specific God who reveals himself to specific men and at specific times, choosing a specific people. This is known as the ‘Scandal of Particularity’. If you Google that one, you will find a lot of interesting material around that. It’s a scandal to the human mind that God should choose: firstly, one nation. And now, that he should choose you and me to be saved. That’s a scandal. It is very interesting because a lot of people

³ See Dwight Prior “A Different God” available from <https://www.cfi.org.uk/dwight-prior>

holding these A-Millennial Supersessionist viewpoints are actually strong Calvinist theologians, who believe supremely in Divine Election and Irresistible Grace, but they can't accept that God has elected the Jewish people and that his election is without changing his mind (Romans 11:29) *"the calling and gifts of God are irrevocable"*, he doesn't change his mind. So, in their theology we are elected irrevocably but Israel was elected simply to be pushed off to the side when they were no longer needed. And the concept of God's election is offensive, particularly to humanism, which is the driving force behind the European Union, and the Age of Enlightenment, the Brotherhood of Man and so on. Can't possibly have that!

I am quoting Kendall Soulen again ... "Supersessionism tends to think of God in abstract terms, universal terms". And I know this from talking to my Reformed theologian friend. I've had some of these discussions with him. But when you examine the detail of Scripture it just doesn't tie up with the Supersessionist point. If you take a broadbrush view, particularly if you take the "Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation" big picture, yes, you can make it fit. Yes, you can fit Scriptures into that picture; it will work but it is not the whole picture. But when you drive down to the concrete, historical detail then it starts to fall apart.

We have already mentioned this individual verses the corporate. It is an individual gospel rather than corporate.

Supersessionism takes the view that the Old Testament promises are fulfilled and therefore obsolete. Dwight Pryor⁴ uses the illustration: his wife gets a catalogue, she sees a jumper in the catalogue, she orders it – on the internet it could be now – the order goes to a fulfilment house, they fulfil the order. They send you the order, the order arrives, you get the jumper, you put it on, you throw the catalogue away. And that's how Supersessionism sees the Old Testament, or the prophecies in the Old Testament, you know, in an overarching way. Now, is it fulfilled or do we fill it full? Jesus said, "I'm not coming to abolish the law," which would be that paradigm, but "I've come to establish the law", and he brings out the inner meaning. He 'fills the law full' – of meaning. Yes, Hebrews 8 says the Old Covenant is obsolete, but read the context of Hebrews 8 and you will

⁴ In "A Different God" *ibid.*

see it is only the ceremonial law, the sacrificial law, for sacrifices and so on, which has been made obsolete.

And then I would say, “By their fruit ye shall know them.” I will quote this again. “The Jews deserve the most severe penalties. Their synagogues should be levelled, their homes destroyed. They should be exiled into tents like gypsies. Their religious writings should be taken from them. The rabbis should be forbidden to continue teaching the law. All professions should be closed to them. Only the hardest, coarsest work should be permitted to them. Rich Jews should have their fortunes confiscated and the money used to support the Jews who are willing to be converted.” This is a preacher of the gospel of the grace of God, by the way. Another quote: “Their 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.” Any volunteers of who might have wrote or said those?

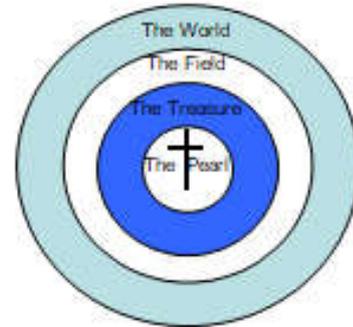
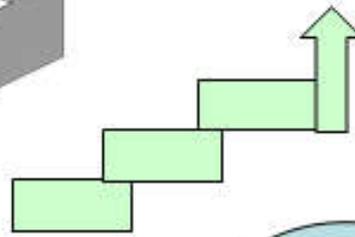
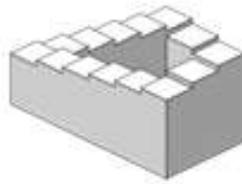
Hitler certainly drew on these materials, but it wasn't Hitler. The first quote was Luther in his book “On the Jews and their Lies.” The second quote is Calvin. Now these are the founders of Reformed thought, they're developers of Supersessionism and A-Millennialism and proponents of the gospel of the grace of God. With reference to the Jews such invectives - they are just samples. If you look to some of the others you can find them on the internet. Some of the things that are said are absolutely horrendous.

So how do the Jews see this wonderful religion called Christianity, that Paul said was going to provoke them to jealousy? Are they are going to see what these Christians have got, and say, “I want that.” In the book by Dr. Michael Brown called, “Our Hands are Stained with Blood,” he quotes a modern Jewish theologian: *“Instead of bringing redemption to the Jews, the false Christian messiah has brought down on us base libels and expulsions, oppressive restrictions and burning of (our) holy books, devastations and destructions. Christianity, which professes to infuse the sick world with love and compassion, has fixed a course directly opposed to this lofty rhetoric. The voice of the blood of millions of our brothers cries out to us from the ground: ‘No, Christianity is not a religion of love but a religion of unfathomable hate! All history, from ancient times to our own day, is one continuous proof of the total bankruptcy of this religion in all its segments.’”*

By their fruits you will know them. I rest my case.

The Mystery of History

- Greek
 - Meaningless
- Supersessionist
 - Linear
- The God who finishes what He starts



There is one bit more, the mystery of history.

Replacement/Amillennialism often go together (but they're not inseparable). For me, they don't do justice to the bigger story. They seem to be inconsistent with a covenant-keeping God, who finishes what He starts.

Martyn Lloyd Jones writing some 60 years ago in his book 'From fear to Faith'⁵ (a commentary on Habbakuk, from which I got the title of our slide) talks about people's perplexity over events in history, and in our time, that seem incompatible with the providence of God:

"Why are people troubled about it? [what was going on then – he was writing against the background of WW2] The main reason, it would seem, is that there are those who use the Bible in a narrow sense, as being exclusively a text book of personal salvation. Many seem to think that the sole theme of the Bible is that of man's personal relationship to God. Of course that is one of the central themes, and we thank God for the salvation provided without which we should be left in hopeless despair. But that is not the only theme of the Bible. Indeed, we can go so far as to say that the Bible puts the question of salvation into a larger context. Ultimately the main message of the Bible concerns the condition of the entire world and its destiny; and you and I, as individuals, are part of a larger whole ... The great and noble teaching of the Bible is concerned with the whole question of the world and its destiny."

⁵ Widely available on the Internet

- So the Greek view – history is cyclical, endless, meaningless – the object of life becomes to escape to spiritual realm which is the only ‘real’ thing; work becomes something to be avoided and death welcomed as a friend, an escape from this meaningless world (where the Scriptures tell us that death is an enemy!)
- The Supersessionist view of history is linear – each stage becomes redundant as next stage of God’s purposes unfold (Marvin Wilson calls this the ‘rocket model’ – stages drop off when their purpose is fulfilled). Dwight Prior comments that most Christians are interested in going up; God is interested in coming down! i.e. God came or comes down to Earth at Creation, the Flood, Babel, to Egypt, at Sinai, in the Incarnation, at the 2nd Coming, and finally in the New Jerusalem.

Supersessionism is unsatisfactory as it leaves undone:

- Removal of the outward manifestation of sin in **this** creation and leaves God’s purposes thwarted and only realised in another sphere, in contrast to Col. 1:15, 16a
 - Vindication of Christ in the world that He created and maintains - that rejected Him see Col.1:16b, 18
 - The reconciliation of all things Col.1:20
 - Vindication of God’s promises to Israel - not for their sake, but for His Name’s sake (Exek.36)
 - Vindication of God’s promise to bless the world through Abraham – yes, it’s fulfilled in Christ, but there is more! Romans 11 speaks of their (Israel’s) fullness = life from the dead – resurrection!
 - Makes nonsense of the fact that the New Covenant was made with the Houses of Israel and Judah Jer. 31:31 in context of descendants of Israel never ceasing to be a nation
- The God who finishes what He starts
The Climax of History is the unfolding of God’s plan for the Universe and the Scriptures show that He has a specific order. God had in mind before Creation a complete work, a New Creation which required a ‘helper suitable’ for His Son. At the end of the day, it’s all about Jesus! (Him/His 27 times in Eph. 1)

1 Cor. 10:32 speaks of 'giving no-one offense – neither to Jew nor to Gentile, not to the church of God' – the three great divisions of the human race. Looking at the concentric circles, God's purposes work in from outside but don't end in the middle! He works out again

The Cross is the crucial moment, but it is not the consummation of God's purposes (see Eph 1:9-10)

- the Second Coming is not the consummation – Eph. 1:20-21;
- completion of the Church is not the consummation, but according to Rom 11:25-26 it is the basis for
- Consummation of Israel which, in turn, is the basis for the blessing of the nations Rom. 11:12, which leads to
- Consummation of the nations in the Millennial Kingdom, when all the effects of sin are reversed (as always, on the basis of Christ's finished work on the Cross)

But, even that is not the consummation, as 1 Cor 15:24-28 tells us that:

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (cf. Rev 20:14)

For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

The consummation of God's work in Creation **and** Redemption, is the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rev.21), in which righteousness will be at home, and God will dwell with His people – all the "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven" enjoying Him and glorifying Him for all eternity in unsurpassable bliss! As Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:9-10:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, those things that God has prepared for those that love Him – but God has revealed them to us by His Spirit" Amen!