

CHAPTER 10 PERSEVERANCE

I. Statement of the doctrine

WCF 17.1 “They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”¹

¹Phil. 1:6; 2 Pet. 1:10; John 10:28, 29; 1 John 3:9; 1 Pet. 1:5, 9.

Perseverance applies only to those who are elect, justified, and now in the process of sanctification; it does not apply to all professing Christians.

Perseverance refers to the estate of grace, not to the attainments of grace; “backsliding” is possible (WCF 17:3).

“Perseverance of the saints” is a better phrase than “eternal security,” for it emphasizes the necessary human effort and responsibility. “Eternal security” often places undue dependence on the initial experience of salvation, instead of the continuing life of saving faith.

II. Scriptural support for perseverance

A. Perseverance is God’s work through us (WCF 17:2)

1. The Father sets us free and places his unchangeable love on us.

Jer. 31:3, “the LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

2 Tim. 2:19, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

2. The Son paid to save us, and now he prays for us.

Cf. Lk. 22:32 (Jesus prays for Peter)

Jn. 10:28, “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

Jn 17:24 “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

Heb. 7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Rom. 8:33-39, nothing able to separate us from God’s love in Christ, because Christ died for us.

3. The Holy Spirit abides in us.

Jn. 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

Also 1 Jn. 2:27

B. The Scriptures expressly state that the elect will persevere and be saved eternally.

Rom. 8:29-30, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom

he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

Php. 1:6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

2 Tim. 1:12, “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

1 Pet. 1:5, 9, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

1 Jn. 3:9, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” (seed possibly the Holy Spirit in believers, or believers who abide in God.)

C. The terms of the covenant of redemption, sealed with Christ’s blood, demand the final salvation of all the elect. All five points of Calvinism hang together (cf. WCF 17:2).

Jer. 32:40, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them [the New covenant], that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

Heb. 9:12-15, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

Heb. 10:14, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

Heb. 13:20-21, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

III. Backsliding

According to our standards (WCF 17:3), our experience, and our understanding of Scripture, we must recognize that Christians can to a large degree fall away from the pattern of Christian life and sanctification. Two well-known biblical examples are David (one year’s duration, 2 Sam. 11:27; 12:14) and Peter (one evening. Mt. 26:70, 72, 74).

The Confession lists four possible causes for this backsliding:

- 1) temptation of Satan
- 2) temptation of the world
- 3) remaining corruption in ourselves
- 4) neglect of the means of grace

Likewise, the Confession lists seven results of backsliding:

- 1) God’s displeasure, 2 Sam. 11:27; Isa. 64:5, 7,9.
- 2) Holy Spirit grieved, Eph. 4’:30
- 3) Losses of grace and comfort, Ps. 32:3-4; 51:8, 10, 12.
- 4) Heart hardened, Isa 63:17
- 5) Conscience wounded, Ps. 32:3-4.

6) Others hurt and scandalized, 2 Sam. 12:14; 1 Cor. 5:1.

7) Temporal judgments, 2 Sam. 12:14; Ps. 89:31-32; 1 Cor. 11:32.

To these consequences of backsliding, we may add an eighth, loss of reward in the kingdom, 1 Cor. 3:12-15.

Backsliding in a Christian is characterized as being temporary, and not complete.

VI. Objections to perseverance considered

A. Verses that introduce a condition in perseverance

Col. 1:22-23, "In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."

1 Thess. 3:8, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

Heb. 3:6, 14, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

Rev. 2:10, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The Calvinist recognizes in these verses the doctrine of human responsibility – just as we are responsible to believe and commanded to believe, so we are responsible to persevere and commanded to persevere. This truth does not contradict the equally clear fact that God alone causes us to believe.

The Lord uses these encouragements to faithfulness as means whereby we are confirmed in our perseverance.

B. Verses that state a possibility of falling

Ez. 18:24, "24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

1 Tim. 1:19, "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."

2 Pet. 2:20-21, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Rev. 3:5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

The last of these verses is similar in thrust to those under B above. The first three examples seem to deal with professing Christians who are not actually born again, as in 1 Jn. 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

C. Verses that warn against final apostasy

Heb. 6:4-6, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Heb. 10:26-29, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

2 Pet. 3:17, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness."

Again, the last verse is a warning similar to those above. The two passages in Hebrews should be taken together. The normal interpretation used by Reformed writers is that both passages speak of those who profess Christianity, and even delude themselves with false assurance, but who finally turn away. On the other hand, some see in the descriptions clear evidence of genuine faith, and therefore consider this as a hypothetical case only: if a true Christian were to apostatize, he could never be saved again. We should notice that these verses are equally, if not more, difficult for Arminians, since a second salvation is ruled out.

CHAPTER 11 THE IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

I. Definition of the church

A. Biblical terms

1. *'edah*, “congregation, company” (145x)
derived from *ya'ad*. “assign, appoint (a time)”
related to *mo'ed*, “meeting”
various uses:
 - swarm of bees (Jd. 14:8)
 - sinful assembled group (congregation of Korah)
 - usually holy (Israel, whether assembled or not)Num. 10:2-3, “Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”
LXX. *sunagoge*
2. *qahal*, “assembly, congregation” (123x)
always people
perhaps derived from *qol*, “voice, sound”
usually used when Israel is assembled; cf. Ex. 12:6, “the whole assembly (*qahal*) of the congregation (*'edah*) of Israel”
normally used interchangeably with *'edah*
 - neither *qahal* nor *'edah* used before Ex. 12:3 (Passover) except prophetically in Gen. 28:3; 48:4 (*qahal*); thus these terms apply especially to God’s covenant people.LXX:
 - sunagoge* in Ex.-Num.
 - Ekklesia* in the rest of OT
 - only some time after Christ did *sunagoge* and *ekklisia* became hostile terms
 - Jas. 2:2, “For if there come unto your assembly (*sunagoge*) a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment.”
 - Jas. 5:14, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church (*ekklisia*); and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”
3. *sunagoge*, “synagogue, congregation, assembly” (57x)
Used most often in the gospels; places of Jewish worship, or assembled worshipers. Also Christian assembly, Jas. 2:2.
Apostate Jews are called “synagogue of Satan” in Rev. 2:9; 3:9.
Later usage, restricted to Jews, as opposed to Christians.
4. *ekklisia*, “church, assembly” (115x)
From *ek* and *kaleo*, “to call out”.
For NT usage see C below.

B. The English word church

This English word derives from the Greek word *kuriakon*, “the Lord’s.” This Greek word is found in Rev. 1:10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.”

The plural form *kuriaka* was given to the names of churches by Constantine (acc. to Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*), in much the same way as the plural form *hagia* is used in Hebrews to describe the tabernacle. The Greek term was carried over into Old Saxon as *kirika*, and thus into Modern English as church.

Normally, English Bibles translate only the term *ekklesia* by the English word church, and that translation is always used, except for the three secular occurrences in Acts 19. If the OT had been written in Greek, the word church would be found often in the English OT, even as it is found in the KJV of Heb. 2:12, quoting Ps. 22:22. Heb. 2:12, “Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Hence, it is inaccurate to say that the word church is limited to the NT.

C. NT usage of *ekklesia*

1. Secular assembly

a. lawful

Acts 19:39, “But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.”

b. unlawful

Acts 19:32, “Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.”

Acts 19:41, “And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.”

2. OT church or congregation

Acts 7:38, “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.”

Heb. 2:12 quoting Ps. 22:22, which has *qahal*.

3. Local Christian congregations

a. singular (Mt. 18:17; Rom 16:5; Col. 4:15.

b. plural

1 Cor. 16:1, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.”

4. Group of congregations in a city

a. Jerusalem

Acts 8:1, “And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Also Acts 12:1; 15:4.

b. Antioch in Syria

Acts 13:1, “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”

c. Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1)

d. Corinth (Rom. 16:23; 2 Cor. 1:1)

e. Ephesus (Acts 20:17; Rev. 2:1; cf. “presbytery” in 1 Tim 4:14)

5. Congregations in a region

Acts 9:31, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

There is a textual variation at this verse, with E P Byz giving the plural "churches" and plural verbs; while the singular is in Aleph A B C P⁷⁴, etc. The UBS text gives the singular a "B" rating, "some degree of doubt." Metzger suggests the plural was introduced by copyists to conform to Acts 15:41 and 16:5 (*Textual Commentary*, p. 367).

6. Entire visible church at a particular time

Acts 7:38, "the congregation in the desert."

1 Cor. 10:32, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."

1 Cor. 15:9, "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

7. Entire body of the elect from all times

Esp. in Ephesians and Colossians (e.g. Eph. 1:22-23; 3:10, 21; 5:25).

Cf. Heb. 12:23, "the church of the firstborn."

II. Biblical history of the church

A. From Adam to Abraham

no organized body of believers

evidence of godly believers:

in Heb. 11: Able, Enoch, Noah.

Others mentioned in Genesis: Adam, Eve, Seth, Enosh (4:26), Melchizedek.

Job, if dated early

still there was some kind of formalized worship

call on the name Yahweh (Gen. 4:26)

sacrifices (Abel, Noah, Job)

Clean animals sacrificed (Gen. 8:20)

animal blood poured out (Gen. 9:4)

B. From Abraham to Moses

The Abrahamic covenant was spread over many years in Abraham's life (Gen. 12, 13, 15, 17, 22), but the pivotal point in regard to the visible church is the covenant made when he was 99 years old (Gen. 17; Rom. 4). At this point God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, "father of a multitude," and established the covenant sign of circumcision.

Starting at this point, God's people were collected into one visible body: the beginning of the visible church. The Protestant reformers saw in the Abrahamic covenant the three basic requirements for a true church of Christ:

1) faithful preaching of the Word of God (Gen. 17:7-9; 18:19; cf. 26:5)

2) right administration of the sacraments (Gen. 17:10-13)

3) proper church discipline (Gen. 17:14)

Since the OT church is visible, it includes true believers and hypocrites, as does the NT church. Likewise, the OT church contained children and servants; it was built on the family structure.

During the period before Moses, the church received at first divine revelations, until the death of Joseph; and then it apparently experienced a long period of

silence. As the people increased in number, “elders” represented them, and “priests” performed sacrifices (Ex. 3:16-18; 19:22, 24).

C. From Moses to Christ

The church continued its earlier identity, with its sacraments, circumcision, offerings.

It added more ordinances; e.g. Passover, feasts.

It added a separate priesthood and a central place of worship.

It should be noted that the OT church was a separate organization from the state of Israel or Judah. It was possible to be a member of the state without being a member of the church. E.g. the term “cut off from the congregation” sometimes refers to excommunication from the church privileges, as with lepers.

During this period the prophets called the people to covenant faithfulness, and warned of approaching judgment. At the end of this period John the Baptist and Jesus continued in this tradition. When the nation rejected John and Jesus, a new phase began.

D. From Christ to the second coming

Lord’s Supper instituted the new covenant, Heb. 8.

Now in the last days, 1 Jn. 2:18.

Many OT regulations now dropped: Aaronic priesthood, sacrifices, most ceremonial laws; these things were fulfilled in Christ.

The theocracy, which was suspended at the Babylonian Captivity, remains suspended until Christ’s second coming. This includes the special relation of the Jews to the land of Israel as a divine right, and the related unique economic and property laws.

The Gentiles are accepted into the church as Gentiles.

Other ceremonial obligations were altered:

 initiation rite: circumcision changed to baptism

 covenant meal: Passover changed to Lord’s Supper

 day of worship: seventh day changed to first day.

The centralized temple system was replaced by the universal synagogue system in church organization; cf. Mt. 15-20.

CHAPTER 12 RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO ISRAEL

Various views about this topic reflect different approaches to biblical theology and hermeneutics. They can be grouped conveniently into some of the basic eschatological positions.

I. Classic amillennial system

This treatment of Israel and the church is that which has been held by Augustine, the Roman Catholic church, the Lutheran churches, Calvin, and most Reformed traditions.

- A. The promises made to the physical seed of Abraham are understood as explicitly or implicitly conditional, requiring faith.
- B. Many physical promises are regarded as having been fulfilled already
 - Josh. 21:43-45, "And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.
44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.
45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."
 - Neh. 9:8, "And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous."
 - Neh. 9:23-24, "Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it.
24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would."
- C. Spiritual promises are considered far more important than physical promises. Many physical promises are understood allegorically as referring to spiritual matters, or to the intermediate or eternal state.
- D. By and large, the NT church is viewed as the recipient of the OT kingdom promises to Israel.
 - a. The Jews as a nation cease to have the promises directed especially to them.
 - b. The church, made up of the faithful remnant of the Jews and the believing Gentiles, is spiritual Israel; it is all there will be of Israel (postmillennialists assert a future conversion of the nation of Israel.)
 - c. Therefore, the biblical references to Israel, Judah, Zion, Jerusalem, etc., refer to the church, either, on earth or in heaven.
- E. In short, Israel is grafted into the church.

II. Dispensational system

- A. OT saints were saved by faith, just as NT saints, but the knowledge content of faith in OT times was much more limited than amillennialists believe.
- B. OT promises to Israel are conceived of as unconditional, and there is greater emphasis on the physical nature of these promises and on their literal fulfillment.
- C. In the time of Jesus, the nation of Israel rejected the Mosaic covenant law and its promises.
- D. The kingdom promises were thus withdrawn from Israel until the millennium, when they will be fulfilled. The OT “prophetic clock” has stopped ticking during the present time; it will resume ticking when the church is raptured to heaven and the seven-year tribulation period begins.
- E. The NT church is a separate body from Israel, with separate identity, functions, promises, and destination; it never is called Israel.
 - a. The NT church is a mystery not known in OT prophecy; it can be called a “parenthesis.”
 - b. The NT church considers Jew and Gentile as equal within itself.
 - c. The NT church is primarily a spiritual body, with spiritual promises – not those of the OT, which were made to Israel.
- F. In the millennium, Israel will have been converted and will receive the kingdom promises. These promises include the reestablishment of the Jewish legal system and temple sacrifices. Israel will be an earthly people; the church, a heavenly people, will reside in heaven.
- G. In short, Israel and the church are entirely distinct.

III. Covenant premillennial system

- A. The OT promises to Israel are understood literally, as both spiritual and physical. The biblical covenants are outworkings of the covenant of grace.
- B. When so stated, the promises are unconditional (Abrahamic, Davidic, new covenant); others are stated to be conditional (Mosaic, phps. Ezekiel’s temple).
- C. Because of Israel’s disobedience, the theocracy was withdrawn until the second coming of Christ, at which time the promises will be fulfilled. The theocracy has been suspended since the Babylonian Captivity, with the exception of the Messianic works of Christ during his life on earth.
- D. The church of Israel has continued to the present, with important modifications:
 - a. The NT church is still in essence the continuation of the OT church; true Jews in NT times became Christians; the visible Christian church continues to operate under the Abrahamic covenant.
 - b. The church in this new dispensation, has sustained important changes in administration. Nevertheless, its unity is maintained.
- E. The NT church, along with the OT church, is the heir of the OT literal promises to Israel, and will share in the millennial “Jewish” kingdom.
 - Mt. 21:43, “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”
- F. Unbelieving Jews will be converted at the second coming of Christ.
- G. In short, the NT church is grafted into Israel.

(This understanding of covenant premillennialism is that which is presented in this course; it follows our understanding of both the OT and the NT).

V. Note on historic premillennialism

Historic premillennialism is the name given to the belief that Christ will return before the promised millennium, but that his coming is not divided into two separate phases (before & after the tribulation). Many of the theologians who hold this position would agree with covenant premillennialism, as presented above.

However, others accept a more allegorical interpretation of the OT promises, as in the tradition of the amillennialists. These men base their premillennial position solely on NT passages. E.g. George Eldon Ladd. Ladd recognizes his similarity of approach in the OT and in a partially realized eschatology to that of the amillennial scholar Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (1950).

Ladd's position:

- 1) OT prophecies and covenants must be interpreted in the light of the NT fulfillment passages – i.e., as spiritually applied to the church in many cases. Some of the OT prophecies may still refer to national Israel, but we cannot determine which prophecies.
- 2) Christ began his messianic rule with his resurrection and ascension; his rule will be made visible at his second coming. The promised kingdom is therefore both present and future.
- 3) The NT seldom discusses the millennium; it is hinted at in 1 Cor. 15:23-26, and taught in Rev. 20:4-6.
- 4) According to Rom. 11:26, the Jews eventually will all be saved, but the exact relationship of this event to the second coming or the millennium is uncertain.

V. The mystery revealed to Paul

Paul links the church in NT times to the word mystery, and says this mystery was unknown before his ministry. Many have taken Paul's statements to teach that the church is an entirely new entity, and separate from Israel. Rather, it appears that the NT church is mysterious in that it accepts Jew and Gentile on equal standing, without requiring the Gentile to become a Jew.

A. The term *mysterion*

This Greek word, transliterated in English as mystery, means a secret which was unknown previously, but which now has been revealed.

In the gospels Jesus is quoted as using the word one time, when he told the disciples that they would know "the mysteries of the kingdom of God" (Mt. 13:11 = Mk. 4:11 = Lk. 8:10).

John uses the term a few times in Revelation, describing various symbols, or, in one place (10:7), the end result of prophecy.

Rev. 10:7, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."

But the vast majority of usages occur in Paul's epistles (21x). Paul uses the term to describe various aspects of the gospel and God's prophetic purpose. However, some usages seem to refer directly to the church, and dispensationalists claim that these references prove that the existence of the NT church is something entirely new and unexpected and that the church is therefore not a part of Israel.

Rom. 16:25-26, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

Eph. 3:3, 4, 9, “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words hereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.”

Cf. NIV at 3:6, for definition of the mystery : “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shares together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

Col. 1:26-27, “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Col. 2:2 (note Gk. Text, followed here by NIV), “...in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ” (for Christ in his corporate sense, cf. 1:24).

Careful examination of these passages will reveal that the mystery of which Paul speaks is not the existence of the church, but the nature of the church: the church now includes Jews and Gentiles together in one body. This development was not predicted in the OT, nor expected by pious Jews.

B. The mystery and OT prophecy

While this development was not specially predicted in the OT, it was agreeable to the OT. There was a certain uncertainty in the OT regarding the nature and timing of the fulfillment of the promises (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Yet certain OT predictions indicate that the blessings promised to Israel will result in blessings on the Gentiles (e.g., Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Isa. 11:10; 42:1, 6; 49:6, 22; 52:15; Mal. 1:11; Mt. 4:15-16, cf. Isa 9:1-2).

These blessings on the Gentiles are predicted in a context of Jewish supremacy in the kingdom (e.g., Isa 49:23; 60:3, 5, 10-11, 14, 16). The “mystery” is that now Gentiles in the kingdom will share with the Jews this favorable position. See Isa. 32:1; cf. Mt. 19:28; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4-6.

James saw that the OT recognized the fact that Gentiles as Gentiles would be God’s people as the kingdom began (Acts 15:14-18, quoting Amos 9:11-12, probably from an older Hebrew text than the MT, cf. LXX). And Paul saw in the OT justification for his mission to the Gentiles (Tom. 15:4-12, 20-21).

The vagueness of OT prophecy on this point allowed great flexibility in the providential fulfillment of these prophecies. It enabled the conditional promises of the Mosaic covenant and of Jesus himself to be made in good faith, so that the Jewish nation could have received these promises earlier, without violating predictive prophecy.

CHAPTER 13

THE VISIBLE CHURCH

I. Definition

A. Invisible church

WCF 25:1, WLC 64-65

The invisible church is the entire body of the elect. It is “invisible” in that it cannot be distinguished certainly, nor is it contained in a visible organization.

In addition to the biblical designation church, this invisible church is referred to in these terms:

“the body of Christ” (Eph. 1:0, 22-23; Col. 1:18; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27)

“the bride of Christ” (Eph. 5:23, 27, 32; Rev. 19:7-9; cf. Ez. 16; Hosea)

“the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 1:23)

The invisible church is the direct result of the terms of the covenant of redemption.

In return for his active and passive obedience, Christ will receive an eternal kingdom, and a people for his name. These people are his church, united to Christ in his death, resurrection, ascension, and glory.

B. Visible church

WCF 25:2, WLC 62

The visible church is the entire body of those professing the true religion, along with their children (Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 7:17). In the NT dispensation, it does not automatically include wives or servants (1 Cor. 7; Phle.)

Often this term refers to the visible organization to which professing Christians belong, in order to carry out the biblical injunctions to preach the word, administer the sacraments, and administer discipline.

II. Purity of the visible church

A. Church purity as a goal

WCF 25:4-5, WLC 61

Because of sin’s remaining influence in every Christian, no Christian church is perfect, and no church can be certain that it excludes hypocrites. Yet this necessary mixture in the visible church does not justify complacency; the church is instructed to make the effort to keep itself pure in doctrine and life. One can see a parallel in the case of an individual Christian. While he is never free from sin in this life, he is commanded to hate sin and turn from it, “perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

God himself desires the purity of his church (cf. Eph. 3:14-21; 5:25-27).

B. Manner to obtain the purity of the church

The following Scriptural methods for obtaining church purity are listed in the general order of severity, it being preferable to exercise church discipline as mildly as possible to bring about the needed repentance or change.

1. Preaching of the word and prayer

The ministry of the word itself to the congregation or to individuals is used by God to bring conviction of sin, conversion, and increasing sanctification. Likewise, God answers the prayers of the minister, elders, and people for one another’s spiritual needs. This should be the normal mode of church discipline. By preaching on subjects which are related to the life of the

church, the minister prevents many potential problems arising in the first place.

2. Church discipline in receiving members

Those who do not give an acceptable profession of salvation are not to be allowed to join the church. An acceptable profession includes the absence of open, scandalous sin; an acceptance of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith; and a profession of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. Simon in Acts 8:9-24

In the case of adults, baptism follows conversion: Acts 2, etc.

Churches are to be built with genuine materials, 1 Cor. 3:10.

3. Church discipline in matters of life

Church members who live in open and scandalous sin are to be discipline, and if necessary, put out of the church. Note in these cases, as in others, the progressive stages of discipline: admonition, rebuke, suspension, excommunication.

Offense and rebellion (Mt. 18:15-20).

Immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-8, 9-13; cf. restoration after repentance, 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

Indolence (2 Thess. 3:6-15)

4. Church discipline in matters of doctrine

Those who teach false doctrine should not be allowed to teach or lead in the church. Those who deny essential Christian doctrine are not to be permitted to be members of the church, but are to be publicly exposed and opposed. Note frequent warnings against false teachers in the NT; e.g., Mt. 7:15; Acts 20:28-31.

Examples of apostolic warnings and actions against false teachers: Rom. 16:17-18; Gal. 1:8-9; 5:7-12; Titus 3:10; 2 Jn. 9-11.

Note also that the doctrines involved in these examples touched the vitals of Christian faith. The apostles allowed much latitude in secondary or questionable issues. The Christian needs balance of toleration for differences among Bible-believing Christians, and intolerance for deviations from orthodoxy springing from unbelief of Scripture.

5. Church separation as a last resort

If a church has deteriorated to the extent that it is disobedient to Christ in doctrine or life, and it refuses to allow discipline to correct the error, that church has forsaken Christ as its head. If that error is fundamental to Christianity, that church ceases to be a true church of Jesus Christ, even if it maintains an outward appearance to be such. It is the duty of Christians in such a case to separate from that apostate body and to form or join with a true church of Christ.

The visible church began with a separation

Gen. 12:1, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Gen. 17:1, "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."

Israel in the OT was separate from the ungodly nations around them, Ex. 19:5-6; cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9. In Lev. 18:3-5; 19:2, note that the concept of "holy"

is “set apart,” “separated to a sacred purpose.” (Cf. doctrine of sanctification notes)

Lev. 18:3-5, “After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.

4 Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God.

5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.”

Lev. 19:2, “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”

The church in the NT, likewise, must separate from bodies which deny the true faith. Note the example of Paul’s practice and teaching:

	<u>practice</u>	<u>teaching</u>
in Corinth	Acts 18:7	2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 11:2
in Ephesus	Acts 19:9	Eph. 5:25-27

Acts 18:7, “And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.”

Acts 19:9, “But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.”

In both cases Paul compared the relation of the church to Christ with that of a pure bride to her husband, which illustration fits well the reality (as in Rev. 19:6-9).

III. Government of the visible church

This subject is studied carefully in the pastoral theology department. Here we will simply summarize the six arguments concerning church government found in Thomas Witherow, *The Apostolic Church, What Is It?* Witherow enumerates six biblical principles of church government:

A. Office-bearers were chosen by the people

Acts 1:23, “And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.”

Acts 6:5, “And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.”

B. The office of bishop and that of elder are identical.

The two Greek terms are episkopos (overseer, bishop), and presbuteros (elder).

These terms are used interchangeably in the NT several times:

Acts 20: 17, 28, “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

Titus 1:5-7, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.”

1 Pet. 5:1-2, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

This fact agrees with the salutation in Php. 1:1, “to all the saints...with the bishops and deacons.”

C. There was a plurality of elders in each church.

Acts 14:23, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.”

Php. 1:1, “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”

Titus 1:5, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”

D. Ordination was an act of the presbytery – i.e., a plurality of elders.

Acts 6:6, “Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

Acts 13:3, “And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

References to Paul’s ordaining the evangelists Timothy and Titus (2 Tim. 1:6 and Titus 1:5) should be compared with the mention of Timothy’s ordination by the presbytery (1 Tim. 4:14). As an apostle, Paul had authority to ordain to the special and extraordinary office of evangelist, while the presbytery could ordain him to the Christian ministry in general (office of teaching elder).

E. The assembled elders from the various churches exercised rights of government and received appeals.

Acts 15:2-6, “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.”

Acts 15:22-23, “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and* brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia.”

*Note that the Greek does not have an “and” before “your brothers,” as in the KJV; the letter came from the apostles and elders.

F. Christ was recognized as the only head of the church.

Eph. 1:12, “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

Eph. 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

Col. 1:18, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

Church officers themselves were quick to point out this fact:

Paul – 2 Cor. 1:24, “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.”

Peter – 1 Pet. 5:3, “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

Hebrews author – Heb. 13:17, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

John – 3 Jn 9-11, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”

IV. Activities of the visible church

The Bible Presbyterian Form of Government states that the visible church’s power is “ministerial and declarative” (1:7). The essence of that statement is spelled out in WLC 63, and especially in WCF 25:3, which outline is followed here.

A. Duties of the church

ministry of God, administer the word and government

oracles of God, declare the word

ordinances of God, administer sacraments

B. Purpose of the church

gather the saints, evangelism

perfect the saints, Christiana nurture

continue to the end of the age, training next generation

C. Effect of the church

God is present by his Spirit

church has God’s promise of support

the visible church is God’s normal means in his spiritual work among his people.

Eph. 4:11-13, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

CHAPTER 14 THE MEANS OF GRACE AND THE SACRAMENTS

I. The means of grace

The means of grace are the outward methods by which we receive saving grace; cf. WCF 153, WSC 85. They are related to the means of sanctification. The means of grace which are specifically related to the church are the word of God, prayer, and the sacraments.

- A. The Word – the visible church is given the primary responsibility of proclaiming and teaching the word of God (Mt. 28:19-20). The word is a definite means of grace (WCF 1, WLC 155-160, WSC 89-90).
- B. The Sacraments – the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are also means of grace (WCF 27, WLC 161-164, WSC 91-93). They will be discussed in this section.
- C. Prayer – prayer is a means of grace (exposition of the Lord’s Prayer in WLC 186-196, WSC 99-107). Genuine prayer is one of the first signs of regeneration. Prayer benefits the Christian in two ways:
 - a) objectively, as God answers his specific prayers
 - b) subjectively, as the Christian in prayer draws near to God and submits to his will.

II. Meaning of the term sacrament

A. Derivation

The English word sacrament comes from the Latin sacramentum, which in turn is the term the Latin fathers used to translate the Greek word musterion. They applied this term to baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

B. Basic meaning of sacrament

The Latin term refers to that which is given or done as the result of an oath or pledge. Often it refers to the oath itself; cf. Pliny’s letter to Trajan (Bettenson, p. 5), “They bind themselves by an oath [sacramentum].” This idea of a binding vow or oath fits well with the idea recently proposed by Meredith G. Kline, which relates the sacraments to ancient treaty obligations and ordeals (*By Oath Consigned*, p. 81).

C. Meaning of sacrament in Christian theology

According to our standards, sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace; they must be instituted by God; and they must be symbolic of the benefits of redemption, which are thereby represented, sealed, and applied (WSC only) to the elect.

Cf. WCF 27:1, WLC 162, WSC 92

III. Identity of the sacraments

- A. Sacraments of the OT
Cf. WCF 7:5; 27:5

These sacraments include circumcision, the offerings, the religious feasts. Two of these sacraments had the same significance as their NT counterparts: circumcision (Col. 2:11-12) and Passover (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

B. Sacraments of the NT

The only sacraments during this period are baptism and the Lord's Supper; WCF 27:4, WLC 164, WLC 93. The similarities and differences between these two sacraments are enumerated in WLC 176-177.

C. Roman Catholic sacraments

The seven Roman Catholic sacraments seem to have been standardized by Peter Lombard in the twelfth century. He held that these seven sacraments were not only "visible signs of invisible grace," but also "the cause of the grace it signifies."

The seven Roman Catholic sacraments are as follows:

- 1) baptism
- 2) confirmation
- 3) eucharist
- 4) penance
- 5) matrimony
- 6) holy orders
- 7) anointing the sick (extreme unction)

John Calvin noted that if marriage was a sacrament because it pictured Christ and the church, then thievery should be a sacrament, since Jesus will come as a thief! (*Institutes* 4:19:34, use of 1 Thess. 5:2).

IV. Efficacy of the sacraments

A. Roman Catholic view

1. The visible signs, administered rightly, actually convey the grace signified: ex opere operato – it operates by the action.
2. Thus, baptism actually cleanses from original sin; penance actually forgives sin; eucharist actually gives spiritual life, etc.
3. No particular faith is required by the recipient; he need only submit to the form prescribed by the church.
4. The sacraments have effect only if administered, with proper intent, by an ordained priest of the Roman Catholic church.

B. Lutheran view

1. Faith is required in adults; there is no ex opere operato. In the case of infants, the Holy Spirit kindles faith. Grace is given to all recipients, but faith is required to profit from that grace (cf. the woman who touched Jesus' garment, Mt. 9:20).
2. The power of the sacraments comes through the word which accompanies the sign; the word always is joined with the Holy spirit.
3. Baptism is required for infant salvation.

C. Reformed (Calvinistic) view

Cf. WCF 27:2-3, WLC 161, WSC 91.

1. There is no intrinsic power in the elements or the accompanying word.
2. The intent of the administrator is not decisive.
3. The sacraments have two parts: the visible sign, and the spiritual efficacy or grace. The spiritual efficacy of the sacrament depends on the sovereign pleasure of the Holy Spirit, who normally operates through the faith of the recipient.

4. The type of grace conveyed is the same as that conveyed by other means.
5. The accompanying graces often are conveyed at the time of the sacrament, but they need not be so.

D. Zwinglian view

1. The sacraments are symbolic only, with no grace sealed at the time.
2. The word “ordinance” therefore is preferred.
3. Answer to Zwinglian view:

Cf. WCF 27:2, WLC 163

The Scriptures tie the sacraments and their spiritual benefits very closely together. E.g.,

Gen. 17:10; the covenant = circumcision

“This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.”

Mt. 26:27-28, the cup = Christ’s blood

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

Acts 22:16, baptized = cleansed

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

Titus 3:5, “washing of (=) regeneration”

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

CHAPTER 15 HISTORY OF BAPTISM THROUGH NT TIMES

I. Derivation of baptism

The English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptisma*, and therefore is found only in the NT and in translations of the LXX. Is not found in our English OT. The parallel Hebrews words will be studied under the section on the mode of baptism. The NT and LXX words related to baptism are as follows:

baptizo, “baptize,” the cultic term (NT 80x; LXX 4X)

bapto, “dip, dye” (NT 3x; LXX 18x; cf. LXX words *bamma* and *baptos*, meaning dyed)

baptisma, “baptism (NT 22x; not in LXX)

baptismos, “baptism, washing” (NT 14x; not in LXX)

Baptistes, John the “Baptist, Baptizer” (NT 14x; not in LXX)

II. Institution of baptism

To be called a sacrament, an ordinance must be instituted directly by God.

Jesus instructed his disciples to baptize during his earthly ministry, but that baptism was similar to John’s baptism.

Distinctive Christian baptism was instituted by Christ after his resurrection, before his ascension:

- 1) This institution is implied by the longer ending of Mark, when Jesus was at table with his disciples, Mk. 16:14-16.
- 2) The primary institution of Christian baptism was with the eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee, Mt. 28:19. Some suggest that there were over 500 present on that occasion; cf. 1 Cor. 15:6
- 3) The institution of baptism perhaps is alluded to just prior to the ascension near Bethany, Lk. 24:50; Acts 1:5, 12.

III. Baptism before the NT

We will now survey the various forms of baptism, leading up to and including Christian baptism. While baptism itself was not commanded in the OT, one of the underlying themes of baptism – ritual washing or cleansing – occurs frequently in the OT. Three times the NT uses Greek words used for baptism, and links them to some practice derived from the Mosaic code.

A. Hebrews 9:10, “Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

The term “divers washings” is *diaphorais baptismois*, using the masculine noun *baptismos*. The best texts omit the word “and” after “washings” (UBS [B] rating), thus equating these washings with “carnal ordinances.”

These washings are identified in Heb. 9:13-14 as “the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean.” They are contrasted with the blood of Christ, which will “cleanse our consciences.” The Greek words for “sprinkle” and “cleanse” are *rantizo* and *katharizo*. Peter links

these two concepts in 1 Pet. 1:2, “by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.”

The two OT passages the author of Hebrews refers to are these:

Lev. 16, Day of Atonement

Num. 19, the red heifer

- B. Mark 7:4, “And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.”

This passage refers to the Pharisaical interpretations of Leviticus 15, which mentions ceremonial defilement of people, utensils, beds, and clothes. People, utensils, and clothes are to be washed.

There is a textual variant in Mark 7:4, with some texts including *klinon*, “of beds.” But this word is missing in p⁴⁵, Aleph, and B; it is included in the UBS text in brackets with a [C] rating.

Greek words relating to baptism occur twice in Mark 7:4:

“except they wash.” *ean me baptisontai* (aorist middle subjunctive of *baptizo*; literally, “unless they baptize themselves”).

“the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables,” *baptismous poterion*, etc. (literally, “baptism of cups, pitchers and kettles”).

This ceremonial “baptism” of the Pharisees is described in verses 2-3. Before eating, especially after possible contact with unclean people, the Pharisees would wash (*nipto*) their hands “with the fist” (*pugme*). This ceremony was performed by pouring water over cupped hands, supposedly washing away defilement. The precise mode of this ceremony is somewhat obscure, but it is clear that only the hands and possibly the forearms actually contacted the water.

- C. Luke 11:38, “And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed before dinner.”

Here the aorist passive form of the verb *baptizo* is used: *hoti ou proton ebaptisthe* (literally, “that he was not first baptized”).

Comparing the similar passage Mt 15:2 = Mk. 7:5, it appears that the same ceremonial washing of the hands is referred to by the expression “baptize oneself,” or the passive “be baptized.”

IV. Jewish proselyte baptism

The baptism of proselytes to Judaism is not required in the OT, but developed during the intertestament period. This practice is not specifically attested before AD 70, but it is generally conceded to have begun by the time of Hillel and Shammai.

The OT term *ger* was changed in meaning from “sojourner” to “convert,” and the Jews became very anxious to make converts to their particular understanding of ritual purity (Mt. 23:15).

The Talmud specifies the requirements for proselytes: (1) circumcision, (2) baptism, and (3) offering a sacrifice. The baptism ceremony was required for both men and women. The proselyte was to be completely washed in a water-bath, the size of which was to be large enough for a complete immersion. Prior to the ceremony, the proselyte must cut his hair and nails; and he must be completely naked during the baptism. The proselyte baptized himself, with the elders watching; in the case of women converts, the elders would wait on the other side of a curtain. It is assumed by most scholars that the mode of proselyte baptism was immersion, although this is not specifically stated in the records.

V. Ritual washings at Qumran

The community at Khirbet Qumran, on the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, apparently consisted of an Essenic sect, which lived there from 100 BC until AD 67. There three sources of evidence concerning the ritual washings of this group:

A. Archaeology of Qumran

At the NW corner of the ruins a stream flows through a cistern, which has stairs and a drain hole in the wall. The cistern is large enough for immersion, but scholars question the use of the cistern; Menahem Mansoor suggests that the stairs simply enabled the people to reach the level of the water in the dry season. Similar cisterns, apparently used for ritual washings, and conforming to Talmudic standards, have been discovered at Masada.

B. Zadokite document (or Damascus document)

A large number of manuscripts were discovered in a geniza of an old synagogue in Cairo. These MSS are dated 6th to 8th centuries AD. Among them is the Zadokite document, also called the Damascus document. More recently, fragments of this document have been discovered at Qumran in the various caves.

“Concerning purification with water: Let not a man wash in water that is filthy or not enough for covering a man. Let him not purify in it any vessel. And any pool in a rock in which there is not enough covering, which an unclean person has touched, its water is unclean like the water of a vessel” (translation of Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 359).

This document gives these rules for cleansing with water:

- 1) water must not be in a vessel
- 2) water must not be dirty or touched by someone unclean
- 3) water must be enough to cover a man

C. Manual of Discipline (Rule of the Community)

This document was found in the Dead Sea caves. The appropriate section is translated by Burrows as follows (DSS. P. 373):

“Everyone who refuses to enter God’s covenant.... He will not be purified by atonement offerings, and he will not be made clean with the water for impurity; he will not sanctify himself with seas and rivers or be made clean with any water for washing. Unclean, unclean he will be all the days that he rejects the ordinances of God, not being instructed in the community of his counsel.

“But in a spirit of true counsel...and in the submission of his soul to all the statutes of God his flesh will be cleansed, that he may be sprinkled with water for impurity and sanctify himself with water of cleanness.”

The Manual of Discipline states that no amount of water can cleanse someone outside their covenant; but that for one in the covenant, he can have his flesh cleansed by sprinkling of water for impurity, water of cleanness.

Apparently those at Qumran shared the concept of Jewish proselyte baptism: that ritual purity was essential, but separate from moral purity or spiritual rebirth.

Josephus shared this view in his evaluation of John the Baptist (*Antiquities* 18:5:2).

D. John’s baptism

John was described before he was born as one who would turn many in Israel from their sins and would, in the power of Elijah, prepare people for the Lord (Luke

1:16-17). John was to be a prophet, who would prepare the way for the Messiah, and would declare the people's forgiveness (Lk. 1:76-79).

Some scholars have suggested that John's baptism was learned at Qumran (cf. Lk. 1:80); but the differences between John and the sect at Qumran appear too great (F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, pp. 153-54; Millar Burrows, *DSS*, pp. 328-29, *More Light on the DSS*, pp. 56-63, esp. 59-60).

We would prefer to place the origin of John's baptism in divine revelation. He was instructed by God, in the tradition of the OT prophets.

An outline of John's career

(1) baptizes in the Jordan valley (in peraea, Mt. 3:1-2, Mk. 1:2-8; Lk. 3:1-15; Jn. 1:19-28)

- mentions judgment was near (Mt. 3:10)
- mentions that he baptized with water, to repentance and forgiveness (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:4)
- contrasts himself with Christ, who would baptize with the Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11)
- great numbers baptized (Mk. 1:5; cf. Acts 19:1-5)

(2) baptizes Jesus in Jordan (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:29-34)

- Jesus baptized "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15)
- God testifies to Jesus' messiahship

(3) John moves and baptizes near Samaria, at Aenon near Salim (Jn. 3:23-36)

- for location, see F.F. Bruce, NTH, p. 159, this biblical statement agrees with archaeological evidence, W.F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 247
- "much water" = hudata polla, "many waters" in Jn. 3:23. This is the expression for many wells or fountains. Water was necessary for the large crowds and their animals; cf. G. Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways*, p. 89.
- Jn. 3:25, baptism raised a discussion concerning purifying (*katharismos*), suggesting OT rituals.

(4) Probably after brief stay in Samaria, John returns to Peraea, to baptize in the Jordan

(5) John is arrested in Peraea, and held in the Peraean fortress of Machaerus (Mt. 14:3-4, Mk. 6:17-18; Lk. 3:19-20)

- while there, John witnesses to Herod Antipas (Mk. 6:20)

(6) because of John's arrest, and perhaps strife between their disciples (Jn. 3:26; 4:1-2), Jesus moves north through Samaria (Jn. 4) and into Galilee for his Galilean ministry (closer to Herod Antipas, Mt. 4:12; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 4:14, Jn. 4:1-3).

(7) from prison John sends disciples to Jesus to confirm that he was the Coming One (Mt. 11:2-6; Lk. 7:18-23)

(8) John is beheaded by Herod (Mt. 14:3-12; Mk. 6:17-29; Lk. 3:19-20)
- later Herod thinks John raised (Mt. 14:2; Mk. 6:16; cf. Lk. 9:9)

(9) John as Elijah

- Following Malachi 4, the Jews expected Elijah to return before the kingdom would be established. While John himself denied that he was the actual Elijah (Jn. 1:19-21). Jesus said that John filled that role, but because the nation rejected John and Jesus, Elijah would still come again (Mt. 11:14; Mt. 17:10-13, Mk. 9:11-13).

E. Baptism of Jesus and his disciples

Jesus himself did not baptize, but his disciples did (John 4:2). Jesus baptized in Judea, while John was baptizing near Samaria (Jn. 3:22). There was a great response (Jn. 3:26; 4:1). There is no further mention of Jesus' baptizing after John was arrested. Apparently Jesus' baptism was identical to John's, and consequently was withdrawn when the nation rejected John (cf. Acts 19:3-5; cf. Tertullian *On Baptism*, ch. 11 {ANF 3:674}).

F. Christian baptism

- instituted by the risen Christ (Mt. 28:19)
- carried on by the apostles and early disciples:
 - ◆ apostles and disciples (Acts 2:38, 41)
 - ◆ Philip (Acts 8:12-13, 36, 38; v. 37 not in Greek)
 - ◆ Ananias (Acts 9:18; 22:16)
 - ◆ Peter and perhaps other disciples (Acts 10:47-48)
 - ◆ Paul (Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; I Cor. 1:14-16)
- general practice of the church:
 - ◆ all the above verses
 - ◆ cf. other verses, e.g., I Cor 1:13, "were you baptized...?" (assumes they were baptized).
 - ◆ I Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?

CHAPTER 16 SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

This question is perhaps the important in the whole subject of baptism; its answer will affect one's view of both the mode and the subjects of baptism.

I. Traditional Reformed understanding

WCF 28:1. WLC 165. WSC 94

Here is the list of the various significances of baptism mentioned in WLC 165:

- 1) Ingrafting into Christ
- 2) Forgiveness of sins by his blood
- 3) Regeneration by the Holy Spirit
- 4) Adoption as God's children
- 5) Resurrection to everlasting life
- 6) Admission to the visible church
- 7) Engagement to be the Lord's

The Westminster standards link baptism to the covenant of grace, and combine many of the individual significances found in Scripture. All these significances are positive or beneficial. These significances are grouped and studied below in the following sections.

II. Ingrafting into Christ

This point, union with Christ, is taken by John Murray as the central meaning of baptism (*Christian Baptism*, p. 6).

The Scriptures mention this aspect of baptism often, especially in connection with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Rom. 6:3-6, *eis*: into, union with Christ; or unto, identification with Christ.

1 Cor. 12:12-13, *eis*, into Christ's body.

Gal. 3:27-28, *eis*, into Christ

Col. 2:11-12, *dat. Auto*, with him

Some would maintain that all these passages refer to spiritual baptism, not to water baptism. Yet even in that case, it seems that the significance of spiritual baptism should be maintained in water baptism.

III. Forgiveness of sins and regeneration

These passages link baptism to purification and cleansing.

A. Significance of John's baptism

Mt. 3:6 (=Mk. 1:4 = Lk. 3:3)

Jn. 3:25

B. Verses which speak of forgiveness as a washing

1 Cor. 6:11

Titus 3:5

C. NT passages concerning Christian baptism

Acts 2:38

Acts 22:16

Col. 2:12-13

Heb. 10:22

1 Pet. 3:21

IV. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

A. The same term, *baptizo*, is used for both events

B. The two are linked in Jn. 1:33 = Acts 1:5 = Acts 11:16, which passages compare John's baptism with water to Christ's baptism with the Holy Spirit.

C. Some passages can be interpreted to refer to either water or Spirit baptism

Examples:

1 Cor. 12:13

Gal. 3:27

D. The baptism of the Holy Spirit may refer to regeneration, which would imply that all believers in all dispensations have received it (cf. Rom. 8:9).

E. On the other hand, it may refer to a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit in preparation for the kingdom; cf. Acts 2:17 (referring to Joel 2:28-31). In this latter sense this sign confirmed the message of the apostles (as in 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4).

V. Initiation into the visible church

Baptism was linked by Christ to discipleship, Mt. 28:19.

Baptism was a prerequisite for church membership; e. g., Acts 2:41.

VI. Parallel significance of baptism and circumcision

A. The church in the NT continued to have an initiatory rite, baptism instead of circumcision.

B. The NT links the significance of circumcision with that of baptism.

Col. 2:11-13

cf. heart circumcision in Rom. 2:28-29

C. OT circumcision shares the same meaning with NT baptism – union with God and his people, cleansing from sin, regeneration, and the covenant of grace in general.

Gen. 17:10, = covenant

Gen. 34:14-17, union with God's people (intermarriage)

Ex. 12:44, 48, required to eat Passover

Dt. 10:16, regeneration, love for God (cf. vv. 12-13)

Dt. 30:6, regeneration, love for God

Josh. 5:7-9, cleansing from defilement

Jer. 4:4, regeneration, cleansing heart = washing heart in v. 14.

Jer. 9:25-26, uncircumcised in heart; to know and love God in heart, cf. v. 24

D. Since baptism is practiced in the NT dispensation, circumcision no longer is necessary.

Circumcision "perpetual" in Gen. 17:13.

Circumcision now optional 1 Cor. 7:18-20.

Circumcision ruled out as a spiritual work in case of Gentile Titus, Gal. 2:3-5.

VII. Baptism's underlying significance

VIII. Theologians have always wrestled with the biblical data trying to find a single unifying significance that would encompass all the above points.

- A. Recent discoveries of ancient Near Eastern treaties have provided the basis for a possible solution.
1. Ancient suzerain-vassal covenants often were accompanied by an oath and a covenant ritual, especially on the part of the vassal.
 2. The covenant ritual usually involved the slaying of animals, with imprecations on the one who should break the treaty obligations,
 3. Perhaps the expression "to cut a covenant" originated with this idea.
 4. The OT gives two clear examples of this practice:
Gen. 15:9-21, God's covenant with Abraham
Jer. 34:18, 19, Jerusalem's covenant with her slaves.
 5. The ritual often pictured the sanctions of the covenant, usually the curse for disobedience, perhaps the blessing for obedience.
 6. Vassals who assumed the covenant also assumed it for their subjects, who were thus bound to the suzerain's terms.
- C. The Abrahamic covenant, as well as the Mosaic covenant, demanded loyalty to Jehovah's ordinances.
Gen. 18:19
Gen. 26:5
- D. With this background, it is more apparent that the sign of circumcision was the covenant ritual, graphically picturing the sanctions of the Abrahamic covenant.
- Sanctions for obedience
Regeneration
Cleansing from sin
(perhaps) Deliverance through the promised seed, through Abraham's natural progeny.
- Sanctions for disobedience
Especially, the cutting off of the people from God (cf. the negative connotation in Ex. 4:24-26)
- Jesus Christ fulfilled the sanctions pictured in circumcision: he received the sanctions for disobedience, and he conveys to us the sanctions for obedience. (Cf. Kline's interpretation of Col. 2:11, "the cu]rcumcision of Christ," taken as an objective genitive, referring to his Passion; while this interpretation is possible, it seems that the subjective genitive is better referring to the circumcision of the heart which Jesus performs on us through the Holy Spirit).
- E. Likewise, the new covenant of Jer. 31, Ez. 36, and Heb. 8 demands obedience for blessing – the life of faith.
- F. The NT sign of baptism also signifies the sanctions of the covenant of grace, as spelled out in the Abrahamic and new covenants.
- Sanctions for obedience
cleansing from sin
baptism of the Holy Spirit

Sanctions for disobedience

death, cf. Mk. 10:38-39; Rom 6

divine judgment

Again, Jesus fulfilled the sanctions pictured in baptism. By assuming the covenant curses, he secured its blessings for those united to him.

- G. This understanding of the significance of baptism harmonizes all the various Scriptural passages into one concept which in turn corresponds to ancient practice.
- H. If this correspondence is correct, the underlying significance of baptism is that we place ourselves and those under us (children, in the NT) under the obligations of the new covenant. God has commanded that all people do this. Baptism would therefore symbolize our obligation to accept the blessings available through faith and obedience, and the curses resulting from disobedience and rebellion.

VIII. Efficacy of baptism

- A. This doctrine is related to the view of the efficacy of the sacraments in general.
 - Roman Catholic view – forgives original sin; saves.
 - Lutheran view – similar to RC; recognizes faith
 - Zwinglian view – symbolic only; no grace conferred.
- B. Reformed view of the efficacy of baptism
 - WCF 28:5-6. Here the Confession states that, while it is a sin to neglect baptism, yet baptism is not required for salvation, nor does it guarantee salvation.
 - Paragraph 6, reflecting the older Reformed view, states that, when rightly administered, baptism offers, exhibits, and confers spiritual grace, on these conditions:
 - 1) The person baptized is elect.
 - 2) The time of blessing is not tied to the time of baptism (though possible).
 - 3) Methods to obtain blessings are employed (cf. WLC, which speaks of “improving” our baptism).
 - With these conditions, the Westminster standards reject the idea of automatic baptismal regeneration.
- C. Reformed view in the light of ancient covenant rituals
 - 1. Baptism confers no promise or blessing other than that received through faith (this point would be true at least in the case of adults).
 - 2. Baptism places one in God’s covenant community and obligates one to keep God’s new covenant.
 - 3. For the elect, baptism seals the blessings of the covenant; for the nonelect, it seals the curses of the covenant.

CHAPTER 17 SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

WCF 28:4, 7, WLC 166, WSC 95

I. Historical survey of infant baptism

Nearly all Christian denominations practice infant baptism, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and most Protestant denominations. In recent church history, the first churches to practice only adult baptism were the Anabaptist churches in the 16th century. We know of no large segment of the church prior to the 16th century that practiced only adult baptism.

Most of the controversy centers around the practice of the apostolic church. The earliest church fathers, while mentioning and describing baptism, give no specific information of infant baptisms, nor do they deny their practice. This is the reason that the practice of the early church must be found in the biblical evidence.

II. Early church fathers

A. The earliest specific references concerning infant baptism come from Tertullian (ca. AD 200), *On Baptism*, ch. 18 (ANF 3:677-78).

“But they whose office it is to baptize, know that baptism is not rashly to be administered...And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary – if baptism itself is not so indispensably necessary – that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger...? The Lord does indeed say, ‘Forbid them not to come unto me.’ Let them ‘come,’ then, while they are growing up; ... let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the ‘remission of sins’? More caution will be exercised in worldly matters, so that one who is not trusted with earthly substance is trusted with divine! ... For no less cause must the unwedded also be deferred – in whom the ground of temptation is prepared...If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay; sound faith is secure of salvation.”

While Tertullian himself taught that baptism should be deferred (as well as marriage), he recognized the practice of infant baptism as customary in his time. We should note that other Christian writers, such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus, who lived at the same time as Tertullian, did not list infant baptism among the various “heresies” they sought to combat.

B. Many of the inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome, dating from the same time (beginning of the 3rd century) indicate that small children were “believers,” etc.
a one year old “servant of God”
several twelve year olds “believers from their birth”

These inscriptions are consistent with infant baptism and the belief that baptism

cleansed from sin.

C. Cyprian

In his letter to bishop Fidus (Letter # 58, parag. 2, 6; ANF 5:353-54; ca. Ad 250), Cyprian answers the bishop's question concerning the proper time of baptism: should the child be baptized at eight days of age, or immediately after birth?

“But in respect of the case of infants, which you say ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the law of ancient circumcision should be regarded, so that you think that one who is just born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day, we all thought very differently in our council...And therefore, dearest brother, this was our opinion in council, that by us no one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God, who is merciful and kind and loving to all. Which, since it is to be observed and maintained in respect of all, we think is to be even more observed in respect of infants and newly-born persons, who on this very account deserve more from our help and from the divine mercy, that immediately, on the very beginning of their birth, lamenting and weeping, they do nothing else but entreat.”

This quotation proves that the popular mind in the church accepted infant baptism without question – the only issue being the number of days to wait. It also shows the linkage of baptism to circumcision in the mind of the church in Cyprian's day.

D. Conclusion from the church fathers

The earliest reference in church history to show either infant baptism's practice or its prohibition come at least 150 years after Christ died. These quotations show the widespread use of infant baptism by the third century. Prior to the third century, either one of two things happened:

- 1) The church introduce infant baptism, against the practice of the apostolic church (there is no record of any such conflict), or
- 2) The church continued the apostolic practice of infant baptism.

This course believes that the second alternative is correct. But the ultimate evidence in this matter should come from Scripture itself.

III. Direct NT evidence concerning infant baptism

- A. The NT records eleven Christian baptisms. In no case is there a specific mention of infants being baptized, and in no case are they explicitly excluded when assumed to be present.
- B. No children present (2 cases)
 - Acts 8:38, Ethiopian eunuch
 - Acts 9(, 18; 22:16, baptism of Saul
- C. Children perhaps present (6 cases)
 - Acts 2:41, 3000 at Pentecost (men emphasized, vv. 5, 22, 29; women not mentioned; promise made to children, v. 39)
 - Acts 8:12-13, Philip in Samaria (men and women mentioned; children not specified).
 - Acts 10:47-48, Cornelius, kinsmen, friends (v. 24)
 - Acts 18:8, Crispus and all his house (believed)
 - Acts 19:5, twelve men of Ephesus (cf. v. 7)
 - 1 Cor. 1:14, Crispus ad Gaius
- D. “Household baptisms (3 cases)
 - Lydia and her household, Acts 16:15
 - Philippian jailer and his household (“he having believed”), Acts 16:33.

Household of Stephanus, 1 Cor. 1:16.

F. Conclusion from direct NT evidence

It seems from these cases that the apostles never went out of their way to avoid giving covenant sign to infants, while the significant number of household baptisms makes infant baptism quite feasible.

IV. Infant baptism and covenant theology

The strongest arguments for infant baptism stem from its significance, as the covenant initiatory rite. The traditional Reformed argument for infant baptism emphasizes the unity of the covenant of grace and of the visible church in the two dispensations of the OT and the NT:

The “church” is one.

The “seed of Abraham” is one (esp. Rom. 4, 9; Gal. 3).

The promises are the same.

Circumcision and baptism share the same significance.

Therefore, unless new revelation is given, baptism should continue to be administered to infants in the covenant. Reformed theology has also found in the terms of the Abrahamic covenant itself justification for including infants in the covenant community, as recipients of many covenant blessings, and as entitled to the covenant sign:

- 1) The Abrahamic covenant is a covenant of grace as well as of law, Rom. 4:13, 16.
- 2) This covenant is an everlasting covenant, Gen. 17:7; still in effect, Gal. 3:7, 16-18, 29.
- 3) This covenant is spiritual, as well as physical, the outworking of the covenant of grace, Gen. 12:2-3; 17:7, etc.; Gal 3.
- 4) This covenant is directed to parents and their children, Gen. 17:7-14; Acts 2:39; 3:25-26.
- 5) First circumcision, then baptism, were the signs and seals of this covenant.
- 6) While baptism was enlarged, to include females, there is no evidence or command that it was restricted, to exclude infants.
- 7) When considered in the covenant context, the “argument from silence” supports the view that infants continued to receive the covenant sign. The “burden of proof” lies with those who would deny baptism to the infants of believers.

V. Responsibility of Christian parents

A. Abraham’s responsibilities

God established the Abrahamic covenant to be between himself and Abraham and his posterity. The promise made to Abraham was that God would be the God of him and of his seed after him (Gen. 17:7). The sign and seal of this covenant was to be circumcision, administered to Abraham and to his male children and household members (Gen. 17:9-14). However, the covenant was not guaranteed to all his seed automatically (Rom. 9). Abraham and his seed were expected to live the life of faith, and to properly train their children (Gen. 18:19; 26:3-5).

B. Children blessed through parents in the OT

Throughout the OT dispensation, the promise was maintained that God would continue to bless children through the faith and obedience of their parents:

- 1) Example of Job, sacrificing for his children, Job 1:5
- 2) Abraham's blessings passed down through his natural children, Isaac (Gen. 26:2-4) and Jacob (Gen. 28:12-14).
- 3) Blessings of Davidic covenant, passed down to his natural children, many of whom were personally undeserving (e. g., 1 Kg. 11:12-13, 32; 15:4).
- 4) Second commandment: while the curse extends to the third and fourth generation, the promise and blessing may well extend to thousands of generations.
- 5) The Mosaic covenant specifically mentions the blessings which flow to the children of covenant-keepers, Dt. 4:37-38; 7:7-8.

C. Parental responsibility in the OT

This blessing on the children entailed the responsibility of parents to rear their children in the fear of the Lord. This rearing of children included the elements of applying the covenant sign, praying for them, being an example before them, and properly disciplining and training them.

- 1) Parents were commanded to apply the covenant sign to their children, Gen. 17:9-14; Ex. 4:24-26, etc.
- 2) Parents were to train their children and teach the covenant terms to them, Gen. 18:19; Dt. 5:29; 6:6-9, 20-25; Ps. 78:1-8.
- 3) Parents were to discipline their children properly, Prov. 13:24; 19:18 (cf. Eli); 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 29:15, 17.
- 4) Parents were to protect their children from unbelief and apostasy; cf. the radical actions required in Neh. 13:23-27.

D. Children under the Abrahamic covenant in the NT

The NT affirms the continuing relevance of the Abrahamic covenant to believers and their children. NT believers are, by their faith, tied directly into the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:6-9, 16-18, 26-29). The conditions and promises given to parents in this dispensations are the same as those given to Abraham; only now the covenant sign and seal is baptism. If this understanding of the significance of baptism is correct, then baptism should be administered to those within the covenant (the visible church), including the children. In the NT, the children of believers, even Gentile believers, are considered as in covenant relation to God:

- 1) Jesus blessed the infants (Luke, brephos) of his followers, saying that the kingdom was for them as well as for their parents, Mt. 19:13-15, and parallel.
- 2) Peter affirmed that the Jews in Jerusalem after Pentecost were included in the Abrahamic covenant by virtue of natural descent, which therefore placed them in favored position concerning the gospel offer of salvation, Acts 3:25-26.
- 3) Peter earlier said to virtually the same group, that the covenant promises would continue to their natural children, if they would repent and receive Christ, Acts 2:39.
- 4) Paul, speaking to the Gentile jailer in Philippi, said that if the jailer would believe in Christ, he would bring salvation to himself and to his household as well. Note the Greek of Acts 16:31, "Believe (sg.) on the Lord Jesus, and you (sg.) will be saved, you (sg.) and your house." This emphasis in the Greek exactly parallels the situation seen in the OT. It is assumed that the natural seed will be saved; but the responsibility still

lies with the parents to train their children, and with the children to accept the Lord for themselves.

- 5) Note that in #3 and # 4 above, the covenant sign of baptism was administered immediately after these words were given. We assume that baptism was also administered after # 2 as well (cf. Acts 4:4).
- 6) In 1 Cor. 7:14, where Paul is addressing Gentile Christians, he teaches that, by virtue of the faith of even one parent, children are automatically in a special relationship to God – “holy, set apart,” *hagios* – and are not “unclean” (*akathartos*), as are children outside the covenant people of God.

E. Parental responsibility in the NT

the NT, as well as the OT, places on the parents the responsibility of properly rearing their children, so that their children might personally share the blessing of the covenant. Parents are to place the covenant sign on their children; cf. household baptisms with the arguments in this section. Note that the Great Commission in MT. 28:19 in the Greek uses two participles in the instrumental use to explain how the disciples should “make disciples” of all nations: “baptizing them and teaching them.” In the total biblical context, the Great Commission emphasizes God’s covenant relation to families, and the church’s responsibility to her own children. In Eph. 6:4 (cf. Col. 3:21) Paul instructs parents to copy the OT pattern in children rearing, not oppressing them, but rearing them in the *paideia* (nurture, discipline, training) and *nouthesia* (admonition, instruction, warning) of the Lord. This pattern is amply expanded in Deuteronomy and Proverbs.

This kind of child-rearing continues to bear fruit in the NT dispensation. Cf. examples of Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15) and the children of the elect lady (2 Jn. 1, 4).

VI. Additional light from the treaties

Vassals were to insure their subjects’ loyalty to the suzerain. These obligations were imposed by the suzerain and were not left up to the choice of the vassal or his subjects. If circumcision and baptism are the signs of the covenant sanctions, following the pattern of the ancient treaties, they pledge their recipients to keep the covenant, but they do not necessarily guarantee the obedience of those recipients.

The doctrine of infant baptism is confirmed by this comparison in two ways:

- 1) The authority of parents over their children is analogous to that of vassals over their subjects under the authority of God as the suzerain.
- 2) With this understanding of baptism’s significance, Reformed theology does not have to prove that grace always accompanies baptism; it is sufficient to show that baptism places the child into the covenant people of God, the same relation sustained by circumcised Jewish children in the OT.

VII. Common objections against infant baptism

Here are the most common arguments which are used to oppose giving the covenant sign to children. Brief lines of thought are given to answer these objections. The detailed refutation is found in the whole positive line of argument presented in this chapter.

- A. The NT says “believe and be baptized.” How can an infant believe?
 This command was given to two groups of people: Gentiles, who were outside the covenant and were old enough to believe; and Jews who were alive during the transition from the OT dispensations to the NT dispensation (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:12; 10:47). They were commanded to be baptized to show their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. This same principle was observed in the OT. The first group was represented by the Jewish proselytes, who were circumcised as adults. The second group was represented by Abraham and his family, who received circumcision as adults even though they were believers already, because God at that time introduced a new dispensation. In both dispensations the children receive the covenant sign along with their parents.
- B. Paedobaptists disregard the distinction between the two dispensations.
 This argument cuts both ways. Opponents to infant baptism can be said to disregard the unity of the church under the covenant of grace. Actually, paedobaptists do recognize dispensational distinctions; but these distinctions must be explicit, or at least implicit, in scripture. There is no Scriptural evidence excluding the children of believers from the Abrahamic covenant.
- C. There is no Scriptural command to baptize infants.
 While this argument is the surface, it ignores the explicit command to circumcise children and the continuing implications of that command. One also should think about the wording of the Great Commission and its fulfillment in the several household baptism of the NT.
- D. Infant baptism developed in the Roman Catholic church.
 All historical evidence points to the universal practice of infant baptism in orthodox churches by the third century. Before that time the present historical evidence neither affirms nor denies its practice. Most Protestant church historians date the beginning of the Roman Catholic church with Pope Gregory I, ca. AD 600, long after. We should note also that the arguments for infant baptism come from the Scripture, not from church tradition.
- E. Infant baptism minimizes the importance of conversion and gives carnal security to unbelievers.
 This same argument could be used against circumcision in the OT; many Jews found carnal security in their circumcision; yet still God commanded that sign to be given. Actually, if the meaning of circumcision and baptism be understood, the person who has been circumcised or baptized would be all the more anxious to be truly converted, so that he would not be a covenant-breaker and receive the sanctions for rebellion, but would rather receive the sanctions for faith and obedience. He would also be drawn more readily to Christ, whose sufferings are portrayed in the covenant sign.
- F. If infants are to be admitted to baptism, why are they not admitted to the Lord’s Supper? In the OT, circumcised children participated in the Passover feast.
 This is perhaps the most cogent argument against infant baptism. First, it should be said that not all Reformed theologians would exclude small children from the Lord’s Supper. But assuming the traditional Reformed attitude that only those who are of age to examine themselves should participate (WLC 177), there can be a change from one dispensation to another. This change regarding the covenant meal is specified in 1 Cor. 11:28 (A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.).

On the same basis, the covenant sign is changed in the NT by specific commands: baptism replaces circumcision, and females receive the sign along with males. On the other hand, there is no indication that infants are no longer to receive the covenant sign.

CHAPTER 8 MODE OF BAPTISM

I. Reformed position

A. Statement of Westminster Confession 28:2-3

WCF 28.2 The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called thereunto.

WCF 28.3 Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person.

Concerning the method of baptism the Confession makes a number of statements:

necessity of water

performed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

performed by a lawfully ordained minister

dipping (immersion) not necessary

rightly administered by pouring (affusion) or sprinkling (aspersio)

B. Interpretations of the Standards regarding mode of baptism

1. Historic interpretation

This position was held by the majority of the Westminster Assembly (e.g., writings of John Lightfoot), and has been maintained traditionally by the Presbyterian churches. Immersion cannot be shown from Scripture; therefore, it is unnecessary, and (according to the exclusive principle of divine worship) should not be practiced in Reformed churches. Pouring and sprinkling can be shown from Scripture; therefore it should be practiced.

2. Inclusive interpretation

This viewpoint is of more recent origin, and is intended to permit immersion in Reformed churches. The goal with many is better interdenominational relations and broader membership. Immersion, while perhaps the ancient mode, is not necessary for valid baptism. Pouring or sprinkling are other proper modes of baptism. Mode is relatively unimportant and may be left up to the churches or even to the individuals baptized.

C. Terms used in evaluating mode

1. "Valid"

A "valid" mode means that baptism has taken place – the person is baptized.

Reformed position: as long as there are a minister, water, and the Trinitarian formula, baptism has taken place. All three modes produce a valid baptism.

Baptist position: only immersion is the valid mode. Other modes do not accomplish baptism. This belief requires separate denominations. Some groups are even more exclusive: Brethren churches insist on trine immersion; some groups, on baptism by their group.

2. "Proper"

A "proper" mode means that the mode is the method taught by Scripture and/or apostolic practice.

Reformed position: pouring and sprinkling are proper mode; immersion is an improper mode. Yet an improper mode does not negate the sacrament.

Cf. other improper modes: kneeling at communion, baptizing by immersing the head only, etc.

Baptist position: since immersion is the only valid mode, it must also be the only proper mode. There is no distinction between “valid” and “proper.”

D. Proof texts used by the Westminster Assembly

The Westminster Assembly taught that the modes of pouring and sprinkling were closely tied in the Scripture to water baptism. They included the following proof texts in this section:

Mk. 7:4, “And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brassen vessels, and of tables.”

Acts 1:5, “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Acts 16:33, “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

1 Cor. 10:2, “And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

Heb. 9:10, “Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”

Heb. 9:19-22, “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

II. Arguments from the terms employed

A. Use of *baptizo*

Many immersionists argue that the term “baptize” itself means immerse, and that therefore immersion is the only possible form of baptism. This argument needs to be studied by noting the actual usage of the word.

1. Method of study

Many claim that *baptizo* means immerse. This impression can be gained by a superficial study in various lexicons.

For example, Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, p. 131, begins the entry with “dip, immerse, mid. Dip oneself, wash (in non-Christian lit. also plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm, etc.)” However, as the entry continues, it discusses NT usage: “in our lit. only in ritual sense,” and it divides the word into three usages: “1. Of Jewish ritual washing...2. In special sense baptize...3. In figurative sense.”

So careful study of the lexicons does not reveal “immerse” as the simple meaning of the word.

It appears that *baptizo* in and of itself does not specify mode, but rather, effect. While baptism normally involves an outside element (but not always), it always produces a change or effect in the person or thing baptized. Perhaps the clearest example is the use of the term for “dye.”

While lexicons give helpful information, controversies must ultimately be settled by usage of terms. This is how lexicons themselves operate.

It is important also to remember that terms change their meanings over periods of time, as the English words “manufacture, prevent, let, cleave.”

2. *Baptizo* in classical Greek

In classical Greek the term often has the meaning of dipping or plunging (Liddell & Scott); but the emphasis is on the result of the action, not the action itself: cf. a ship is sunk, a man is drunk, garments are dyed, people “flood” Jerusalem.

But even in classical Greek, the mode employed is not always dipping or immersion. Wuest himself (*Studies*, p. 71) points out three examples from classical Greek where the mode is not immersion. Each case involves something being dyed with blood:

“In the Battle of the Frogs and Mice, it is said that a mouse thrust a frog with a reed, and the frog leaped over the water, (*baptizo*) dying it with his blood... Lucian dreams that he has seen a huge bird shot with a mighty arrow, and as it flies high in the air, it dyes (*baptizo*) the clouds with his blood. An ancient scholium to the Fifth Book of the Iliad makes a wounded soldier dye (*baptizo*) the earth with his blood.”

3. *Baptizo* in the LXX

This verb is found four times in the LXX; and it is apparent that these usages show that no single mode is suggested by the word.

(1) 2 Kings 5:14

Here the word translates the Hebrew *tabhal*, which normally is translated “dip.” But *tabhal* can mean moisten, by applying the subject to the element; it does not always imply a complete immersion; e.g.

Lev. 14:6, dip living bird in blood of dead bird

Lev. 14:16, dip finger in oil in hand

While an action of dipping is appropriate to this verb, total immersion is not implied. Actually, Elisha had simply commended Naaman to “wash” *rachats*, perhaps according to the regulation in Lev. 14:7-8.

Apparently, the LXX translators used *baptizo*, because they wished to emphasize the results of the washing, not the mode.

(2) Isaiah 21:4

“My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.” This passage in the Hebrew is simply “horror has made me afraid.”

This is a common usage in classical Greek, the figurative usage, emphasizing the effect of the fear. It bears no relation to mode.

(3) Judith 12:7

“And she would wash (baptize herself) in the camp at the fountain of water.”

The book of Judith is in the Jewish Apocrypha. It tells of Judith, a pious captive in the camp of General Holofernes, “chief captain of Nebuchdnezzar King of the Assyrians” (?), Judith 4:1. The camp contained 182,000 soldiers, and a fountain of water was in the middle of the camp. Each night Judith would wash herself at the fountain. Since this was written in the 3rd century BC, and Judith is pictured as a pious Jewess, this “baptism” must be a ritual washing,

required to cleanse from Gentile defilement; not immersion, in view of the circumstances.

(4) Ecclesiasticus 34:25

“The one being cleansed (baptized) from the dead and again touching it, what profit is there in his washing?”

Ecclesiasticus (Son of Sirach) was written in Hebrew ca. 190 BC, and translated into Greek before 132 BC.

This passage refers to the required ceremony for those who touch a corpse, which involves sprinkling and washing, Num. 19:11-19.

4. Baptizo in the NT

This verb is found 74 times in the NT, but there is no example of a specifically stated mode. In the context Mark 7:4 seems to favor aspersion, and Luke 11:38, affusion. In other cases, circumstances seem to rule out immersion.

5. *Baptismos*, *baptisma*, and *baptistes*

Baptismos is used three times in the NT. In Mark 7:4 and Heb. 7:4 and Heb. 9:10 it favors the mode of sprinkling; in Heb. 6:2, where it refers to Christian baptism, no mode is indicated in the context. The terms *baptisma* and *baptistes* are not used in the NT with sufficient context to indicate any particular mode.

6. *Bapto*

This verb is never used for ritual baptism; rather, it is a secular term. *Bapto* is linked closer to the idea of immersion than are the other related words:

(1) In classical Greek, it normally means “dip, plunge, dye.”

(2) In the LXX it is used 18 times, often translating the Hebrew *tabhal*, “dip.” But even here the immersion may not be complete (cf. Lev. 14:6, 16; Ruth 2:14). And in Daniel, it does not even mean dip at all, but rather “moisten” by the dew (Dan. 4:33; 5:21).

(3) In the NT it used four times:

Lk. 16:14, immerse, dip tip of finger.

Jn. 13:26 (twice), dip (not immerse) piece of bread.

Rev. 19:13, dye, not by immersion, but by splattering (cf.

Isa. 63:3, *nazah* in the Qal).

These usages show that *bapto*, while it is often is accomplished by immersion, is not a modal term as such, but, as the other related terms, emphasizes the results more than the method.

B. Use of prepositions

1. Claim of immersionists

It often is said that baptism by immersion is implied by the use of the Greek prepositions, normally translated into, down into, in, out of, or up out of the water. These prepositions, it is said, imply the act of immersion.

Examples:

Mt. 3:6 = Mk. 1:5, John was baptizing in (en) the Jordan.

Mt. 3:16 = Mk. 1:10, Jesus was baptized, and immediately went up (*anabaino*) out of (Mk. *ek*) or from (Mt. *apo*) the water.

Acts 8:38-39, Philip and the eunuch went down (*katabaino*) into (*eis*) the water,...then they came up (*anabaino*) out of (*ek*) the water.

2. Range of meaning for common prepositions

It is dangerous to base doctrines on precise definitions of Greek prepositions, because they cover broad areas of meaning. Their meaning in any particular place must be determined by the context. For an idea of the broad range which these words possess, note the lists in the back of Young's concordance, which shows the number of times each Greek word is translated by various English words in the KJV. Here are some examples:

<u>en</u>	in with (include. Instrumental use – e.g., Lk. 22:49; Rev. 13:10, “with the sword”) at by, etc.
<u>eis</u>	to into unto (e.g., Mt. 17:27, “go to the sea”; Jn. 11:38; 20:4-5, “come to the tomb”) toward
<u>ek</u>	out of from (often parallel to <i>apo</i> , as in Mt. 3:16 = Mk. 1:110) apart from away from (cf. Lk. 2:4, Joseph went up <u>ek</u> Galilee; Jn. 11:55, many went up <u>ek</u> the country to Jerusalem).

3. Interpretation of prepositions in baptism

In the examples cited, and in other similar examples, the prepositions indicate that the parties to the baptism went down to where the water was (river, stream, fountain), and the baptism took place. Then the parties went up the banks to normal ground level. The prepositions are not dealing with the actual baptism.

This order is evident especially in the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:38-39. Note also that the text emphasizes that they both went down and came up, but obviously Philip did not immerse himself.

Acts 8:38-39, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”

III. Arguments from the significance of baptism

A. Immersionist argument

This area presents probably the most forceful immersionist argument. Immersionists state that baptism should symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and along with that, the spiritual death, burial and resurrection of the believer.

Rom. 6:3-4, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Col. 2:12, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

Many proponents of each position believe that these passages are speaking of spiritual baptism, not water baptism. Yet immersionists say that water baptism should adopt this same symbolism.

B. Total symbolism of baptism

The Reformed standards recognize a number of strains of significance in baptism: union with Christ, regeneration and cleansing from sin, initiation into the visible church. Baptism should symbolize all of these elements, not just that of regeneration. In the Scriptures the modes of sprinkling and pouring are most often associated with these concepts. Further study has shown the centrality of the new covenant, and the place of baptism as the initiatory rite bringing one under its sanctions – the sanctions being pictured:

- (1) While regeneration is an important part of baptism’s significant, it is not the entire or even the basic meaning symbolized.
- (2) Sprinkling and pouring appear to be the Scriptural modes which are most often associated with the new covenant:
 - Jer. 31:31, 33, new covenant, write law in hearts.
 - Ez. 36:24-27, sprinkle, put Spirit in hearts.
 - Isa. 52:15, sprinkle many nations (nazah in Hiphil).
 - Heb 8, new covenant replaces Mosaic covenant.
 - Heb. 9:11-15; 10:19-22, “baptisms” of Mosaic covenant accomplished by sprinkling of blood of animals or of water; under new covenant, we are sprinkled by blood of Christ.
 - 1 Pet. 1:2, “bodies washed” parallel to “hearts sprinkled.”
 - Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17; promise of new covenant, pouring out of Holy Sprit; cf. Zech. 12:10 and WCF proof texts from Acts (sect. 1:4); linked there to water baptism.
- (3) Since sprinkling often was of blood, it also represented the sanctions of punishment under the new covenant (cf. Christ’s “baptism”); and this mode therefore symbolizes death and burial, as well as new life under the resurrection.

IV. Arguments from ancient practice

A. Immersionist argument

Many eminent theologians and scholars state that immersion was the mode practiced by the ancient church.

John Calvin, *Institutes* 4:15:19, “But whether the person being baptized should be wholly immersed, and whether thrice or once, whether he should only be sprinkled with poured water – these details are of no importance, but ought to be optional to churches according to the diversity of countries. Yet the word ‘baptize’ means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church.”

The French edition of Calvin is even stronger, “...Although the mere term Baptize means to immerse entirely, and it is certain that the custom of thus entirely immersing was anciently observed in the Church.”

Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, p. 508, “The baptistery was usually a small, separate building in the center of which was a round or

octagonal pool (fons or piscina), entered by a flight of steps, for the act of immersion.” (but note the exception on p. 541 and the logic on p. 499).

The argument continues: since baptism originally was by immersion, that mode should be retained.

B. Reformed response to this argument

1. Many Reformed theologians respond by saying that, even though immersion be granted as the ancient mode, the essence of baptism is not found in its mode, but in the use of water with the triune formula. Hence, mode is immaterial, and may be left to the discretion of the various churches. Cf. Calvin, in above quotation; Fr. “For the sign is represented in either (mode).

This principle is stated by A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, p. 614.

2. In addition, few scholars of any persuasion would insist that immersion was the only mode practiced and considered valid by the early church.
3. Further, many Reformed scholars doubt that the ancient church practiced immersion as the normal mode, or even, in the early centuries, at all.

C. Mode in the intertestament period

Information concerning mode must be found in archaeological remains, the Mishnah and Talmud, the *Zadokite Document*, and the *Manual of Discipline*. William Sanford LaSor argues convincingly for immersion in “Discovering What Jewish Miqvat’ot Can Tell Us about Christian Baptism,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13:1 (Jan.-Feb., 1987) 52-59. However, all the information taken together does not give an entirely clear picture of the actual mode or modes used.

Often considered as a complete washing
containers large enough for complete immersion
actual modes not specified as immersion
Manual of Discipline specifies sprinkling
these ceremonies not the same as Christian baptism.

D. Mode in the NT

In no case is immersion specified in the NT. In nearly all the cases of baptism in the NT, there is some circumstance in the historical situation or in the Scriptural context which would argue against the mode of immersion in those cases.

(1) John baptizing at the Jordan

The traditional site of John’s baptizing in the Jordan is unsuitable for immersion. Most of the year it is too muddy and shallow; when the water rises to an acceptable depth, it becomes a rushing torrent. The place in the Jordan where many Baptist groups perform immersions is just below the Sea of Galilee, far to the north of Judah.

(2) John baptizing at Aenon near Salim

There are no bodies of water near Aenon suitable for immersions; the “many waters” are wells, which were necessary for drinking. The question raised at that time was about “purifying,” suggesting the current and OT modes of sprinkling or pouring.

(3) Baptisms at Pentecost

The large numbers baptized (3000; cf. 5000 in Acts 4:4), apparently in the temple precincts; and the scarce water supplies in Jerusalem, with the desire to keep water used for ritual purposes free from contamination, all argue for a quick, simple ceremony, using little water.

(4) Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch

Cf. Acts 8:37-39. There are no large bodies of water in the Negev, and the traditional site has very little water. The “going down” and “coming up”

refer to both Philip and the Eunuch. Just before his baptism, the Eunuch was reading the Suffering Servant passage in Isa. 52:13-ch. 53, which begins with the prophecy of Jesus' "sprinkling" many nations.

(5) Baptism of Saul

The Greek of Acts 9:18, "and having stood up, he was baptized," indicates that he was baptized standing up, apparently in the same room.

(6) Baptism of the Philippian jailer and his family

Cf. Acts 16:33. Paul and Silas were both in bad physical condition; yet the jailer and his family were all baptized immediately, at night. Normally there were not large tubs in jails or houses. The situation calls for a simple, easily administered ceremony.

(7) Baptism of Cornelius and his family

Peter compared this baptism to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17. His demand "Can any forbid the water?" seems unlikely if he had an immersion in mind, but fits quite well if he expected water to be brought to them.

Conclusion – in these instances, baptism seems to have been a very simple and quick ritual, performed easily, often where little water was available. This approach to the mode of baptism argues in favor of sprinkling or pouring, and against immersion.

E. Mode in the early church fathers

We should note first that the mode used in the early church is not normative for us; e.g., all evidence indicates that people were baptized naked. Yet, any continuity between the apostles and the early church respecting mode is important to notice. There are two sources of information concerning mode in the early church – literature and archaeology.

1. There are several early sources which mention the idea of "going down" and "coming up" for baptism:

(1) *Shepherd Hermas*, Parable 9:16 (ca. AD 100-150; *ANF* 2:49b)

"We went down into the water...They go down into the water dead, and they come up alive...These went down dead and came up alive."

(2) *Epistle of Barnabas* 11 (ca. AD 70-130; *ANF* 1:114b)

"We go down into the water full of sin, and we come up from it bringing fruit in the heart."

(3) Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 66 (ca. AD 150; *ANF* 1:183b)

"Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated...They receive the washing with water...He who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed (calls on God)...he who is illuminated is washed."

2. The two earliest and most detailed statements are in the *Didache* and Tertullian.

(1) The *Didache*, ch. 7 (ca. AD 150; *ANF* 7:379b)

"But concerning baptism, thus you shall baptize. Having first recited all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. But if you have not living water, then baptize in other water; and if you are not able in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

This statement of the *Didache* can be taken in two ways:

- (a) Immerse if possible, otherwise pour.
 - (b) Baptize, if possible, in running water or in a receptacle; otherwise, the person baptized may stand on the floor. In either case, pouring would be used.
- (2) Tertullian, *On Baptism*, chs. 6-8 (ca. AD 200; *ANF* 3:672-73).
 “Not that in the water we obtain the holy Spirit; but in the water, under the angel, we are cleansed, and prepared for the Holy Spirit... Thus, too, does the angel, the witness of baptism, ‘make the paths straight’ for the Holy Spirit, who is about to come upon us, by the washing away of sins...
 “After this, when we have issued from the font, we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction... In our case, the unction runs carnally (i.e., on the body) but profits spiritually; in the same way as the act of baptism itself too is carnal, in that we are plunged in water, but the effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from sins.
 “In the next place the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction... Then, over our cleansed and blessed bodies willingly descends from the Father that holiest Spirit. Over the waters of baptism, recognizing as it were His primeval seat, He reposes... To our flesh, as it emerges from the font, after its old sins, flies the dove of the Holy Spirit.”
3. Cyprian’s letters (ca. AD 350) appear to favor varying modes:
 Letter 69:1 (*ANF* 5:376a), “it is required, then, that the water should first be cleansed and sanctified by the priest, that it may wash by its baptism the sins of the man who is baptized; because the Lord says by Ezekiel the prophet: ‘Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness.’”
 Letter 70:1 (p. 377), describes heretical baptism with the term dipping: “For I know not by what presumption some of our colleagues are let to think that they who have been dipped by heretics ought not to be baptized when they come to us.” On the other hand, Tertullian speaks of cults practicing sprinkling.
 Letter 75:12-17 (pp. 400-02), in a long discussion, argues for equal validity of baptism by “washing” or by “sprinkling,” especially in clinical cases, or even cases of temporary illness.
4. Conclusion from the church fathers
 While the early church father’s language often is ambiguous, it seems that they concur in the early practice as normally being done while standing in water. Statements about actual mode are not at all definite until the third century, where they appear mixed.
 The fathers must be interpreted in the light of more definitive data – i.e., that provided by archaeology. Cf. the remarks of Clement F. Rogers, *Baptism and Christian Archaeology*, p. 240; popular custom often is on a different level from the idealized statements of church leaders. Rogers gives this example: “So, were a stranger to examine our customs today, he would find frequent allusions in sermons to the symbolism of baptism which would seem to assume the practice of total immersion; on turning to the Prayer Book he would suppose it to be the custom, and affusion to be permitted occasionally, but an examination of the fonts in our churches

would prove submersion always impossible for adults and nearly for infants.”

F. Mode in ancient frescos and drawings

Most of these drawings come from the Roman catacombs, starting AD 100. Others come from cemeteries and baptisteries.

These frescos and drawings usually show the person standing in water, sometimes on dry ground, usually naked. Water is poured over the head; in one case, sprinkled by a branch (ca. AD 200). Frequently a dove is in the picture.

An interesting feature of these pictures is the water level; it follows a definite pattern:

first 3 centuries, water up to ankles

4th - 5th centuries, water up to knees

5th - 6th centuries, water up to waist

but often standing on ground, or up to knees

Jesus up to waist, but John on ground

6th - 7th centuries, in fonts water to chest

baptizer outside

sometimes smaller fonts

9th century, 3 examples of immersion, all of infants

It should be noted that it was possible to show submersions, if this had been desired.

On pp. 303-04, Rogers states his conclusions:

“We notice from these sixty examples, ranging from the first to the tenth century and coming from Rome, Gaul, Spain, Milan, Ravenna, Armenia, Syria, Egypt, Byzantium, Sicily, Ireland, and the Kingdom of Lombardy, and the court of Karl the Great, that the type is persistent...As far as there is any development in the actual mode of administration it is towards submersion, but the furthest step in that direction consists in representing the water as rising (in most cases miraculously) as high as the neck...We have seen then that all the evidence of archaeology goes to prove that the essential part of baptism was considered in the early Church to be pouring of water over the candidate’s head by the bishop, or guiding his head under a descending stream, followed by the laying on of hands.”

G. Mode and ancient baptisteries and fonts

1. Examples known to Rogers

Rogers lists and discusses 38 baptisteries dating from the 2nd to the 10th centuries.

Observations from Rogers’ findings:

- ◆ normally contain 2 or 3 steps down
- ◆ depth varies. From 8 - ¼ inches to 4 - ½ feet
- ◆ diameter varies, from 2 feet to 62 feet
- ◆ the biggest baptistery: the Lateran, 4th century AD; 62 feet long, oblong; 3 feet deep; but it has carvings on both sides showing baptism being administered by pouring
- ◆ all fonts, and many baptisteries would forbid any immersion (except perhaps of infants); some. Although the dimensions are sufficient, are so constructed to forbid immersions.

2. Examples discovered more recently

(1) Church of St. Babylas, at Kaoussie in Syria

- ◆ discovered in the 1930’2

- ◆ baptistery added to the church ca. AD 425
 “In the baptistery the baptismal basin was large enough to receive a candidate into water but not large enough to provide for his immersion, so the ceremony must have been carried out by affusion (Finegan, *LAP*, 540-41).

(2) House-church in Dura-Europos

- ◆ Dura-Europos is in the Syrian desert
- ◆ house-church built in AD 233
- ◆ discovered in 1930's
 “The greatest interest attaches to the small room known as the chapel. At its west end is a niche set against the wall with an arched roof resting on pillars. This contains a sunken receptacle which may have been a baptismal font. Like the baptistery in the later church at Kaoussie, this was too small to have permitted the practice of immersion, and if it was really a baptistery it must be assumed that the rite was performed by affusion.” (Finegan, *LAP*, 499)
 Finegan has some reservation about this conclusion, since, citing Tertullian and Latourette, he assumes the early church practiced immersion: “Since the more general custom among the early Christians was that of immersion, other explanations have been sought such as that this was the tomb of a martyr.” Note, however, that the archaeologist involved contradicts that possibility: “That the room was a baptistery rather than a martyrion was clear from the absence of any signs of bones or covering for the basin we found beneath the canopy” (Hopkins 91). We note also that, as we have seen, the total evidence from the early church does not justify the assumption that immersion was the normal mode in the ancient church.

3. Conclusion from evidence of archaeology

Early baptisteries and fonts agree with early drawings, and give evidence that the normal practice of the early church was pouring water over the head, often with the candidate standing in water, usually with the baptizer standing on dry ground. The tendency toward more water, and the immersion of infants, became marked in the ninth and tenth centuries AD. This conclusion concerning the mode of baptism in the early church agrees quite well with the second interpretation suggested for the *Didache*, and with all the other evidence from the early writers. Likewise, this conclusion provides good continuity with the available evidence from the NT itself regarding the mode of baptism.

CHAPTER 19 THE LORD'S SUPPER

I. Institution of the Lord's Supper

WCF 29:1

A. Biblical accounts

1. Earliest account, 1 Cor. 11:23-25

1 Cor. 11: 23-25, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."

2. Synoptic gospels, Mt. 26:26-28 = Mk. 14:22-24 = Lk. 22:19-20

3. Not in John's gospel.

B. Relation to Jewish Passover

It is generally recognized that Jesus celebrated the Passover and instituted the Lord's Supper at the same meal. There is some disagreement as interpreters try to harmonize John with the Synoptics concerning the details and exact date of the supper.

In any case, the relation of the two sacraments in Scripture is clear:

Mt. 26:17-20, "¶ Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve."

Lk. 22:15-16, "And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Cf. 1 Cor. 5:7-8, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

II. Terms for the Lord's Supper

no special name in the Synoptics

"breaking bread," Acts 2:42; 20:7

"the feast", 1 Cor. 5:8

"the bread and the cup," 1 Cor. 10:16

"communion," 1 Cor. 10:16-17

"the table of the Lord," 1 Cor. 10:21

“the Lord’s Supper,” 1 Cor. 11:20

“love-feast,” Jude 12

III. Significance and efficacy of the Lord’s Supper

A. Four positions

Roman Catholic – During the middle ages the Catholic church developed the idea of transubstantiation, which is that the essence of the bread and wine in the eucharist actually changes to become the body and blood of Christ, physically. However, the accidents, or appearance of the elements, remains the same. Therefore, the elements are actually God, and are to be worshipped. Eating and drinking the elements actually brings Christ into the person, bringing all the grace promised.

Lutheran – Martin Luther rejected the Catholic idea of transubstantiation, but he still believed that Christ was corporeally present in the elements. The term used to describe this view is consubstantiation. The essence of the bread and wine remains, but the corporeal body of Christ is present “in, with, and under” the elements, much as light is present in air. Thus, one “chews Christ with the teeth.” Much stock is placed in (1) Christ’s omnipresence, which is referred to his body as well as to his spirit, and (2) the word “is” in the words of institution. Lutherans believe that grace will come to the person who partakes in faith, through the elements and the accompanying word. The Reformed standards oppose consubstantiation (WCF 29:7, WLC 170). It is theologically difficult to base special significance for the Lord’s Supper on a supposed omnipresence of Christ’s body. Also, the word “is” often is metaphorical, meaning “represents, is similar to”; cf. “I am the door.”

Reformed – (WCF 29:1, 7, WLC 168, 170, WSC 96; and see thorough treatment by Calvin, *Institutes* 4:17). The Reformed view denies both doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation. Rather, the sacrament exhibits and conveys grace to the elect who exercise faith and obedience in receiving it. This grace is always subject to God’s sovereign will. This grace operates directly on the spirit, not through the other means of grace. In a true but spiritual sense, worthy partakers do feast on Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

Zwinglian – This approach to the Lord’s Supper makes it to be only a memorial ordinance. There is no promise of grace other than that which comes through obedience to any other command. The objective act is more important than the subjective experience.

B. Relation of the Lord’s Supper to the new covenant

This relation is clearly expressed in the words of institution:

Mt. 26:28 and Mk. 14:24, “my blood of the covenant”

Lk. 22:20 and 1 Cor. 22:25, “the new covenant in my blood”

The church now operates under the new covenant. The old (Mosaic) covenant is no longer operative; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:6, 13.

The transition to the new covenant appears to be not Pentecost (cf. Jn 7:39, and the Greek text of Jn. 14:17, [D] rating in UBS), but the institution of the Lord’s Supper during Passover. Christ is our Passover lamb (Jn. 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7).

An interesting suggestion is that, just as baptism is the initial covenant ritual, so the Lord’s Supper is a repeated renewal ritual. It is clear that the sanctions of the new

covenant are pictured: death for disobedience (the penalty paid by Christ), and life for faith and obedience.

III. Recipients of the Lord's Supper

A. Limitations of recipients

Just as with the Passover, the recipients of the Lord's Supper are limited to those who are part of the visible church. While church discipline was exercised in the OT church, the NT further emphasizes the necessity of an acceptable testimony in one's way of life in order to partake of the Lord's Supper:

1 Cor. 5:6-7, 13; 20:21; 11:27, 29; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; cf. WCF 29:8, WLC 173.

This requirement, especially the command to examine oneself (1 Cor. 11:28), has led most Reformed churches to limit recipients to the age of discretion, with the category of "communicant members." This requirement is not evident in the OT regarding the Passover.

The warnings against approaching the Lord's table unworthily should not be pressed so that those who do not have assurance of salvation are barred. If someone has a true desire to be in Christ, yet feels unworthy, he should be encouraged to come to the Lord's table.

Some churches practice "close communion," allowing only members of their own church or denomination to partake of the Lord's Supper. This practice is designed to prevent people from partaking unworthily, thus bringing judgment on themselves, and also to protect the testimony and communion of the church from being compromised. On the other hand, most Protestant churches practice "open communion," allowing all professing Christians present to participate. Only those judged too young or known to be unqualified are prevented from taking part. With reasonable safeguards this seems to be the best approach. It recognizes the spiritual unity of the visible church, and properly regards the communion as the Lord's table, not the church's table.

B. Preparation of recipients

In order to profit spiritually from the Lord's Supper, the people should be encouraged to prepare for the sacrament by self-examination, prayer, meditation, repentance, and revival. In this way, the Holy Spirit more abundantly blesses those who come in faith to the Lord's Supper.

V. Mode of administration

The pastor and the people should partake of both elements. Obviously, there should be no adoration of the elements; nor is it necessary to receive the elements in a kneeling position. The Lord's Supper was celebrated frequently in the Apostolic church; today many churches celebrate it quarterly, monthly, or weekly.

WCF 29:4 disapproves of private services, but this seems to refer to those who simply desired to avoid public services (as princes and nobles). It certainly does not rule out administering the Lord's Supper in small groups for those who are ill or are otherwise unable to attend public services.

The elements should be bread and wine. The bread may be leavened or unleavened. There is no NT requirement to keep the ceremonial law against unleavened bread at Passover.

The wine may be fermented, but need not be. American evangelical churches usually use unfermented grape juice to avoid giving any offense or cause of stumbling. As A. A. Hodge pointed out, these matters relating to the mode of administration do not comprise the essence of the sacrament.

CHAPTER 20 THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

I. Reformed position

WCF 32:1

The soul continues to live after the person dies.

Elect souls are perfected in righteousness, go to heaven, behold God.

Non-elect souls go to hell, are tormented.

There is no other place, such as Purgatory.

II. Biblical terms for the intermediate state

- A. she'ol, “pit, grave, death, underworld” (66x)
 - often parallel to maweth “death”
 - place of departed dead in many cases both of good and evil
 - may be related to the verb sha'al “to ask”
- B. hades, “Hades” (KJV “hell”) (11x)
 - NT word for place of departed dead
 - righteous or wicked
 - parallel to she'ol
- C. paradeisos, “Paradise” (3x)
 - Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7
 - taken from Heb. Pardes (3x in OT), from the Persian word for “garden”
 - always good, place of righteous dead
 - parallel to third heaven
 - 2 Cor. 12:2-4, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”
 - Tree of life there, Rev. 2:7 (letter to Ephesian church).
- D. “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk. 16:22)
 - Lazarus there, while rich man in “Hades”
- E. ouranos, “heaven” (284x)
 - often also used for “air, sky, space,” or as a Hebraistic metonymy for “God”
 - usually the abode of God and the angels, often used in plural form
 - sometimes used in church fathers as the place to which Christians go at death; cf. Rev. 6:9; cf. 4:1-2
 - in the NT viewed as the source of blessings; e.g., Mt 5:12; 6:20; 2 Cor. 5:1-2; Col. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:4.
- F. geena, “Gehenna, hell” (12x)
 - from Heb. Ge'hene; hinnom, valley of (the sons of) Hinnom”; in Aramaic, gehinnam
 - traditional site of hell and last judgment; “Hell” in the NT, the final place of torment for the wicked
 - used in Synoptics 11 times; once in James (3:6)
- G. “Lake of fire” (6x)

Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14 (twice), 15; 21:8
apparently the same as geena, since it also includes fire; cf. Mt. 5:22; 18:9; but see Lk. 16:24.

H. tartaroo, verb “hold in Tartarus” (2 Pet. 2:4)

2 Pet. 2:4, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

Tartarus in Greek mythology was considered the place lower than Hades, where divine punishment was meted out

cf. Dt. 32:22, “lowest she’ol (sheol tachthith) used in 2 Peter only for demons, not departed wicked.

III. Bliss of the saved in the intermediate state

A. Doctrinal statement

freed from sin

freed from misery

communion with Christ

waiting for the resurrection

B. Scriptural data

All the passages dealing with the subject show the state to be one of blessedness:

Lk. 16:22-25, Lazarus comforted

Lk. 23:43, thief in paradise

Php. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8, Paul looks forward

Heb. 12:23, spirits made perfect

C. Mode of existence

The righteous dead in heaven are described as “souls” (psuche, Rev. 6:9; but cf. 20:4) or “spirits” (pneuma, Heb. 12:23). Yet pronouns and nouns are used of them, suggesting personality. E.g., Lazarus, Christ, and pronouns “I, you.”

While the NT emphasizes joy during the intermediate state, both the OT and the NT teach that the state is incomplete, and even undesirable (except temporarily).

OT

Ps. 6:5, “For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?”

Ps. 88:5, “Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.”

Ps. 115:17, “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.”

Eccl. 3:19-21, “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

Eccl. 9:4-6, “For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”

Eccl. 12:7, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

Ps. 16:10, “you will not abandon me to the grave (she’ol)” (quoted in Acts 2:27; 13:34-35)

she’ol is used in Heb.; hades in Gk.

Parallelism shows “grave” to be the meaning, not the underworld or the place of departed spirits

same conclusion applies in Acts context

“my soul” = “me”

Mt. 12:40, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Refers to the body, not the spirit (cf. Lazarus in the grave, Jn. 11:34, 43)

Rom. 10:7, “Who will descend into the deep? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”

A NT paraphrase of Dt. 30:11-14, showing the word of God to be accessible

“deep” = “abyss” (abussos):

used for “sea” in LXX, Gen. 1:2; 7:11

usually the abode of evil spirits

here probably used for death itself, emphasizing that it is unreachable, combined with the idea of “sea” in Dt. 30.

Eph. 4:7-10, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”

context is Christ’s bestowing spiritual gifts to the church, vv. 7-8, 11
Paul quotes Ps. 68:18: God leads away captives, God takes spoil, cf. eschatological theme in vv. 29-31

Paul applies to Christ, showing he has gifts (spoils) to distribute
quote explained in vv. 9-10

in v. 9, Jesus descended to earth – “lower (parts) of the earth” is genitive of apposition; cf. Isa 44:23 (Christ came down to earth, Jn. 3:13; 6:38)

in v. 10, Jesus ascended to heaven with “captives and spoil”;
idiom may be figurative, including promises, privileges, angels (1 Pet. 3:22); or idiom may be more specific, including Satan and demons (phps. Meaning of Col. 2:15), or Christians (Heb. 2:15).

1 Tim. 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Ancient hymn

“seen by angels” appears to be after his resurrection

“vindicated by the Spirit” = Jesus’ resurrection; cf. Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 3:18

1 Pet. 3:18-20, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but

quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

“spirits now in prison” refers to Peter’s own time

Christ preached to them through the Holy Spirit in Noah; cf. 2 Pet. 2:5.

1 Pet. 4:6, “For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

In v. 5, Jesus will judge those who are living and those who have died

many of those now dead (no article) had the gospel preached to them (when they were alive – aor. Pas.) cf. 1:12

the gar makes Christ’s judgment in v. 5 more appropriate

Conclusion – These passages do not show any descent of Christ’s spirit into hell. Rather, Christ in his disembodied state was in glory in heaven – just as Christians awaiting his resurrection.

CHAPTER 21 MILLENNIAL SYSTEMS

I. Amillennial view defined

A. OT covenants

The promises made in the OT to Israel do not find their fulfillment in a future 1000-year millennium. They fall into one of the following categories:

- a) Conditional, thus not to be fulfilled
- b) Already literally fulfilled, at least partially; e.g., Josh 23:14; 2 Chro. 9:26; Neh. 9:8.
- c) Fulfilled spiritually during the present age of the church. Fulfilled either in the church itself (Jn. 3:3-6; K. 17:20-21), or in the intermediate state during this time (Rev. 20:4-6).
- d) To be fulfilled in the future, but in the eternal state, after the general resurrection, not in a future 1000-year millennium.

While amillennialists disagree among themselves in assigning the various promises to the various categories, they agree that none of them refers to a future literal kingdom on the earth prior to the resurrection of the unjust.

B. General resurrection

Amillennialism requires a single resurrection of both the just and the unjust, without any significant time delay between them. There are not two resurrections separated by a thousand years.

C. Definition of the millennium

The thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20 (Lat. "millennium") is already present; it will not be a separate, future time period. Thus the term "amillennial."

II. Arguments used for amillennialism

A. Spiritual vs. Physical

Spiritual realities are more important than physical realities, 2 Cor. 4:18. Compare the spiritual nature of the promised kingdom, Lk. 17:20-21; Jn. 18:36-37.

B. NT interpretation of OT

The NT interprets several OT "physical" prophecies in a spiritual sense and applies them to the church age. These are the primary examples:

Luke 4:17-19 – Jesus quoting Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus quotes this messianic section, with its prophecies of glory, and says that this prophecy is fulfilled in his first coming, v. 21.

Acts 2:16-21 – Peter quoting Joel 2:28-31. Peter quotes a prophetic section dealing with the last days and applies it to the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Acts 15:15-18 – James the brother of Jesus quoting Amos 9:11-12. James quotes a prophecy about the restoration of the Davidic monarchy and applies it to church problems of his day, even changing the wording of the Hebrew (in line with the LXX) to make it more "spiritual."

Romans 9:25-26 – Paul quoting Hosea 1:10 and 2:23. Paul uses passages concerning the restoration of Israel to describe the conversion of the Gentiles in the church.

Hebrews 8:8-12 – The author of Hebrews quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. The author of Hebrews applies the eschatological promises of the new covenant to the church age and says that the new covenant has already replaced the old covenant.

C. The church as spiritual Israel

OT promises to Israel are in the NT applied to the church, which is spiritual Israel. See Rom. 9:6; 11:26 (cf. Gal. 3:7-29); Gal 6:16.

D. A general resurrection

Scripture teaches a general resurrection, not two resurrections as the premillennialists believe. Especially note Dan. 12:2; Mt. 25:31-46; Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15. On the other hand, Revelation 20 is highly figurative, and the word “lived” can refer to the intermediate state only.

E. Millennialism as unhealthy

- 1) It exalts carnal pleasures over spiritual holiness.
- 2) It mixes saints with unglorified sinful people in a supposed glorious kingdom.
- 3) It exalts Judaism over universal Christianity; cf. Gal. 3:28.
- 4) It leads to pessimism; Christ is seen as not now reigning and conquering his enemies.
- 5) It leads to dispensationalism and the fragmenting of Scripture, depriving the church and Christians of many blessed texts and promises.
- 6) It places emphasis more on the future and eschatology than on the present and holiness.

F. amillennial heritage

Amillennialism has an honorable history of exegetes and theologians:

Origen

Augustine

The whole church after Augustine through the Middle Ages

Luther and the Lutherans

Calvin and most Reformed churches

Anthony Hoekema

III. Postmillennial view defined

A. Future millennium

There will be a glorious 1000-year kingdom on the earth, fulfilling many OT prophecies.

B. Spiritual emphasis in kingdom

This kingdom will be marked by “universal” salvation and righteousness. Many OT physical prophecies should be applied to this future age, but in a spiritual sense.

This kingdom will be universal, without any special recognition of the Jews. “Pro-Jewish” prophecies are to be interpreted to refer to the church as a whole.

C. Means of inauguration

This kingdom will be established by the power of God working through the church and the preaching of the gospel. Especially noteworthy will be the conversion of the Jewish people to Christ. The church is not to expect the coming of Christ before the world is converted.

D. Second coming after the millennium

During the millennium Christ will still be in heaven ruling through his Spirit. At the end of the 1000 years, he will come to the earth, raise the dead in a general

resurrection, judge all people, and initiate the eternal state. Thus the “postmillennial” return of Christ.

VI. Arguments used for postmillennialism

A. Argument against amillennialism

Many prophecies which the amillennialist interpret spiritually and apply to the present age are better interpreted as referring to a more glorious age, especially prophecies of universal righteousness, peace, and salvation.

B. Arguments against premillennialism

Premillennialism robs the church of much of its glory by attributing many prophecies to the presently unbelieving Jews. Premillennialism holds to two future resurrections, while the Scriptures teach a single, general resurrection, which is followed immediately by the judgment.

C. Postmillennial optimism

Amillennialism and premillennialism are pessimistic about the future of the church and Christianity in this age. Only postmillennialism is optimistic as it expects Christ to conquer all his enemies through the church’s ministering the gospel in this age. Postmillennialists are optimistic about the future conversion of Israel.

D. Postmillennial heritage

Postmillennialism has an honorable history of exegetes and theologians:

many Puritans
Jonathan Edwards
Charles Hodge
A. A. Hodge
B. B. Warfield
A. H. Strong
William Shedd
R. L. Dabney
J. H. Thornwell

V. Premillennial view defined

A. Future messianic kingdom

There will be a glorious future kingdom on the earth for 1000 years, which kingdom will continue in future ages. It will be both political and spiritual, with Jesus Christ and his saints ruling over the nations by force, as well as by moral leadership.

B. A “Jewish” kingdom

Dispensationalists believe that the physical Jewish nation will be preeminent with the reinstatement of all the Jewish law and sacrifices. The church, a separate body, will not be involved on that level. Nondispensationalists believe that the Jewish nation will be preeminent with the NT church having been grafted into Israel and thus being equal in position. Since the Jewish ceremonial law is now obsolete, it need not be restored in the millennium.

C. Two resurrections

The resurrection of the dead will be divided into two main phases: the just at Jesus’ coming, and the rest after the 1000 years are completed.

D. Second coming before the millennium

This kingdom will follow the visible, personal return of Christ to the earth. For the promises to be fulfilled, the Lord Jesus and the resurrected saints must be alive on the earth. Thus, the “premillennial” return of Christ.

VI. Arguments used for premillennialism

A. Biblical covenants

The biblical covenants promise such an eternal, earthly kingdom; esp. the Abrahamic, Davidic, and new covenants. They require the direct rule of the Messiah over Israel and the world, with prior resurrection and the personal participation of OT and NT saints.

B. OT prophecy

Prophecies of the OT, taken in their most natural sense, predict such a kingdom. E.g., Isa. 11, 60; Dan. 2, 7; Isa. 59 as quoted in Rom. 11:26-27. It is an interesting exercise to compare the lists of events predicted in the prophets about Israel in the last days. For example, the following list of future events is found in many prophetic portions of the OT:

- Israel judged, scattered, desolate
- Israel restored to her land
- Enemies seeking to destroy Israel, esp. Jerusalem
- Supernatural defeat of enemies
- Messiah comes to earth
- Holy Spirit poured out on Israel; repentance, faith
- Glorious messianic kingdom established

The passages supporting this schedule of events include the following:

- Isa. 32:10, 13-18
- Isa. 44:1-5
- Isa. 59:18-21
- Ez. 36:24-29
- Ez. 37:11-14
- Ez. 39:25-29
- Hos. 1-3
- Zech. 12:2, 8-10
- Zech. 14

Other passages from the OT could be added to this list, but the various events and their order would remain the same.

C. NT promises same as OT

The NT teaches that the church will receive the same promises with Israel. The Jews’ unbelief opened the way for the Gentiles to receive this kingdom.

- Rom. 11
- Heb. 7:6; 10:36; 11:9-10, 13-14, 16, 39-40; 12:22, 28; 13:14
- Rev. 21:1-3, 10, 12, 14.

This argument would not be used by dispensationalists, but is effective for covenant theology. The unity of the OT and NT saints in the future kingdom is illustrated by Jesus’ remarks in Mt. 22:32 and Lk. 13:28-29. Premillennialists point out that while the subjects of the prophesied kingdom have changed, the nature of that kingdom and the terms to describe it have remained the same.

Mt 22:32, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Lk. 13:28-29, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

D. Resurrection before the kingdom

In order for the patriarchs and other OT saints to receive the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant, Jesus said a resurrection was necessary (MT. 22:32). The intermediate state is viewed not as an end of prophecy, but as a temporary condition which is not satisfied until body and soul are united. On the other hand, the prophesied kingdom is viewed as the end of prophecy, when the saints are satisfied and reigning in glory. Premillennialists believe that the Scripture teaches the reality of two resurrections – one at the coming of Christ, and the other after the millennial period.

E. Expectation of pious Jews, Jesus, apostles

It is generally recognized that the Jews of the first century expected such a kingdom. From works about the eschatological belief of the Jews of Jesus' time, one can outline the following events:

The final ordeal and confusion (tribulation)

Elijah as precursor (maybe witnesses in rev. 11)

The coming of the Messiah

The last assault of the hostile powers

Destruction of hostile powers

The renewal of Jerusalem

The kingdom of glory in the Holy Land (preceded by resurrection of just, the earlier Jewish idea)

The renewal of the world

A general resurrection

The last judgment; eternal bliss and damnation

The fact that this future kingdom was expected by the pious Jews in Jesus' day can be illustrated by the songs of Simeon and Mary in Luke 1. It is apparent that the teaching of John the Baptist, Jesus himself, and the apostles did not conflict with this idea. Rather, the NT indicates that early Christian preaching confirmed these expectations, Nt. 10:7; Acts 1:3, 6; 1:19-21.

F. Significance of present dispensation

While we received benefits that are to accompany the kingdom, the kingdom itself is not yet established. The present dispensation is preparatory and anticipatory of the kingdom. The kingdom will be brought to the earth by the return and direct implementation of the king, Jesus Christ.

It should be noted that many of the blessings promised in the new covenant are now possessed by believers, including the law of God written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Yet this blessing was given also to OT saints (cf. Ps. 119). The primary blessing noted in Hebrews 8 is that now we are free from the ceremonial sacrificial system since Christ now has manifested himself visibly and sacrificed himself as the great Antitype. The new covenant will be fulfilled when Christ returns and grants repentance to all Israel.

G. NT interpretation of OT prophecies

The NT does not spiritualize the OT kingdom prophecies. It is generally admitted that the majority of NT citations of the OT employ the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. Those passages which are said to use a spiritualizing hermeneutic need not be interpreted in that way. In fact, careful study will reveal that even in these passages the NT writer quotes the OT with attention to the OT meaning and context. Note the examples quoted earlier:

Luke 4:17-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus in his first coming began to fulfill the work of the Messiah. But he did not institute the kingdom as such, which follows the “day of vengeance of our God” in Isaiah 61:2 – a phrase not quoted by Jesus in Luke 4.

Acts 2:16-21. Quoting Joel 2:28-31. These signs accompanied the offer of the kingdom, which was then still available to the Jews, which offer the unrepentant nation rejected (Acts 3:19-21, cf. 28:25-31). Joel 2 will yet be fulfilled.

Acts 15:15-18, quoting Amos 9:11-12. The NT does not change the wording of Amos, but follows the LXX, which in turn apparently preserves the original Hebrew used in James’ time. Note that the Hebrew-speaking Pharisees did not oppose his reading. It seems likely that the Masoretic text later changed “man” to “Edom,” a change involving only one vowel letter (‘dm to ‘dom); and “shall seek” to “shall possess,” a change is all the more explicable, since the book of Obadiah is a prophecy against Edom, and it follows immediately after Amos 9.

Further, James quotes the passage not to show that the “tent of David” is now being built, but that when the Lord does return to rebuild it, two groups of people will await him, Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Gentiles should not be required to become Jews. Note the words of introduction: “The words of the prophets are in agreement with this.”

Romans 9:25-26, quoting Hosea 2:23 and 1:10. In this chapter Paul is primarily speaking of the manner in which national Israel will be saved. The mention of Gentiles in Verse 24 is almost parenthetical, looking forward to ch. 11. Paul’s argument shows that there is to be a time of widespread unbelief and judgment on Israel before their final salvation. The “objects of mercy” in verse 23 appear to be the Israelites, and the “objects of wrath” in verse 22 appear to be their enemies. In all the OT passages Paul uses, the Assyrians are the particular enemies which bring judgment on Israel. The verses from Isaiah are quoted in Romans 9:27-29.

There is not need to say that Paul changes Hosea’s clear meaning by making passages which refer to the restoration of Israel describe the conversion of the Gentiles in the present age. For more detailed treatment, see John Battle, “Paul’s use of the OT in Romans 9:25-26,” *Grace Theological Journal*, 2:1 (Spring 1981), 115-129.

Hebrews 8:8-12, quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34. The author of Hebrews does not state that all of the promises in Jeremiah 31 are now fulfilled. Rather, he quotes the passage to show that Christ is higher than Aaron in that he mediates a better covenant. The new covenant is shown to be better than the Mosaic covenant, which has been made obsolete by the death and resurrection of Christ. We as Christians are now under the spiritual rule of the new covenant, which is in many ways equivalent to the Abrahamic covenant. But the promised pouring out of these blessings to the whole

nation of Israel, along with the other promised blessings, has not yet taken place (cf. Jer. 31:38-40).

H. Spiritual and physical nature of the kingdom

Premillennialism recognizes the physical-spiritual nature of man and of God's creation, and gives due weight for both spiritual and physical blessings on man and on the world. Some of the arguing against premillennialism seems to stem from relics of the asceticism of the Middle Age. Of special concern is the question of the resumption of animal sacrifices in the millennium. Many premillennialists believe that these will be re-instituted, perhaps with altered significance. On the other hand, others doubt that these sacrifices will be re-instituted. The temple and ritual described in Ezekiel 40-48, parts of which are mentioned in other prophets, can well be understood as a conditional promise within the Mosaic dispensation, made to the captives who returned from Babylon. It does not need to be a part of the future millennium. Note the conditional emphasis in Ezekiel 43:9-11.

Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them."

Further, if the new heavens and new earth of Isaiah 65 and 66 is to be identified with the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21-22, as representing the messianic kingdom, then there is explicit denial of a temple (Rev. 21:22).

I. Premillennial heritage

In addition to having a wide variety of adherents since the time of the Reformation, this view is the only one to be the predominant view of eschatology in the early church. Some examples from early Christian writers:

Didache – Section 16:6-7 (*ANF* 7:382). "And then shall appear the signs of the truth; first, the sign of an outspreading in heaven; then the sign of the sound of the trumpet; and the third, the resurrection of the dead; yet not of all, but as it is said: The Lord shall come and all His saints with Him. Then shall the world see the Lord coming upon the clouds of heaven."

Papias – Disciple of John, companion of Polycarp (according to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5:33:4 [*ANF* 1:563]). Fragments 4-5 (*ANF* 1:153-54). Well-known quotation about grapes during the millennium. Likewise, in Irenaeus' quote, Papias favors premillennialism, with the resurrection of the just and the literal interpretation of Isaiah 11.

Justin Martyr – In dialogue with Trypho 80-81 (*ANF* 1:239-240). "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and other declare.

"(Then follow Justin's proofs from various biblical texts, especially from Isaiah) ... And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem;

and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”

Irenaeus – In *Against Heresies* Book 5, ch. 30-36 (*ANF* 1:558-67). Important father, as in direct line: John → Polycarp → Irenaeus. Seven lengthy chapters outlining doctrine of last things. A definite premillennialist, with prior resurrection, earthly rule of Christ, etc. Some examples:

Ch. 30:4, “But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Ch. 32:2, “If, then, God promised him [Abraham] the inheritance of the land, yet he did not receive it during all the time of his sojourn there, it must be, that together with his seed, that is, those who fear God and believe in Him, he shall receive it at the resurrection of the just. For his seed is the Church, which receives the adoption to God through the Lord, as John the Baptist said: ‘For God is able from the stones to raise up children to Abraham’... Now God made promise of the earth to Abraham and his seed; yet neither Abraham nor his seed, that is, those who are justified by faith, do now receive any inheritance in it; but they shall receive it at the resurrection of the just; and on this account He said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Examples continue, with supporting scriptural arguments. The footnote in *ANF* 1:561 indicates that because of the strong “millenarian notions, which had been long extinct in the Church,” scribes of the middle ages had omitted five of these chapters. They were only restored to the text of Irenaeus by later scholars.

Tertullian – in *Against Marcion*, Book 3, ch. 25 (*ANF* 3:342-43). In this chapter he argues against the docetic idea that heavenly reward is all that is important, asserting that the earthly kingdom of the millennium is also important, as a stage to the heavenly kingdom to follow.

CHAPTER 22 RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

I. Confessional statement

All the dead will be raised:

those in Christ will have the same bodies but glorified
those who are lost will be raised to dishonor.

All who are still living who are in Christ will not die, but will be changed. This event often is called the “translation,” emphasizing the change that will take place, or the “rapture,” emphasizing the suddenness of the event, as a “taking up, catching up.”

II. Scriptural support for the resurrection

There are many passages dealing with this subject. Only the most important or striking passages will be mentioned here.

OT Promises

Job 19:25-27

“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

The Hebrew phrase in v. 26 “from my flesh (*mibbesari*) does not necessarily mean “without me flesh,” as it is translated in Gesenius, para. 119w; Delitzsch, Job 359-60; BDB 578b; ASV, RSV, NASB. It also can mean “in my flesh,” or “from within my flesh,” as indicated in BDB 579-80 (usage of *min* similar to Greek *ek*); KJV, NIV. In this sense the construction would be similar to the idea of “looking out of a window.”

Abrahamic covenant (esp. Gen. 17:8; 26:3; 28:13)

These verses promise the personal participation of the patriarchs themselves in the promises, including the permanent occupation of Canaan. Heb. 11:13 states that these promises were not fulfilled during their lifetimes; hence, a resurrection is necessary for them. The idea of resurrection was not foreign to them (Heb. 11:19). Compare Jesus’ argument, cited below (Mt. 22).

Isaiah 26:19

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

This passage is in the apocalyptic section of Isaiah (ch. 24-27).

Daniel 12:1-2

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

This passage places the resurrection in the time context of the great tribulation (cf. Mt. 24:15-21). It includes the just and the unjust.

Statements of Christ

John 5:28-29

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Jesus speaks of the future resurrection from the tombs of the just and the unjust.

Matthew 22:23-33

(29-32) “Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Jesus proves that there is a resurrection of the body as he argues with the Sadducees. His scriptural argument is based on a quotation of Exodus 3:6. Jesus refers to the Abrahamic covenant, as God spoke of it to Moses, and deduces from it that there will be a physical resurrection of the patriarchs.

Statement of Paul

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 – Paul here includes specific information concerning both the resurrection and the translation of living saints.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24, 42-44, 51-57 – This section also mentions both the resurrection and the translation of living saints, and he here makes these doctrines central to Christianity.

Acts 24:15 – “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” In his testimony to Felix, Paul asserts the resurrection of both the just and the unjust and claims to hold the same belief in this area as that held by the Pharisee party.

Philippians 3:20-21 – “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Here Paul refers to the “fashioning anew” of our bodies at the time of the resurrection and translation.

Statement of John

Revelation 20:4-6, 11-14 – In his vision of the future, John saw the double resurrection with the “thousand year” intervening between the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust.

III. Scriptural support for two resurrections

The premillennial view requires two resurrections – of the just and of the unjust – separated by the thousand year “millennium.” The amillennial and postmillennial views believe in a “general resurrection,” with the just and the unjust being raised simultaneously.

The following biblical passages normally are used by either side in this argument. In each case premillennialists believe these passages either specifically teach the reality of two separate resurrections, or at least are compatible with those passages which do.

Daniel 12:2 – Note the structure of this verse: “Many shall awake, these to...and these to...” The waw here actually is disjunctive – “but.”

The use of “many” at the beginning of this verse, as well as in verse 3, fits best with the righteous. The “many” links best with the first “these.”

John 5:28-29 – Jesus here clearly separates the two resurrections, repeating the noun, “the resurrection of life... the resurrection of judgment.” These two phrases are parallel to the “first resurrection” and the “second death” John describes in Rev. 20.

The use of the word “hour” (*hora*) in verse 28 does not demand a general resurrection, as that word often designates a longer period of time. Compare 1 John 2:18.

Acts 24:15 – since the terms “resurrection, just, unjust” are all anarthrous, the Granville Sharp rule does not apply; rather, the terms are used qualitatively, simply meaning that both just ones and unjust ones will be raised. Further, the *te kai* (“and also”) emphasizes the distinction of the two groups.

1 Cor. 15:23-24 – The “order” of the various groups being raised is given in three stages:

- (1) Christ
- (2) Christ’s people, at his coming
- (3) “the end” when death itself is destroyed, v. 26.

The “end” spoken of ties in with the second death of Revelation 20, when the unjust are raised; this takes place after he reigns (v. 25).

Revelation 20:4-6, 11-14 – In verse 4 “they lived” (*ezesan*) most naturally refers to physical resurrection. Cf. “lived” in v. 5, where it refers to the physical resurrection of the lost. The NIV properly translates both “came to life.” The events in v. 4 are called a resurrection in v. 5. V. 5 separates the first resurrection in time from the second death (= second resurrection). Verses 12 and 14 specifically say that the unsaved are not to be raised until the 1000 years are over, after the saved are “reigning.” Death is destroyed after the unjust are raised.

Note on Matthew 25:31-46 – This passage often is used to show a general resurrection, but there is no mention in the passage of a resurrection of the dead. Rather, it seems to depict the judgment of the living nations at the outset of the millennial kingdom. At that time, special attention will be given to the manner in which people treated the saints of God during the time of their great persecutions.

IV. Nature of resurrection body

A. Bodies of the unsaved

Standards use the phrase “raised to dishonor”

Bodies have physical substance

This substance will exist eternally

But these bodies not glorious; will befit their wicked hearts.

B. Bodies of the saved

Same bodies as during life, physical substance

Cf. body of Christ after resurrection:

feel hands and side, Jn. 20:27

eat fish, Lk. 24:42-42
called “flesh and bone,” Lk. 24:39
able to transport itself supernaturally
Cf. description in 1 Cor. 15:35-54:
honor
power
spiritual (“flesh and blood” in v. 50 and expression for the present mortal
body; it does not imply the absence of physical flesh or blood in the
resurrection body) ; body empowered by spiritual force
incorruptible

CHAPTER 23

TRIBULATION SYSTEMS WITHIN PREMILLENNIALISM

Over the last century and a half there have developed various methods of relating the church to the tribulation spoken of in the OT prophets, the Olivet Discourse, Revelation 6-19, and other passages. The historic titles for the various positions are based on the relative time of Jesus' coming for the resurrection of the just and translation of living saints: pre-tribulation or post-tribulation being the most prominent views.

I. Historical introduction

While the fathers expected to experience the tribulation, they also anxiously looked forward to the second coming of Christ. It is best not to trace the beginning of pretribulationism to "strange spirits" speaking in an Irvingite church meeting, as S. P. Tregelles has done and as popularized by Dave MacPherson. It appears that Darby was the first to systematically present this doctrine after considerable personal study of the Bible.

II. Arguments for pre-tribulationism

Some of the arguments listed would only be valid for one holding dispensationalism; others are based on exegesis of biblical portions or logic.

A. Purpose of the tribulation

Dispensationalism hold that the seven-year tribulation predicted in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation is designed to purge Israel and to bring her to repentance and faith in the Messiah. Since the NT church already believes in Christ, there is no need for it to experience the tribulation. Indeed, the church or those "in Christ" are not mentioned as being present in the tribulation.

B. Nature of the church

Dispensationalists also hold that the church is a unique body, begun at Pentecost, which has heavenly rather than earthly concerns. The church looks forward to being taken from the world to heaven by Christ, the bridegroom. Israel looks forward to her Messiah coming to them on the earth. Revelation 4-5 pictures the 24 elders in heaven during the tribulation; they represent the church. The wedding feast of Rev. 19 likewise is before the second coming.

C. No wrath for the church

According the Rev. 6:17, the tribulation is a time of God's wrath poured out on the world. On the other hand, God has promised that the church would not experience his wrath, Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:9-10.

Rev. 6:17, "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

1 Thess. 1:9-10, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

1 Thess. 5:9, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

Other passages also teach this escape for the church, Lk. 21:36; Rev. 3:10 (Chafer's main verse).

Lk. 21:36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Rev. 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."

D. Imminent coming, comfort and inspiration

Whereas posttribulationism requires signs to take place before the coming of Christ, Christians are told to be ready at any time for the coming of the Lord. According to 1 Thess. 4 the return of Christ and the rapture are to be a comforting hope; if the tribulation comes first, it would be a dread of the future. Likewise, we are to purify ourselves because of our expectation of Christ's return; if his return is not imminent, that motivation is gone.

E. Progressive revelation

The OT and the Synoptic Gospels teach only about the posttribulational coming of Christ to the earth. Only John 14:1-3 introduces the secret rapture, at the end of Jesus' life on earth. The other passages are 1 Cor. 15:51-52 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18. Note that the most prominent pretribulational writers do not use any of the "sudden" or "unexpected" passages in the Olivet Discourse or elsewhere in the Synoptics as evidence for the rapture; these passages are too closely linked to the coming of Christ to the earth to judge the wicked and establish his kingdom. Beechick expands this idea to say that Paul did not know about the pretribulational rapture when he wrote the Thessalonian epistles.

F. The "falling away"

Some pretribulational writers have used the term "falling away" in 2 Thess. 2:3 as a reference to the rapture, not the final apostasy. Since the term has the article, it refers to something already known to the Thessalonians, as the rapture discussed in 1 Thess. 4.

2 Thess. 2:3, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

G. Who occupies the millennium?

Since there will be mortal saints in the millennium (Isa 65:20-25), and since all living saints are glorified at the beginning of the millennium (Mt. 25:31-46), posttribulationists have no way to explain how mortal believers will enter the kingdom – and, if unbelievers are condemned at the outset of the kingdom, how any mortals at all could enter it.

IV. Arguments for mid-tribulationism

This view is that the "seven" of Daniel 9:27 is the final tribulation period, which is divided into half, with the antichrist revealing himself as such and beginning real persecution in the middle of the period. The second half (3 1/2 years) is the "great tribulation" mentioned by Christ. The rapture occurs at the beginning of that time.

Dan. 9:27, "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

The final trumpet of Revelation 11 is linked to the final trumpet in Mt. 24:31 and 1 Cor. 15:52.

V. Arguments for post-tribulationism

A. Terms used for the last day

Biblical terms such as “the day, the end, the day of the Lord, the day of Christ” all speak of the Christian’s expectation. These terms include the arising of the righteous dead, the judging of the nations, and the coming of the Lord to the earth.

B. Jesus’ return in the gospels and epistles

The Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24 = Mk. 13 = Lk. 21) and other gospel statements of Christ clearly teach that the disciples are to be on the earth until the glorious return of Christ to judge the nations. They are to endure the tribulations and persecutions that will precede that day. Only a dispensationalist would say that the disciples were being considered by Jesus as representatives of Israel, not representatives of the church. It is wrong to distinguish the coming of Christ spoken of in the gospels from that spoken in the epistles. Exactly the same things are said about both comings.

C. NT terms for Jesus’ coming

Study of the major terms used to describe Christ’s coming reveals that these terms do not distinguish various “phases” or “stages” of Jesus’ coming. Rather, they describe the Christian waiting for the final coming of Christ to raise the dead and establish his kingdom. Note the NT usage:

parousia, coming, official state visit of king to his domain

Mt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39, sign of coming of Messiah

1 Cor. 15:23, they that are Christ’s at his coming

1 Thess. 2:19, Christ at his coming, our hope and crown

1 Thess. 3:13, coming of Christ with all his saints

1 Thess. 4:15, remain unto coming of the Lord

1 Thess. 5:23, preserved until coming of the Lord

2 Thess. 2:1, beseech you by coming of the Lord and our gathering unto

him

2 Thess. 2:8, brightness of coming

Jas. 5:7, patient unto coming of Lord

Jas. 5:8, coming draws near

2 Pet. 1:16, power and coming

2 Pet. 3:4, where is promise of coming?

1 Jn. 2:28, when he will appear, not ashamed at his coming.

Cf. Koine usage of the word for the “meeting” with him in the air in 1 Thess. 4:17 (*apantesis*); see MM 53. “The word seems to have been a kind of technical term for the official welcome of a newly arrived dignitary – a usage which accords excellently with its NT usage.” The term is used also in Mt. 25:6 and Acts 28:15, and the related term *hupantesis* in Mt 8:34 and Jn 12:13. In all these cases, the people go out to meet the dignitary in order to provide a proper escort back to the place they came from.

1 Thess. 4:17, “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Mt 25:6, “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”

Acts 28:15, “And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.”

Mt. 8:34, “And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.”

Jn. 12:13, “Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Apokalupto, reveal

Lk. 17:30, when Son of Man is revealed

Rom. 8:18, glory shall be revealed in us

2 Thess. 2:3, 6, 8, Antichrist revealed

1 Pet. 1:5, salvation ready to be revealed

1 Pet. 5:1, glory that shall be revealed

apokalupsis, revelation

Rom. 2:5, rev. of righteous judgment of God in day of wrath

Rom. 8:19, glory shall be revealed in us

1 Cor. 1:7, waiting for the rev. of our Lord

2 Thess. 1:7, in the rev. of the Lord Jesus from heaven

1 Pet. 1:7, 13, glory at the rev. of Jesus

1 Pet. 4:13, rejoice in the rev. of his glory

Rev. 1:1, rev. of Jesus Christ

epiphaneia, manifestation, appearing

2 Thess. 2:8, splendor (epiphaneia) of his coming (parousia)

1 Tim. 6:14, keep commands until appearing of Lord Jesus

2 Tim 1:10, (first coming)

2 Tim. 4:1, judge living and dead at his appearing and kingdom

2 Tim 4:8, love his appearing

Titus 2:13, blessed hope – glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

D. Revelation wrath at end

Revelation’s plagues seem to be cyclical, each ending with the return of Christ and pouring out of wrath on the ungodly nations. Cf. Rev. 6:12-17 with Mt. 24:19-31; see Rev. 11:15-19. There is no need to say the church will suffer the wrath of God; the church will be with Christ when he returns.

E. Intervening events

The NT predicts many other events in the near and distant future, which had to be fulfilled before the second coming of Christ. As long as they remained unfulfilled, Christ’s coming was not imminent. Yet the first generation Christians lived in expectation of his coming.

F. Natural interpretation

In addition to the terms used themselves, several passages are most easily understood with a posttribulational rapture. Examples:

1 Thess. 4-5, speaking of the same event

2 Thess. 1:4-10, Christians rewarded post-trib.

2 Thess. 2:1 and 2:8, speaking of the same event

1 Pet. 1:3-12, Christians glorified post-trib.

Rev. 20:4, resurrection post-trib.

CHAPTER 24 THE JUDGMENT AND ETERNAL STATE

I. Judgment as universal

The Scriptures consistently associate death and resurrection with divine judgment of the individual.

A. Confessional statement, WCF 33:1

specified in BP confession that “day” can be longer period, including the millennium.

Judgment includes wicked angels

judgment includes all humans

judgment covers all of one’s life and deeds

reward or punishment is based on this judgment

B. Scriptural evidence for judgment of all people

Eccl. 3:17, “I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.”

Eccl. 11:19, “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”

Eccl. 12:14, “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

Mt. 10:26, “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”

Mt. 12:36-37, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Mt. 16:27, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

Jn. 5:22, 26-27, 30, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”

Acts 17:31, “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

Acts 24:25, “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

Rom. 2:5-6, 16, “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”

1 Cor. 3:13-15, “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he

shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

2 Cor. 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Heb. 9:26-27, “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

2 Pet. 2:4, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

2 Pet. 3:7, “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

Jude 6, “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

Rev. 20:11-15, (long section vividly portraying the judgment of the great white throne)

II. Judgment of the saved

Many of the verses cited above mention the judgment of believers; they are not exempt.

A. Time of judgment

The judgment of the saved apparently occurs before the millennium begins, perhaps immediately at death. It appears that it will be completed by the time the messianic kingdom is inaugurated, since by then the saints are established in positions of authority.

Authority in the kingdom is based on this judgment. Cf. the parable of the talents in Lk. 19:11-27, which was geared to teach those who thought the kingdom would appear immediately. The reward of successful judgment was the rule over cities; the parallel account is more general, Mt. 25:14-30.

According to Rev. 19:7-8, the church is judged before the second coming of Christ to the earth at the beginning of his visible reign.

Rev. 19:7-8, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

B. Nature of judgment

This judgment obviously does not include the guilt of sins, which has already been judged in Christ. Rather, it seems to be a judgment for our Christian life and service, which will take into account our sins and good works (1 Cor. 3:13-15). The order of preeminence and responsibility in the kingdom will hinge on this judgment.

It is important to emphasize that, while the NT uses the terminology of “rewards,” the sole glory for any good works we do must be God’s, who works good in and through us. Thus the promised “rewards” are actually only additional bounties of his grace.

III. Judgment of the lost

A. Time of judgment

Since the lost suffer punishment even in the intermediate state, there must be an initial judgment at the point of death. Their final judgment follows their resurrection at the close of the millennium, specified in Rev. 20:11-15.

B. Nature of judgment

The lost are to be judged according to their works (good and bad), against the perfect standard of the law. All will be found guilty of rebellion (Rom. 3:19). Yet there are different degrees of sinfulness.

Punishment in hell will be based on this judgment, with some being punished more severely than others:

Mt. 11:22, "But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you."

Lk. 12:47-48, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Rom. 2:5-6, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds."

Wicked angels will be judged at this time (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6, Rev. 20:10).

Christians will participate in that judicial verdict (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

IV. Eternal state of the lost

A. Confessional statement

WCF 33:2, WLC 89

Eternal torments

Everlasting destruction

Cast out from favorable presence of God

Cast out from fellowship with Christ, saints, holy angels

Cast into hell

Unspeakable torments both of body and soul

With the devil and his angels forever.

B. Scriptural descriptions

Hell is described by various terms in the Bible, all of which contribute a different element to the eternal suffering of the lost.

Destroys body and soul, Mt. 10:28; 2 Thess. 1:8-9

Company of Satan and demons, Mt. 25:41; Rev. 19:20; 20:20, 15

Fire, Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:15

Darkness, Mt. 25:30

Worms, Mk. 9:43-44

Results in thirst, weeping, gnashing of teeth, Lk. 16:24; Mt. 22:13; 25:30

Perpetual and continuous torment, Rev. 14:9-11

We note that many of these terrible descriptions come from Jesus Christ himself, who often warned people to flee from hell.

C. Duration of punishment in hell

Some Christian or quasi-Christian sects, as the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses, teach that the wicked will simply be annihilated, and will not suffer eternally in hell. This idea contradicts plain biblical statements:

Dan. 12:2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Mt. 25:46, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The J.W. New World Translation reads, "these will depart into everlasting cutting-off." This translation is not all justified; kolasis means "punishment," not "cutting-off." They also translate the term wrongly in 1 Jn. 4:18, "fear has to do with punishment: (NWT, "fear exercises a restraint" - but even here "restraint" is far different from "cutting-off"!)." The NWT tries to bring this idea into Heb. 9:27 as well: "it is reserved for men to die once for all time, but after this a judgment," treating hapax as though it were ephapax; cf. Heb. 7:27.

Lk. 16:19-31, continuous torment of the rich man in hades

Rev. 14:9-11, "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

V. Eternal state of the saved

A. Confessional statement

WCF 33:2, WLC 90, WSC 38

Everlasting life

Fullness of joy and refreshing

Openly acknowledged and acquitted

Join in millennial reign (BP Conf.)

Received into heaven (earth not mentioned)

Freed from all sin and misery

Inconceivable joys

Perfectly holy and happy in soul and body

Company of the saints and the angels

Vision and fruition of Triune God

B. Degrees of reward

This principle is clear from a number of passages:

Mt. 6:20, treasures in heaven

Mt. 19:28, 12 thrones for apostles

Mt. 20:23, sit at right and left hand

Mt. 25:14-30 = Lk. 19:11-27, parable of talents

1 Cor. 3:14-15, rewards for Christian service

C. Scriptural description of the eternal state

Eternal life, Mt. 25:46; Jn. 3:16

No tears, Rev. 7:17; 21:4

No hunger or thirst, Rev. 7:16-17

Glory, 2 Cor. 4:17

Rest, Heb. 4:9

No pain, Rev. 21:4

No night, Rev. 22:5

No curse, Rev. 22:3

Unsurpassed beauty, Rev. 21:1-2

Fellowship with others in heaven (assuming this continues in eternal state), Heb. 12:22-23

Communion with God, Rev. 21:3; 22:4

Authority with God, Rev. 22:5

Worship of God (continues in eternal state), Rev. 7:9-12; 19:1

Service to God, Rev. 22:3