



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Structure of Dispensational Theology (1):

The Dispensations

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for another opportunity to study the Scriptures together. We ask that Thou wilt give us enablement and understanding. Give us, Lord, also desires to know and understand the word of God and also to put it into practice. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this hour.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] As you can tell from the outline that, those of you who have obtained one have, the subject "The Structure of Dispensational Theology: The Dispensations." And this is something of a review section in addition to a few words about the Dispensations in that we will take up two or three of the special aspects of it in full-time study. For example, next week we will look at "The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism" and Hermeneutics in general or the sign of interpenetration but, particularly, as it applies to Dispensationalism. Then we will also take up for, at least, one time perhaps two the relationship between the Church and Israel and we will also take up the subject of law and grace separately to deal with certain aspects of Dispensational Theology and some of the questions that are raised about Dispensational Theology and Covenants Theology as well.

Now, we are looking at Dispensational Theology and last week we looked at the history of Dispensational Theology, and so now we are going to look at the Dispensations themselves.

You know doubt have heard someone at the chapel, if not me, someone else, who has pointed out that the divine self revelation is both general and special. In fact, revelation is a two-volume work. General revelation is the revelation of God as he is seen in nature and conscience and history but, particularly, the revelation of God as he is seen in nature. And that is called by most orthodox theologians, general revelation. Special revelation is the revelation of God that has to do with man’s salvation. And that is found essentially in the word of God. Revelation is a two volume work then, volume one is addressed to man as man, that is, the creation and man as created man and volume two the word of God is the special revelation is addressed to man as a sinner. So when we think about revelation we should think about these two aspects of it.

Now, the most cursory examination of volume one of the creation reveals planning and method and purpose. Even unbelieving scientists proceed, generally speaking, with that kind of presupposition and that is why they feel that it is possible for us to come up with as a result of scientific investigation scientific laws because so far as we can see the universe is a universe that reveals planning and method and purpose. It’s, therefore, natural to suppose that volume two or special revelation that found in the word of God that addressed to man as a sinner with also presuppose planning method and purpose. And, further, it is of interest to note that the Scriptures make this specific claim; for the Scriptures speak of the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Now, that is the reference to Ephesians 3:11, that I have in the outline and that specifically in the Greek text is “according to the purpose of the ages” that is the literal statement the apostle makes “according to the purpose of the ages” which he made in Christ Jesus our Lord. You might also compare Hebrews 9:26, and 1 Corinthians chapter

10 in verse 11. In other words, if this is so then it's fair to say the God has a plan which is unfolded in a series of ages.

Now, it is easy to see from this how students of the Scriptures would like to study the Scriptures and find this plan that is unfolded in a series of ages. Dispensationalism or Dispensational Theology, it is claimed, is simply a term to refer to an approach to the word of God which seeks to clearly distinguish the past, the present, and the future economies of God's plan. And it should be added, it also claims to be the theology that most closely accords with the purpose of God as it is revealed in Scripture. So these are the claims of Dispensationism. Dispensationism has come into conflict with historical Covenant Theology that we have already studied. For that system of theological thought has made the same claim a century or so earlier. So that which Dispensationism claims is not something absolutely new. In fact, in the construction of Covenant Theology that is precisely what covenant theologians have sought to do with their three covenants, the eternal covenant of redemption, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. But as I mentioned, some of you may remember this, as I mentioned in the unfolding of the covenant of grace in history most covenant theologians have divided up that period of time into ages or dispensations. Generally, not quite as many as the kind of Dispensationism that appears in the Scofield Bible, but frequently the time from Adam to Moses to Abraham is singled out then from Abraham to Moses and from Moses to Christ and then in the New Testament the period of the Christian Church. So almost all covenant theologians have thought of the unfolding of the covenant of grace in Dispensations.

Now, those Dispensations are not the same in each instance, as I mentioned previously, in Covenant Theology a Dispensation is the unfolding of the covenant of grace through the years. As we shall see in Dispensationism, the term Dispensation refers to an economy during which man is tested with respect with some specific point of obedience to God, man fails, and then there also generally accompanies some further

revelation in the Messianic promise program. So there is a lot of similarity in spite of what people say and yet there are some characteristic differences. So there is conflict between the two and due to the fact that they are each seeking to do the same thing in a slightly different way.

Now, it is helpful for us, I think, as Christian's, particularly, if we read the Bible or we've read it much and have sought in our minds to organize what the Bible teaches with reference to the Divine program. It's helpful to remember that the Bible is not an easy book to control. If you've ever tried to do this and if you ever tried to do this over a period of time you will find that it is not an easy thing to do. That is to arrange everything in the word of God in a very clear unfolding of the Divine purpose. That's what men have been trying to do for nineteen hundred years since the Scriptures have come to their completion in the Bible as we know it. So since the Bible is not an easy book to control it's not surprising that there should be conflict between the covenant theology and dispensational theology and it's not surprising too that there have been attempts, several attempts even recently relatively speaking, to try to forge a new approach that might be more satisfactory than these. One thing is certainly true if we are to accurately critique such theological constructs we must understand them.

So now, we are going to turn to Dispensationalism as a system and seek to understand it and then, I think, we will be able to pass judgment upon it. So, first of all, then in our outline the leading features of Dispensational Theology and capital A, the definition of terms. The three characteristic words that are used to describe the elements of the divine plan of the ages according to Dispensationism. First there is the word “purpose.” Now the term “purpose” is found in Ephesians 3:11, the text we've just referred to. This word refers to the plan or aim of God in the continuing providential ordering of human history along the way to its consummation. So God has a purpose. Now, I don't think there is any area of conflict over this. Covenant Theology would no doubt say without question that God has a purpose. Dispensational theologians feel the

same way. So that's an important word for both of these systems but it's especially important for Dispensationalism what we are studying tonight.

The second word is the word “dispensation” itself. That's the rendering of a Greek word “oikonomea” which means something like stewardship, a stewardship. Now this is the word that is found in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 2, where Paul speaks about the Dispensation of the grace of God that was given to him, a stewardship. Now, for Paul the Dispensation of the grace of God was the stewardship of the gospel for Gentiles. That was his particular calling to bring the gospel to Gentiles. And so he speaks of himself as a steward of the grace of God in that sense. There was committed to him the leadership and the preaching of the gospel to Gentiles because that was a new movement remember. The Lord Jesus, for example, went to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to them he had been sent. As Paul says, “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.”

Now, we have to take account of the fact that our Lord's ministry was addressed to Israel. Paul's ministry was a ministry addressed to the Gentiles. That represents as Paul makes very plain a distinct change in the program of God so far as a goal of the preaching of the gospel was concerned. This word stewardship is also found in places like Luke chapter 16, verses 2 through 4 where the root occurs several times. There it's used in one of the parables that our Lord tells about the unjust steward. You'll remember it and there, of course, the term doesn't seem to have any special theological sense it's rendered variously stewardship, dispensation, to be a steward. And then in Romans 16 in verse 23 it's rendered “chamberlain”. The leading ideas of the term are those of a delegation of responsibility, the rich man, accountability the steward, mutability administrations may be changed. It seems clear that the Bible does use the term dispensation in a way similar to the usage of dispensationalist although not in every instance. In other words, the idea of a stewardship of a certain aspect of truth or

revelation is found in the term dispensation. So whatever we say about

Dispensationalism, it's probably not possible to criticize its use of the term.

The third word that is significant is the word “age” and that is found in passages like Ephesians 3:2 through 5. We have already mentioned Ephesians 3:11. The time element comes into comes in for emphasis with the use of the word age. Believers, according to Dispensationalism live in a certain “age,” but they live under a dispensation. So they live in an “age” under a dispensation. See how Scofield who has been regarded and still is really as the probably the leading illustration of a Dispensationalist in his Scofield Reference Bible, Mr. Scofield defined a dispensation as “A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.” You'll notice Mr. Scofield lays stressed upon the fact that it's a period of time “man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.”

Now, this definition has been criticized perhaps justly because it doesn't clearly include the idea of a stewardship for some. Now, I think, sometimes this criticism is a little bit unjustified but maybe there is a bit of unclarity here. It seems to me that when he says “it's a period of time during which many is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation” that surely to be tested with respect with some specific revelation that certainly would indicate something very close to the stewardship. But we won't debate over that point and I'm sure most Dispensationalists don't. And so in order to respond to that criticism, for example, Dr. Ryrie has re-defined dispensation as “A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose, a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose.” Now, Dr. Ryrie doesn't tell us how it is to be distinguished he just says “it's a distinguishable economy.” So his definition too is subject to some question. But that definition is a definition accepted by most Dispensationalists today. In other words, the stress they feel should be placed upon the fact that it is an economy and not so much a period of time. The reason for that is that it's obvious certain tests, under which man may have been put, according to the Dispensationalists

scheme, extend through several dispensations. And so if we have times then we do have some confusion so stress on stewardship would lead to that.

Mr. H.A. Ironside was a well know interpreter of the word of God. He used to be on the visiting faculty at Dallas Theological Seminary, came every year to teach the students, in the earlier years of Dallas Seminary he taught for one month and then later on when I arrived he taught for two weeks twice a day. Mr. Ironside was one of the Brethren. He was pastor of Moody Memorial Church for many years, one of the outstanding Bible expositors of the last generation. It was a great privileged to here him. He was just an unusually gifted man. He taught all over the world he was well known. He wrote something like seventy-five books and which were largely the expression of his ministry of the word at the Moody Memorial Church. One thing the HAI had, we always called him by his initials HAI. One of the things that he had was a gift from God for illustration and they frequently were very humorous. He was a man with a good sense of humor and therefore some of his illustrations we remember very well. One of these illustrations I remember him telling but it's found in one of his books called the “Lamp of Prophecy” and in order to illustrate dispensation Mr. Ironside suggested something like this. He says “Girls when they go to school” you can see this is a little beyond our time, “Girls when they go to school study domestic economy.” Well they rarely do that anymore but they did then.

And he said “I'd like to illustrate Dispensations by reference to domestic economy.” He says “let's suppose a young girl by the name of Mary goes to school for a while a learns to domestic economy and in order to make a living she finally gets a job and so she works in a home she's very through, she's very adept, she's very trustworthy and she learns really how to handle the house where she is working. But after a few years in which she has gained her skills she hears, and incidentally she's just in an average house with a workmen but she's the domestic employee in the home. But after a while when she has gotten her skills she hears that the house up on the hill, which is

occupied by the wealthy family in the community, is in need of a domestic servant. And so she applies for the job. And after they have interviewed her and had a look at her and looked at the references they finally decide that she is the one for the new job. And so she gets the job. And she comes to the new house in order to get her instructions and the mistress of the house takes her into the kitchen and says, “Mary let me tell you what you’re to do when you’re here.” And Mary says, “You needn’t bother I’ve already had four or five years experience found in the family I’ve had before and I’ve also been to school I understand exactly how to run the house.” And the woman remonstrates a little bit and says, “But Mary not all houses are the same.” She says, “Oh that’s all right you needn’t tell me anything it isn’t necessary you can leave everything up to me.” Now, I should mention that it was she was working in a home in which the man was an ordinary workman and it was her duty to get the family up at five o’clock in the morning to have breakfast at five-thirty on the table or rather to get them up at five-thirty, have breakfast on the table at six o’clock with lunches prepared for the men by six thirty so they could go to work and be at work in time for their full work day.

So the first morning that she is in the new house suddenly the gong is duly rung at five thirty in the morning and the banker head of the house jumps up and calls to his wife, “My dear whatever in the world is the matter. Is the house on fire?” And she says, “I don’t know.” And she goes and says, “Mary what is it.” And she says, “Why Mum it just means that breakfast will be on the table in half an hour.” “Breakfast in half an hour why we don’t sit down to breakfast here until nine o’clock what do you mean?” “Well I mean they always have breakfast at six o’clock where I’ve been working.” And so she goes through the trouble of explaining to Mary that that isn’t the way we do it at a bankers home and HAI used to say, “She learned the importance of Dispensational truth. And that, I think, expresses something of the heart of the claim of Dispensational theologians.

Now capital B, The Hermeneutics, we’re going to talk about this lengthily next week, the Lord willing, so I’ll just set this out as it is without arguing the case.

Dispensationalists espouse the literal or normal hermeneutic and insist that this is fundamental to their theology. They further identify this as the common method of interpretation which is called the Grammatical Historical Method of Interpretation.

Now, the Grammatical Historical Method of Interpretation is simply that interpretation required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history. So when we think of grammatical historical method of interpretation, we should think of that interpretation which harmonizes with the grammar and syntax and that interpretation which accords with the facts of history, that is, as represented by the context of the passage being interpreted. Insisting upon this linguistic exactitude and historical study Dispensationalists contend that they are simply following the orthodox approach to the word of God. What is interesting about this is that they then often appeal to men like Calvin. Calvin said, “Let us know then that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely.” Well the striking thing about this is that covenant theologians would also appeal to this particular method of interpretation. Now, sometime, well I don’t want to get into this because we are going to deal with it in detail next week, but I just want to point out that Dispensationalists do make that claim. And they claim that the claim is simply the orthodox method of interpreting the word of God.

Now, no one would doubt that this is probably true, that is, to speak of the orthodox method of interpretation as being a grammatical historical method of interpretation. That’s true. And it is very important to realize that because there are lots of people that do not follow a grammatical historical method of interpretation. For example, Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy maintained that her book had been dictated by God so that it would have been very unseemly for her to speak of it in a modest manner. She didn’t speak of it in a modest manner either. When afterward when it was observed that she had hired a clergyman to correct her poor English and when the all edged inspiration was disputed she asserted that the mistakes were not at all contrary to

the divine inspiration. She had been so filled she affirmed with science that “grammar was eclipsed”. Well that’s the kind of claim that doesn’t strike us as having any value.

Capital C, its distinctive claims. Dispensationalist, first of all, claim to provide a sound philosophy of history. It has a history of salvation with a plan with progress and with a unifying principle and with the broadest goals. It’s grand concluding unfolding of the glory of God.

Now, Romans 11:36, we have what might be a kind of epiphany of the claim of Dispensational theologians. You’re probably familiar with this but it’s the climax of Paul’s three great chapters, Romans 9, 10 and 11 and then in verse 36 we read, “Because of Him and through Him and for Him are all things to Him be glory unto the ages, Amen.” The plan is there with its all things, the progress is there with through him, the unifying principle is there with it’s for him and its grand goal is there with its glory forever. So the “soli fidei” by faith alone and “soli gratia” by grace alone of Romans 1 through 8, lead on to the “soli deo Gloria” of to God alone be the glory. Of him, through him, for him are all things. So all of the things of the divine revelation find there center in the Lord Jesus Christ, find their purpose in the Lord Jesus Christ, find their goal in the Lord Jesus Christ. So Dispensationalists claim to have a sound philosophy of history. Covenant theologians do as well.

Second, it claims to emphasize proper biblical distinctions. For example, it properly distinguishes the legal age from the Church age. Now that it a very important claim, and it is a claim to which we should pay attention. I think, I will be able to show you the Covenant Theology does have some deficiencies right at this point. It does not sufficiently distinguish the legal age from the present age. We’ll talk about that a little later on. It properly distinguishes, so Dispensationalism claims, the nation Israel from the Church. A not exclusively Dispensational view, of course, but, nevertheless, it makes that claim. It’s properly distinguishes the Church from the kingdom so it claims. The Church being a body of people but the kingdom is the reign of God involving a realm which may

be given over to administration by different agents. The kingdom creates the Church according to Ladd while the Church witnesses to the kingdom. So Dispensationalism makes the claim that it properly distinguishes the Church from the kingdom.

Now, capital D, its opponents claims. The criterium or the critics of Dispensationalism have lodged doctrinal complaints against Dispensationalism. It is often been claimed that Dispensationalists teach different methods of salvation and sometimes as many as seven are said to be taught, obviously in harmony with the fact that some Dispensationalists do divide history into seven Dispensations.

The Ad Interim Committee of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in their report to the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church in 1944 said that Dispensationalists, “do not hold that God has one plan of salvation for all men but that he has had various and diverse plans for different groups.”

Now, in my opinion that is the result of a great deal of confusion. I think, it is fair to say that it is also the result of a bit of ignorance. It's the result of perhaps deliberate misrepresentation on the part of some and to my mind it's a bit unworthy of scholarship not to mention Christianity. But I'd like to say this; Dr. Chafer was not always clear on this point. Dr Chafer it so happen was an individual who had a lot of affinity for ultra dispensationalism. That's not often realized, but if you would read his systematic theology through you would find some statements that would make it very plain that he had affinity for what has come to be called ultra Dispensationlism. Let me read you something Dr. Chafer wrote in his theologies right there for you to read if you like. He says this, “A distinction must be observed between just men in the Old Testament and those justified according to the New Testament. According to the Old Testament men were just because they were true and faithful in keeping the Mosaics Law. Micah defines such a life after this manner, “he hath showed the old man what is good and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.” Men were, therefore, just because of their own works before God or for God,

whereas, New Testament justification is God’s work for man in answer to faith. That’s quite evident from that.

Now Dr. Chafer was well in my way of thinking he was confused over Old Testament salvation. Just preceding this he has said manifestly to be justified before God is his that is God, is his own undertaking. But he was talking about New Testament justification when he said that. When he talks about Old Testament justification he talks differently. Further Dr. Chafer made the difference between the age of the kingdom and the age of grace. Present age writing, there are his words, “the sermon on the mount is the expansion of the full meaning of the personal righteousness which is required in the kingdom.” The great words in this age the present age are believe and grace. Not once do these words appear in connection with the kingdom teaching of Matthew.

Now the implication to that, I think, is very plain. Finally he says “Under grace the fruit of the Spirit is” which indicates the present possession of the blessing through pure grace. While under the kingdom the blessing “shall be such as merited by their own works.” So you can see that Dr. Chafer believed that in the Old Testament men were justified by what they did and they will be justified by what they do in the kingdom to come. But in the present day they are justified by grace through faith.

Now, in fairness to Dr. Chafer I will say that he wrote with a bit of confusion. And when I was in the class with him he expressed a great deal of, I don’t want to use the wrong word here because I greatly admired this man he was a man of faith, but he manifested a great deal of doubt as to what the Bible taught about Old Testament salvation. And later on I will point out one or two of the things that he said. But, I think, you can see that it’s not without some justification that people have said that Dispensationalists, of whom he was the leading one in his day, have taught more than one method of salvation.

Now, in fairness also Dispensationalism today -- practically every Dispensationalist that I know -- makes a point of saying there is just one method of salvation. It is by grace

through faith. The object of faith changes as the divine unfolding of the history of salvation takes place so that in the Old Testament men do not have the object of faith the precise object of faith and the fullness of it that we have in the New Testament times. Some of them felt that it is not really true to say the Old Testament men looked forward to the coming of a personal redeemer. But then again I personally think that they stand in the minority but unfortunately in this area there are some that imbibe that particular teaching.

Now, the outline of the Dispensations. The characteristic features of them, capital A. Before we review the scheme of the Dispensationalists it is important to note a few things. In the first place the Dispensationalist does not regard the ages as being necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, there may be some teaching in one age that is still applicable in another age. Let me give you one illustration. The Lord Jesus spoke about divorce in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. When the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, speaks about divorce he talks about the thing that he says and then the things that our Lord has said. And it is evident from 1 Corinthians 7, that Paul regarded the words of our Lord on this subject as being binding in the present day. So there were certain points of the divine revelation in other ages that were applicable in other dispensations. So bear that in mind.

Secondly, the ages are not simply time periods as we talked about the different definitions of Dispensation from God's viewpoint they are economies. From man's viewpoint they represent responsibilities. From the historical standpoint they are distinguishable stages in the unfolding progress of the divine revelation. The ages contain a test of failure by man a divine judgment and usually a revelation in a further step in the Messianic promise program. If you have ever had a course in the Dispensations you will know that is characteristic of the teaching of the Dispensations that is there is a responsibility that man has, a test, man inevitably fails, there is the pronouncement of judgment upon him and then accompanying, usually, some further unfolding of a

Messianic promises concerning the Lord Jesus Christ by which the plan of salvation is related to the particular program of God as it unfolds.

Capital B, the description of it. There is no complete agreement among Dispensationalists over the number of the Dispensations. Usually men will say there are at least five. For example, the three important ages are the Age of the Law, the Age of the Church, present age, the Age of the Kingdom but since there was something before the Age of the Law you must at least have an age before that and since there is something after the kingdom you must have an age after that. Now that is the minimum. In the Scofield Bible, I didn't bother to count again and my memory is a little awry here, but I'm not sure whether Mr. Scofield specifically speaks of seven now in the new edition or not, but it was very popular to speak of seven Dispensations. But also students of the Dispensations differ over what you should call the age before the beginning of the divine program, a Dispensation, and whether you should call the eternal state a Dispensation. If we don't call the eternal state a Dispensation then we have seven that I have listed here. You'll notice that I have a question mark after the eight the Ages of Eternal State that's just to represent the fact that there is a debate over that point.

The first of the Dispensations is the Age of Innocence. The Age of Innocence or freedom is the age which encompasses Adam and Eve's creation, their placement in the Garden of Eden, the test that is laid upon them, as in the covenant of works in the covenantal scheme. And then, of course, included in Age of Innocence is the failure of man in the Garden of Eden and the unfolding of the initial Messianic promise, the “pro evangelium” of Genesis chapter 3, verse 14 and 15, specifically verse 15. That's the first Dispensation it ends in failure.

The second Dispensation is the Age of Conscious or self determination. Now this is the age that encompasses Adam and Eve being driven out of the Garden to the time of the Flood. And again man fails, sins against God, God finds it necessary to bring the

judgment of the Flood upon man and again further unfolding of the Messianic promises such as the Noahic covenant and also the Noahic promises.

And then thirdly Age of Human or Civil government, this age following the Flood reaches its climax in the failure of man at the Tower of Babel.

And then the fourth age, the Age of Promise, or the patriarchal rule which begins with the call of Abraham and the promises, Messianic promises, given to him. Again failure to expel due to their disobedience in the land and God finds it necessary to send them into Egypt and to the bondage of Egypt. Incidentally, there is a possible way to find a purpose for all of these things. You could say, for example, the Age of Innocence ends in failure and Adam and Eve might have said “but we didn’t know what would transpire.” And in the Age of Conscience when man failed at the time of the Flood they might have said, “But we had no governmental authority.” So God gives them governmental authority in the new age, now man shall his blood be shed, etc. If man sheds blood man’s blood by man shall be his blood be shed. So we have that particular human government established there. And the Age of Promise and failure in each of them the possible objection might be we have no divine principles, no law. And so God gives them a law at Mt. Sinai. And that is the fifth of the Dispensations, the Age of Law.

Now, the Age of Law is the Dispensation the covers the lengthiest period of time and as you well known covers almost of the Old Testament period and also the gospel period in the New Testament. Going from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Golgotha and Israel is put under the law and it ended in failure with Israel with the Gentiles being responsible for the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A possible objection might have been offered by someone but we have no divine enablement. And so of the age of the Church the age in which we are living we have the gift of the Holy Spirit who permanently indwells all of the believers and no such objection might be raised. By the way, I’m just offering these things not to suggest that all Dispensationalists would say this some have said the reasons for these dispensations are represented by things like these this comment.

The Age of the Church also ends in failure according to scripture. It ends in apostasy the coming of the anti-Christ and all of the things that are set forth in the word of God about the last days of the history of the Church on earth before the time of the second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the seventh age being the Age of the Kingdom and that too according to Revelations 20, will end in failure the failure represented in the Gog and Magog the description that is given in Revelation chapter 20, verse 11 through verse 15. And incidentally in that particular passage some Dispensationlists, I think, some thinking Dispensationalists because there are a lit of unthinking ones too like some unthinking covenant theologians. Some thinking Dispensationalists make a great deal over the little statement in verse 3 of Revelations chapter 20 when our Lord comes the second time and Satan is cast into the abyss we read in the last sentence of verse 3, “After these things he must be loosed for a little time.” Why is it necessary for Satan to be loosed for a little time? You’ll notice it is not said he shall be loosed it is said that he must be loosed. In other words, there is a logical necessity in the loosing of Satan for a little time. Well the logical necessity is that this is the final revelation according to Dispensational thinking of the failure of man.

Now, even though the Lord Jesus Christ is present on earth and is ruling with a rod of iron still the heart of man is wicked enough so that when Satan is released for a little season, a rebellion is quickly raised against the personal presence of the King in the Kingdom. In other words, you can see that the philosophy of Revelation lying back of Dispensationalism lays great stress upon the inequity and wickedness and sinfulness of the human heart. Well that’s the scheme of the Dispensationalists.

Roman 3, the problem of Dispensationalism and again since we are going to talk about these things in some detail I’ll just briefly go over these so we will have a little bit of time for questions.

The first problem is the Israel Church relationship. We have time only to mention some problems and so this is the one that frequently is raised and the question of the precise relationship of Israel to the Church is one. Do these two elections make up two different peoples of God? Do they have distinct promises, distinct origins, distinct destinies, that's one problem. The second of problem is the Kingdom offered cross relationship. Was the Messianic Kingdom offered to Israel at our Lord's first advent? Was it offered apart from a cross? Is it still being offered to Israel in this age? These are questions with which one must deal and see the law of grace relationship. What's the meaning of John 1:17 where the Lord Jesus speaking with reference to these great principles says, "For the law" I'll read it exactly for you, "For the law was given through Moses but grace and truth have come to thee through Jesus Christ?" Is the Church under the Law of Moses as a code? Is the Church without law therefore? These are some questions that naturally arise. And one final question pre-tribulationism and Dispensationalism is pre-tribulationism a "sine qua non" of the system? In other words, if a person is a Dispensationalist does he have to believe in the pre-tribulation rapture, is that a necessary feature of the system or is it not? If it is not why not? What changes are necessitated by a person who believes in a post-tribulation rapture, for example, these are just some of the questions that we should bear in mind? Again in fairness to the Dispensationalists who are believers let us remember the practical fruits of Dispensational teaching have been acknowledged by its enemies. George Ladd has written, and I think I read this a few weeks back, "It's doubtful that there has been any other circle of men who have done more by their influence in preaching, teaching and writing to promote a love for Bible study, a hunger for the deeper Christian life, a passion for evangelism and zeal for missions in the history of American Christianity." Well I don't know, that's probably a little strong because what he is going on the do is to be critical of them although he acknowledges that he was indebted to them.

Now, probably as I said is a little strong but at least you can say they have an extremely influence and a good influence in the present era, the twentieth century, the nineteenth century as well. Ladd’s words are striking encomium for the theology.

The challenge to the Dispensationalists today is to work on the fine points of the hermeneutical claims, the defense of their millennialism against recent challenges to their position on the relation of pre-tribulationism to dispensationalism on their soteriology and on their integration of dispensational truths and to the biblical covenantal unfolding of Scripture which they themselves often acknowledge. It should also be said, not as a necessary thing but as a fact, that Dispensationalists as a general rule are Calvinist in their theology. They are not Calvinist and to my mind, of course, that’s something of a weakness.

But now, perhaps you have a question on two that have been raised by what I said and I will be glad to try and answer your questions. Okay, Mark, would you remember to speak loud enough so I can hear and so the rest of the folks can hear it too.

[Question - inaudible] [answer] Yes, it will be. If I should fail I don’t think I don’t think I’ll fail but if I should feel free to ask the question because that’s a legitimate question.

Incidentally, not all Dispensationalists have the idea of the Kingdom that Dr. Chafer does. His is very much of a minority view now although there were some, quite a few who had that view. Who’ve found that it has been severely criticized and, I think, rightly criticized and they have abandoned what they may have been taught originally.

Yes James [question – inaudible] How do they handle what Jimmy? [Inaudible] [Answer] A Jewish person who is saved today, we will deal with this Jim by the way, but a Jewish person who is saved today, is that your question? Paul answers that questions plainly and clearly in Romans chapter 11, verse 1 through verse 10, in which he very plainly states that converted Jewish people today are a remnant of Jewish people in the one people of God at the present time. They are still Israelites and even plainer providing

you would give me about thirty minutes to expounds this text. In Galatians chapter 6 in verse 16, where the apostle says, “Many shall walk according to this rule peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God.” The Israel of God is over against the Israel of the Judaizers who were Israelites but did not understand grace. The Israel of God are converted Israelites forming the remnant who understand the grace of God in salvation.

[Question - inaudible] [Answer] Oh yes. I wouldn't Dispensationally handle it, I'd just handle it. But they do, of course, affirm it. [Question - inaudible] What is the position of what? [Inaudible] Melchisedek? [Answer] Most Dispensational, now I'm not sure Shurban how all Dispensationalists would answer this because your asking a detail now that is a matter of curiosity. Most Dispensationlists would affirm that Melchisedek would belong to the Old Testament saints. They would regard him as an historical figure; that is not as Christ some have regarded Melchisedek as a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ but most would say no since he was made like under the son of God that he couldn't be the son of God and they would regard him as belonging to the Old Testament saints.

[Question - Inaudible] The question for those of you here is when Oswald T. Allis who wrote “Prophecy in the Church” as a critique of Dispensationalism and Dr. Chafer and Dr. Walvrod were writing did anything much come from out of the debate that they had through the printed page? Well, I think, probably very little came out of if so far as changes of positions were concerned. Oswald T. Allis was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary then taught at Westminster Theological Seminary and was a Presbyterian minister and his book was a critique of Dispensationalism but, I think, I know for example I a course on pre-millennialism in which we studied his book. But many of the Dispensationalists did not have the skills to handle some of the things that Professor Allis was setting forth. And on the other hand I think Professor Allis had some serious with his own system as well. But, for example, he rested a lot of his case on the use of the Old Testament and the New Testament and there were practically no men in those

days, this is thirty-five years ago at least thirty-five to forty, who were studying that particular issue and so you'll find a chapter in his book on attempting to show that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament in a spiritualizing way but very few people attempted to answer.

Well our time is up we'll have to stop. I hope if you have other questions raised write them down and raise them next week when we take a look at the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism. What is regarded by Dispensationalists as one of the most important strengths of their system.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for Thy word and we thank Thee for the privilege of study together this evening. We commit these things we have discussed to Thee and pray, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to clarify our own thinking regarding the purpose of the ages.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.