

GOD'S PLAN UNFOLDS

Part 13

*God's Plan Unfolds: The Kingdom from
Reformation to Puritans*

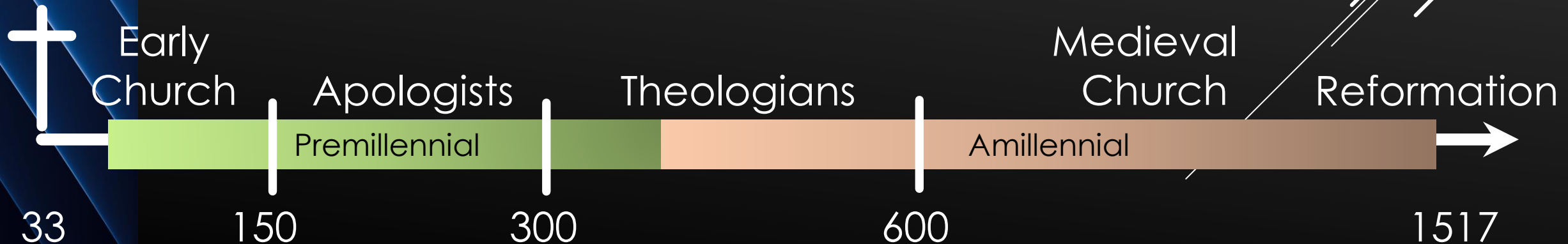
Reformers and Puritans continued wrestling with interpreting God's kingdom plan in the face of changing circumstances

GOD'S PLAN UNFOLDS, PART 13 - MESSAGE

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

Early Church Fathers

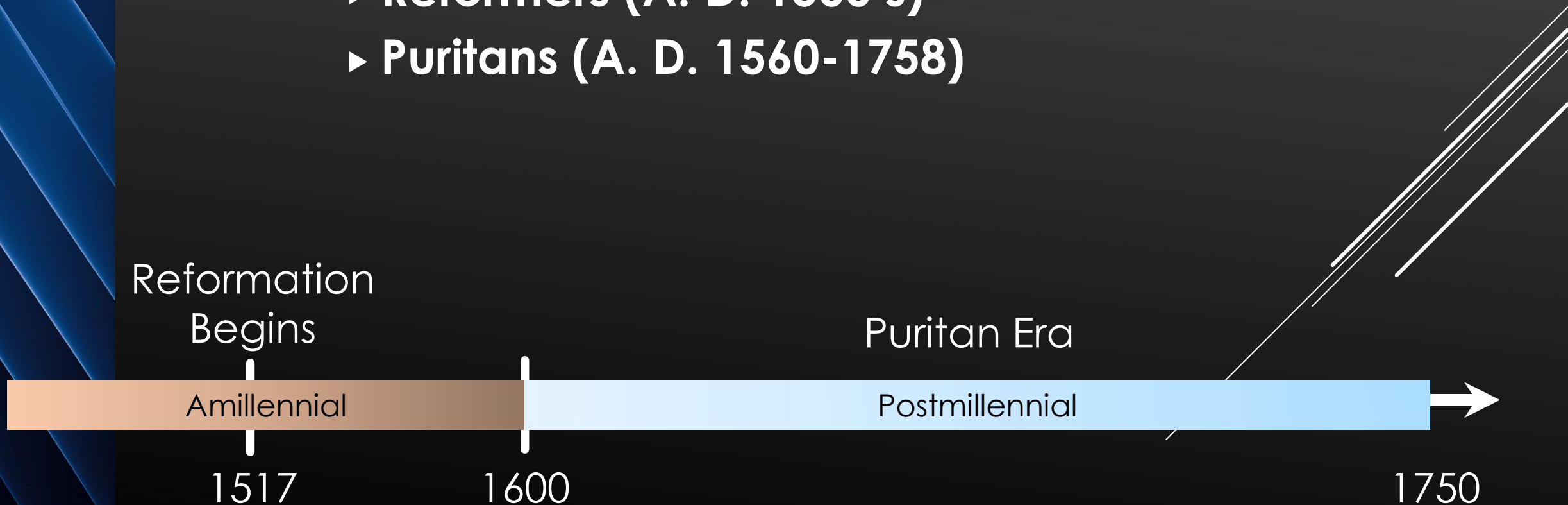
- ▶ Earliest Church Fathers (A. D. 100 – 150)
- ▶ The Apologists (A. D. 150 – 300)
- ▶ The Theologians (A.D. 300 – 600)
- ▶ Medieval Christianity (A. D. 600 – 1500)



CHURCH HISTORY – POST-REFORMATION

Reformation & Puritans

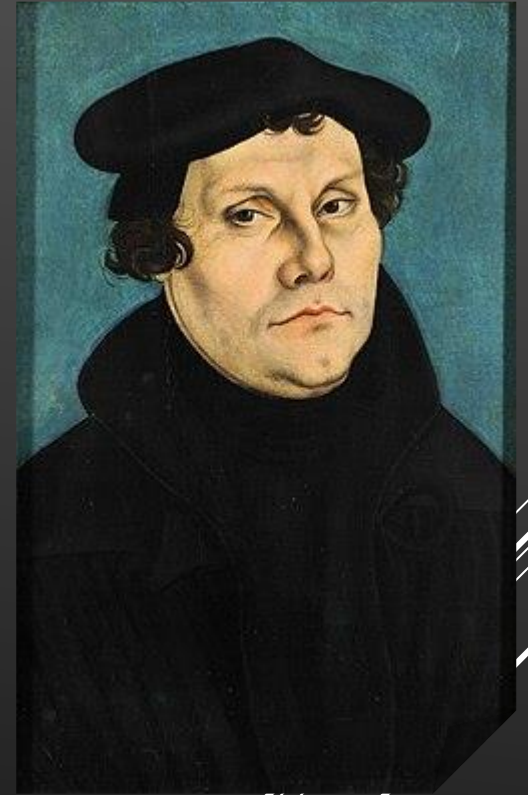
- ▶ Reformers (A. D. 1500's)
- ▶ Puritans (A. D. 1560-1758)



THE KINGDOM FROM REFORMERS TO PURITANS

I. The Early Reformers (1500's)

- ▶ Amillennial
- ▶ Martin Luther – The Tribulation was in his day
- ▶ “Little horn” of Daniel = Pope (or Turks)
- ▶ Harlot of Revelation = papal system



History of the world by Martin Luther

He divided history into 6 – 1,000 year periods



Followed by a Sabbath rest (eternal state)

(John Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 317)



LUTHER'S AMILLENNIALISM

Disdain for Premillennial beliefs

- ▶ Luther, Calvin and Zwingli heaped scorn on Premill views, seeing a “crass form of Chiliasm...in the Anabaptist sects” (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 663)
- ▶ Radical beliefs led to the Peasants’ Revolt in 1525
- ▶ Holland in 1534 Anabaptist radicals renamed Münster, “New Jerusalem”, ousted Catholics and other Protestants, leading to war (Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, Vol. 2, pp. 58-9)

AMILLENNIALISM



THE KINGDOM FROM REFORMERS TO PURITANS

II. Transition - Amillennialism to Postmillennialism

Amillennial dominance fades, 3 causes:

- 1) Renewed study of **biblical languages** (esp. Hebrew), rethinking glorious promises made to Israel
- 2) **Optimism** – Reformation - time of triumph for the Church and the spread of the Gospel, esp. England.
- 3) “**Thomas Brightman** (1562-1607), an English Calvinist, broke the spell of the Origen-Augustine understanding of history, though his particular views bordered on the fantastic” (Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 321)

TRANSITION TO POSTMILLENNIALISM

Reformation truths paved the way for a literal millennium

“The true sense of Scripture, said the Protestants, was its plain literal sense and if it said ‘the just shall live by faith’ **then this is exactly what it meant**...this rule of interpretation proved useful to those who wished to interpret the Old Testament passages which spoke of a restoration of the Jews in a literal sense and not in a spiritual or symbolic sense”

(Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel*, pp. 24-25)

THOMAS BRIGHTMAN (1562-1607)

Earth Christianized “through a progressive triumph of the church before the return of Christ” (Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 321)

- ▶ **Revelation has two literal millennia**
- ▶ **1st millennium (300-1300) ends in the Tribulation (judgment on Catholicism, Islam)**
- ▶ **2nd millennium (1300-2300) Jews saved, Jerusalem revitalized, gospel spreads worldwide, ends with Christ’s return**

Brightman saw “An earth in which Jerusalem is wonderfully restored and has become the centre of true religion, and the centre of an earth in which all men confess Christ as Lord” (Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel*, p. 30)

THE KINGDOM FROM REFORMERS TO PURITANS

III. The Puritans (1560-1758)

John Owen (1616-83) - “Basking in the glow of Protestant triumphalism in England, he spoke of a reign of Christ through the church before His coming” (John Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 322). In the kingdom there will be:

- ▶ Many conversions
- ▶ Purity of worship
- ▶ Christ victorious over His enemies
- ▶ Revelation is fulfilled in England, must spread to Europe (the beast's ten horns)



JOHN COTTON (1585-1652)

Brought Owen's Postmillennialism to America

- ▶ Church suffered persecution under state religion 1,260 years
- ▶ That ended in 1630, Cotton said “with Christ establishing His reign through the wilderness churches in and around Boston!” (John Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 326)
- ▶ Rev 20 begins a period of gospel progress

POSTMILLENNIAL PURITANS

Puritans' emphasis on spiritual revivals arose from their optimism in a literal millennium

But their Postmill beliefs “rejected altogether a naturalistic view of inevitable progress in history—so common in the nineteenth century—but asserted that the sovereign purpose of God in the gospel, as indicated by the promises of Scripture yet unfulfilled, points to the sure hope of great outpourings of the Spirit in the future” (Iain Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, p. 51)

- ▶ Messianic Kingdom: future, literal, King in heaven, saints rule on earth
- ▶ Second Coming: Jesus returns after (Post-mill) kingdom ends
- ▶ Tribulation: Before millennium
- ▶ Gospel preached to all peoples of earth, then millennium begins
- ▶ Israel: Mass conversion



POSTMILLENNIALISM - TRADITIONAL

Germany

Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638) abandoned Amillennialism after the horrors of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648)

- ▶ Impacted how he saw Scripture
- ▶ War primarily fought in Germany
- ▶ 4 to 8 million died due to battle, famine, and disease
- ▶ A Premillennial understanding gave him hope amidst such horror

ANCIENT PREMILLENNIALISM
MAKES A COMEBACK

England

Joseph Mede (1586-1638)

- ▶ Puritan pastors oppressed by Church of England & the king
- ▶ Mede “saw his day as one of persecution that would be followed by a literal reign of Christ on earth for one thousand years” (Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 324)
- ▶ Followed by John Milton, Isaac Newton, Thomas Goodwin

ANCIENT PREMILLENNIALISM
MAKES A COMEBACK

America

Premillennialism “was widely embraced by the early American Puritans, granting them a lens for interpreting their disappointments with the English church, justifying the exodus from their homeland, and inspiring them with hope in their new struggles” (John Hannah, *Our Legacy*, p. 325)

ANCIENT PREMILLENNIALISM
MAKES A COMEBACK