

Bible Basics Conference 2008: Dispensations

Part 15

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[00:00:01] There is an expression that's often used, the canon of scripture. In other words, one part of scripture reflects upon another. And I think if you read some of the Apocrypha, you won't find very much in it that really would reflect on anything else. That's all. Brother Ernie, would you like to bring your question? The question, or rather two questions, there seems to be two types of Jew.

One which is inward, one which is outward.

One in the spirit and not in the letter. Romans 2, 28 and 29.

What implication does this have of Israel being one entity?

[00:01:06] Is Israel's future for those Jews in the spirit or in the letter?

And then an optional extra, if the future of Israel is for one of these people, what should happen to the remaining body of Jews?

I think here we have to apply what we've heard about previously that examining any question or any statement in scripture must be done first of all in relation to its own immediate context and then in the context of scripture as a whole. Now, I'll read these two verses and then tell you the context.

Romans 2, 28, 29.

He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, [00:02:03] neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and the circumcision is that of the heart. In the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.

Now here we have to examine it first of all in its own context. Romans chapter 1 tells us in a fundamental way who God is, what he stands for and what he does.

And then that is related first of all to the brute pagans, then it's related to sophisticated Gentiles, and

then it's related to Jews.

That's at the time that Paul was speaking, [00:03:02] which is in the Christian context. Now, if you want to check that up and take it away, Romans chapter 1 from verse 19 through to 32, it's about the brute pagan who only has the witness of creation available to him.

Chapter 2, verses 1 to 16, it considers the case of the sophisticated Greek with all his intellect and culture.

And then from verses 17 of chapter 2, right through to verse, well you can certainly say verse 8 or perhaps through to verse 20 of chapter 3, [00:04:01] you have the position of the religious Jew. Now, Paul is building up to his statement in Revelation 3, verse 19, all the world is guilty before God, none missed out.

Whether you're a rough pagan, whether you're a sophisticated Gentile, or whether you're a religious Jew, that's not, you're all condemned before God.

But wonder of wonders, the Christian gospel is available to all.

Instead of now saying, are you a brute pagan, are you a sophisticated Greek, or are you a religious Jew, the question now is, do you accept that God is just [00:05:02] and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus?

And in one point of climax, in we get it, we get to the point where we read at the end of verse 4, Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. So, to the Jews, he says, well he condemns the pagan on their own ground, he judges the Greeks on their own ground, and he judges the Jews on their ground.

And he says to the Jews, within that context, you pride yourself on being religious, and having the law, and keeping to an outward set of rules and regulations. He said, on that ground, you're condemned already.

[00:06:01] And the true, the true way to please God is to please God spiritually, not materially or naturally.

But, whether to the pagan, Greek, or Jew, the gospel of the grace of God is now available as he develops from chapter 3 and verse 20.

Now, that's my answer to that. It's not really considering what will be true of the Jews.

You cannot, at the moment, choose to be a Jew, in the sense of the millennial Jew. It's not open to you. You're a sinner, and you can either be a saved, believing sinner, or you can be an unbelieving, unsaved sinner. And that's what he takes up from chapter 3, verse 20. But, his argument building up to the whosoever will availability of the gospel [00:07:01] is to say these three sections of mankind, he says, whichever one you belong to, that you're under the judgment of God.

Matthew 24, please.

Again, we need the context.

Matthew 24, verse 1, Jesus went out, departed from the temple, the disciples came to him. Verse 3, the disciples came to him privately and asked him three questions. When shall these things be?

What shall be the sign of thy coming? And of the sign of the end of the world?

Now, the Lord answers the question, but not necessarily in the order in which they asked the question. But, again, he deals with three situations, [00:08:04] as we've heard from 1 Corinthians 10, under God's eye in Christianity, yes, there's the nation of Jews, there is the Gentiles, who are not Jews, all the other nations, and there is the church of God.

Now, in answering the disciples' question, if we look carefully, we can find that, first of all, up to verse 42 of Matthew 24, he gives an answer about the Jews.

In verse 43 of 24, right through to chapter 25, verse 30, he takes up the position of the church, telling you and me, members of the Church of Christ, what's going to happen to Jews in the future affects the way that we live now. [00:09:02] And chapter 24, verse 43 to 25, verse 30, talks about the challenge to present-day Christians having been enlightened about what God has in mind for the future of the Jews.

And then, from verse 31 of 25 to the end of the chapter, verse 46, he talks about the final result for the Gentile nations. Now, the verse I want to talk about is within the reference to the Jews, and it's verse 41.

Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left. Now, this causes a lot of people a lot of trouble, because when they read about one being taken and one left, [00:10:02] not judging within its context, but saying, ah, the rapture, after rapture, some will be taken and some will be left, and they get the wrong idea about this verse, because it's within the scope of the paragraphs which deal with the future for the Jews.

And the distinction to be drawn is this.

At the rapture, those that are taken are taken for blessing, those that are left behind are potentially left for judgment.

At the appearing.

And those who are taken for blessing are taken for heavenly blessing. At the appearing, it will be different. Those who are taken are taken for judgment, and those who are left behind, who have not been taken in judgment, are left for earthly blessing.

[00:11:01] So I think that, together with Romans 1, 2 and 3, gives me, anyway, a satisfactory answer.

We have to consider each statement, each question that arises in the context of its immediate setting, and then in the setting of Scripture as a whole.

The first question I have here asks, do the covenants shed light on developments in the Middle East?

For example, the foundation of an Israeli state in 1948.

[00:12:03] And did dispensational teachers foresee this?

From the Word of God, from dispensational teachers, from the covenants, could we deduce events that would take place in the Middle East?

I think that the general answer to that, I would say, is yes, that coming events cast their shadow before them.

And we'll turn to Matthew 24, the chapter that our brother was in. But we have been making a distinction between the rapture and the appearing, [00:13:03] between the Lord's coming to the air and His coming to the earth, between the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord, His coming in grace before His coming in judgment. They're both aspects of the presence or coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's not two separate comings. We have our Lord's first coming in humiliation, and we have His second coming in preparation to His public manifestation, the appearing of His coming, the manifestation in glory. He'll take us on to be with Himself according to 1 Thessalonians 4.

And also in Colossians, we're clearly told when He appears, not before, not after, but when He appears, then we also, that is the believers, will appear with Him in glory. [00:14:02] So that when He comes out of heaven, He'll be accompanied by others, and we will appear with Him. Now, it necessarily follows that if we're going to have part in these coming events to which the question addresses itself, it's therefore necessary that the Lord should take the assembly, the church, and the believing company and the Old Testament saints to be with Himself. And there are no signs or indications that we should expect from the Word of God in regard to that event. The Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. They were in expectation.

Paul was in expectation. There was nothing then in Paul's life.

He had that hope in his heart that the Lord should come, and it quickened his spiritual affections and it regulated his daily practical life [00:15:02] and his service for the Lord. And we're in exactly that position tonight. The Lord may come at any moment. We don't know when, and therefore it's important that each soul here should be ready.

Be ye also ready, the Lord Jesus says.

And it also says in some of the parabolic languages in Luke 12, it talks about the servant who's waiting and watching and working for Christ. But it also tells us we don't know. If a thief were to come and break into a house, we don't know when. If we knew when, we'd be watching out. So the question for each one here tonight is are you watching?

And are you ready?

Because when once the master of the house is risen up and shut to the door, there's not going to be another opportunity. I believe the parables of the 10 virgins [00:16:03] in Matthew 25 would make that clear. That when the bridegroom came, there were those that were ready, and they went in.

But there were those that were shut out. And if you're shut out from God's mercy and from God's grace, you're shut out to a miserable eternity under God's judgment. So the matters that we're talking about, we're discussing the general prophetic framework. And it's nice, you know.

It's fine for the intellect, you know. But what about the heart? What about your heart? Would you welcome the Lord Jesus if he were to come tonight? If he were to empty this room of the believers? Even if your mother or father, those nearest and dearest to you, are Christians, would you go with them? Would you be ready?

Or would you be left behind for judgment? So the first thing I want to say in looking at events, if we look at events on earth, [00:17:01] the events have to do with the public manifestation and appearing of the Lord. As to the rapture, as to the Lord's coming to the air, as to the Lord's coming for us all. There's no sign predicated in the word of God. It's something, it's what's called the any moment coming of Christ. May Christ come at any moment. Scriptures would tend to indicate that he would. So then, turning then to Matthew 24 to put this question in the context. It says, learn a parable of the fig tree. It's speaking of Israel there. It says, when his branches yet tender and put forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when you shall see all these things, know that it is very near, even at the doors. And then it says, verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.

Speaking there in Matthew of the fig tree, it elaborates somewhat in Luke's gospel 21 in the parallel passage in verse 29, [00:18:01] where he says, behold the fig tree and all the trees, the nation of Israel and the other nations. And you know, speaking here about dispensational teachers, when these godly men started to study the word of God and look into these things, Germany didn't even exist as a nation.

Hard to take that in. It was before Bismarck. It was before the reunification of Germany. It was before Garibaldi marched across Italy with his red shirts. It was before Italy was reunified.

It was a time of the Austro-Hungarian, the Habsburg Empire, the old Holy Roman Empire. The political map of Europe has changed and changed tremendously and it's changed in the direction of unification [00:19:02] and in a way that is consistent with the events that we have in the book of Daniel and in the book of Revelation. So we can look at all the trees and we can look at the situation in Europe. We can look at other signs and considerations but preeminently we can look at Israel. The question is specifically do the covenants shed light on developments? That's rather narrow really because the covenants, the Palestinian covenant, the Deuteronomic covenant, might be one of the cases in point where centuries before the event it is predicted that the nation of Israel would be scattered and would be carried into captivity and it says when all these things [00:20:03] are come to pass it says and then you call to mind you call to mind among the nations where the Lord thy God has driven you. It's true of the Jewish people. And it says and you shall return unto the Lord thy God and shall obey his voice. He says I'll turn your captivity. Their various promises are given. They'll be delivered from their enemies. They're not going to have any trouble with Hamas then or with Syria or Iraq or any of the surrounding nations or the Syrian. All these things are going to be sorted out. Now I would make this proviso that the covenants contemplate a work of God in the remnant in those who

seek after God in those whom God has begun to work and we know that God cannot it's absolutely impossible that God [00:21:01] can have two distinct peoples on earth at any one time because the very principle in which God is dealing at the present time is that Jews are taken from their Jewish standing those who are nigh those who are far off Gentiles are taken from their Gentile standing they're both brought together and they're made to be one body in Christ. So in the assembly and at this present time there's no separate category of a Jewish believer or a Jewish church and a Gentile church. God is made of the two. He's made one new man. He's joined them together. He's baptized all into one body and there's this tremendous unity amongst the believers. But when the church is removed there's a different principle of household management as we've been saying and then in the book of Revelation strange or interesting thing after the church conditions in chapter 2 and 3 there's no more mention of the assembly or church in Revelation. And then the scriptures that have been before us take into consideration Jews and Gentiles [00:22:02] believers from amongst Jews and believers from amongst Gentiles and it's clear that God then is taking up his dealings with the Jewish people. Well that is a work amongst the Jewish remnant when the gospel of the kingdom will be preached and the everlasting gospel and so on. That's something which will commence once the church is removed from that scene. So we have Israel is back in the land and on belief and the covenants in the way in which it contemplates them as being subject to the work of God which is at a later stage. But I think we can say that the jigsaw pieces are slotting into place. Never mind Germany never mind Italy never mind the state of Europe 150 years ago Palestine was a wasteland and you know with the Turks and barren land no agriculture [00:23:01] no nothing really heaps of ruins the only things really people went to pilgrimages to Bethlehem and Jerusalem those places where Christ was just in the same way as they went to Rome or Canterbury or Santiago to Compostela that was why people went and the very idea even the Jews even Jews themselves when they were said oh you're going to go back to your land they laughed at it they could not even take that in and those who began working to take an interest in a future of the Jewish people people like Louis Way and others who studied the scriptures and because of what they saw was said about the Jews and their future and the word of God then began to take an interest in the Jewish people and had interaction with them I mean some of the suggestions for a homeland for the Jews was not even in Palestine [00:24:01] or in Israel it was to have Romania was it Romania or somewhere you know Uganda thank you Uganda set up a separate homeland for them I'm not really competent I'm not prepared to give a history of the political events in the late 19th century and early 20th century culminating in the culminating in the Balfour Declaration and the Jewish Mandate the British Mandate of Palestine and the way in which the Jews have returned we do have Dr. Paul Wilkinson here Paul can you just make yourself known to the people you may have seen a book flashed up on the screen earlier for science sake Christian Zionism and the role of J.N. Darby and it goes into some of the historical background to these events so I'll not go further than saying that God is setting the stage [00:25:01] at this stage and that the way in which things are shaping up is in accord with what the word of God presents and it is laying the basis on which God will work in a future day with the Jewish remnant so yes dispensational teachers did see it when there wasn't anything to be seen on the horizon not even remotely on the horizon you couldn't go to rapture ready and look up all the signs of the and all the events that are taking place in the world all around us a lot of which incidentally I take just to be speculation because we know in this age in which we live political events can change overnight but still from what we see we can learn a lot about the way in which God is working [00:26:01] out his purposes. God moves behind the scenes but he moves all those scenes which he is behind. I think possibly I may have strayed over my time on this question.

Is that question one? Should I continue with the next question?

Unless you'd rather carry on. I'd rather not do anything probably but no I think we should proceed. The next question is it's in two parts really is the everlasting covenant of Genesis 9.16 different to the eternal covenant of Hebrews 13.20?

So the covenant in Genesis 9.16 is referred to the everlasting covenant this afternoon I read from Hebrews 13.20 about the blood of the everlasting covenant. It's asking is it different? And then it asks about what is meant in Isaiah 24.5 in regard to man having broken the everlasting covenant. [00:27:01] A short answer if that's possible with me. I think they are different. I think what brother Ernie said about Daniel chapter 2 in the days of those kings shall God of heaven set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed and the kingdom shall not be left to other people but it shall stand forever. That kingdom, Messiah's kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom.

We know it will come to an end because it says in 1 Corinthians 15 then comes the end when he delivers up the kingdom at the end of the thousand year reign and then we move into a new heaven and earth and eternal conditions. So this word everlasting it's been explained.

Sometimes it has the significance of age lasting or something which will never be superseded. And that's how I see it.

The new covenant [00:28:01] the blood of the everlasting covenant I take in Hebrews 13 to be the new covenant and it will not be superseded. The Noachic covenant is the one in view in Genesis 9 verse 16 and I said you know that the earth will continue seed time and harvest cold and heat, summer and winter and night shall not cease. God's covenant with the earth that the earthly order of things I think will be everlasting and it will carry right through with the kingdom to the end. Everlasting covenant is used also in regard to the Abrahamic covenant which we know again is different from the earlier covenant. In Genesis 17 verse 7 we have a reference to it.

I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee and their generations for a never lasting covenant. Again that's carrying right [00:29:01] through to its culmination and fulfillment in Christ and it will be that age lasting covenant. In connection with priesthood in Levi we have the same thing in Leviticus 25 13. Once that priesthood is restored and the descendants of Phinehas it will never be superseded also.

We can say the same in Ezekiel 37 verse 6 in regard to the covenant of peace and in 2 Samuel 23 verse 5 we have it in regard to the Davidic covenant or the covenant with David in regard to his seed where he says although my house be not so with God yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. David was passing off this seed. He could say that things weren't perfect in his house but he could look on to Christ and say that everything was sure everlasting [00:30:01] and established.

In regard to the second part of the question Isaiah 24 verse 5 says the earth also is defiled and the inhabitants thereof because they've transgressed the laws changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant therefore the curse devoured the earth and so on.

This to me is somewhat more difficult and well I have the grace to say that I'll be glad of help from others It may be a reference to the land has been left desolate and its judgment has come upon the land and it's really essentially because Israel did not keep its sabbaths in the past and of course we know that the sabbath dated from God rested on the sabbath day in Genesis chapter 2 right at the

beginning of the creation and in the giving of the law in Exodus 20 when they're told [00:31:01] to remember the sabbath day and keep it holy the reason they were not to do any work goes right back to the creation. Six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is and rest at the seventh day. So we're going back there to the creatorial order and the sabbath which may link with the everlasting covenant in Isaiah 24 just as another expression is used in the book of Revelation the everlasting gospel and it seems to link with the truth that had its origin even at the time of the creation and the fall.