
WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?

Session 6: The Reformed View of Israel and Eschatology

THE REFORMED ISRAELOLOGY

- The Westminster Confession only has one mention of Israel: “Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the new testament.
- From this, we can note:
 - Israel as a nation is irrelevant for Reformed theology, except as a stepping stone.
 - Israel is “a church under age,”
 - Not the people of God
 - Not the apple of God’s eye
 - Not the elect before the foundation of the earth
 - Not God’s chosen inheritance
 - Just “a church under age,” now seemingly of no importance.
 - Reformed theology created the popularly discussed division of the law (moral law, ceremonial law, civic law). This is not only foreign to Scripture but is at odds with Scripture.
 - There is no discernable way to determine what laws belong to which category.
 - James 2:10
 - From Israel, Reformed Theology created the false notion of “ceremonial laws,” which seemingly have no meaning other than prefigures of the current status of the church.
 - What part of the Law is “ceremonial?”
 - The Passover? The Sabbath? The Day of Atonement?
 - If the Sabbath is ceremonial, is it required today?
 - If the Sabbath is not ceremonial, is it moral or civil?
 - Who makes the determination on categories?
- The Belgic Confession also only mentions Israel one time: “Therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers, who we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised upon the same promises which are made unto our children” (Article XXXIV).
 - This view takes a baptismal regeneration view (though they would deny it).
 - This sole mention of Israel speaks of how they “formerly were circumcised” and that their promises were “the same promises which are made unto our children.” This is replacement theology by definition.
- Summary: Reformed theology utterly disregards Israel as having any role in the plan of God today.
 - When the Bible is read under the banner of two covenants, the place and role of Israel is so minimized that it is virtually non-existent.
 - When the place and role of Israel is minimized and then swallowed into the place and role of the church, antisemitism is the natural end.

THE REFORMED ESCHATOLOGY

- Reformed theology has no substance beyond a last-day judgment in which the righteous are awarded heaven and the wicked are given justice in eternal punishment.
- The Reformed statements on judgment are wholly and completely based on works. “God hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil” (Westminster XXXIII).
- Reformed statements of faith are totally judgment-focused and contain no word about:
 - The rapture
 - The tribulation
 - The second coming
 - The millennial Kingdom
- In Reformed theology, “the visible church...is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Westminster XXV), thus there is no Kingdom theology separate from church theology.
 - This Kingdom=Church theology is Roman Catholic in origin.
 - This Kingdom=Church theology has been adopted by almost all portions of Christianity.
 - This Kingdom=Church theology is the reason that no Reformed congregation has a prophecy seminar.
 - This Kingdom=Church theology requires prophetic Scripture to be used as allegory.
- The Belgic Confession on last things: “Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare Himself Judge of the living and the dead, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it” (Belgic XXXVII).

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE ON ISRAEL AND LAST THINGS

- The relatively new practice of signing the Baptist Faith and Message makes future changes almost impossible. In making these changes practically impossible, the Southern Baptist Convention has sealed its [flawed] doctrine in the same way as the Westminster Confession did for Reformed theology.
- The BF&M statement on “Last Things” (Article X): “God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.”
 - The statement is open to any kind of eschatology.
 - If God will do it in “His own time and in His own way,” is it possible to know what time and way that might be? Does prophecy give us any insight? Should we adopt that prophecy?
 - Is it acceptable to have an amillennial statement that *allows for* both postmillennialism and premillennialism? If so, is that the kind of denominational doctrinal standards that a person wants?
- The BF&M Statement on the Kingdom is one of few doctrinal confessions that have a dedicated statement on the Kingdom. However, this statement is totally inaccurate and fails to mention Israel (to whom the Kingdom belongs). The statement claims that “Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth.”

- The nation of Israel doesn't have a single mention in the entire statement of faith.

SUMMARY

- Reformed theology is on make-believe covenants that require:
 - Replacement theology – thus Israel is sidelined
 - Amillennialism – because Israel is sidelined
 - Preterism – because something has to be done with the teaching about the Tribulation
- If Reformed theologians began to question the assumptions about the so-called Covenant of Grace, they would be forced to reckon their theology with Scripture and abandon it altogether.
- The Reformed theological position has infected all of evangelicalism.
- The only groups that hold to an accurate and Biblical eschatology are those groups that *reject confessions of faith altogether*.
 - Independent fundamentalist churches
 - Independent Bible churches
 - Non-denominational churches
 - Grace churches
- The argument that a confession of faith will protect doctrine is proven wrong on a practical scale by the fact that confessions have solidified error rather than protected doctrine.