

Dispensational Odds and Ends

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[0 : 00] And we will ask you to turn to 2 Peter chapter 3 for our scripture reading this morning. And we are talking about odds and ends of dispensationalism.

We have certainly not covered the waterfront with this subject, but we have treated it, I think, sufficiently so that we can depart from it for a while and revisit it again at a later date.

But what I would like to do today is just try to tie together what might be some loose ends in your minds out there as regards dispensational distinctives and why they are so important.

And that is because they determine the very nature and content of the message that we preach. And no, not everyone in the Bible was as up on these things as we would like to think they are because we tend to look back and say, well, these people, they walked and talked with Jesus, so they understood all of this stuff and they knew the answers to all of those questions.

And after all, they lived with him and we didn't. So they obviously knew a lot more than we do. No, they did not. They knew a lot more about our Lord's persona just from being with him than what you and I know.

[1 : 15] But insofar as the plan and program of God and what the mystery of Christ really entailed, they did not know. And one who certainly would have been in on the know had it been available to be known was Peter.

But look at what he says about it in his last epistle, 2 Peter chapter 3. And let us begin with verse 8, if we may.

2 Peter 3 and verse 8. Peter says, But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

[2 : 31] Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat.

But according to his promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by him in peace, spotless and blameless.

And regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the scriptures, to their own destruction.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[4 : 15] To him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. I especially want to zero in on verse 16. He is talking about some letters that Paul, the apostle, had written.

Now here is Peter, an apostle, talking about something that another apostle has read. And it makes me really feel good, because if there were things that Paul wrote that Peter didn't understand, maybe I shouldn't feel so bad if I don't understand, too.

And there are some of those things. So he says in verse 16, as also in all his letters, Paul, he wrote to you, in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand.

It's nice that an apostle can admit that he doesn't know something, isn't it? Well, we all knew that they don't know everything, but it's still nice to hear them reflect that.

So here is one apostle saying that another has written some things that he didn't understand. How could that be? And the answer is really very simple. What Paul understood and wrote about, he understood because God revealed it to him.

[5 : 46] didn't reveal it to Peter. Simple as that. Understanding comes on the basis of information that we receive.

Information that is made available to us. We take the information in, and we process it, and we reach a conclusion. But you have to have the information before you can process it, and reach a conclusion.

That's why information is so critical. This is, by the way, where we're living today, is called the information age. Daniel talks about the latter days.

He says, knowledge shall increase. Well, we have found that it is not only increasing, it is exploding. The amount of knowledge and information that is available out there is just absolutely mushrooming.

And you ought to make a distinction in what Daniel said, because Daniel says, in the latter days, knowledge shall increase. But he doesn't say that wisdom will keep up with it. And wisdom is not keeping up with it, because wisdom is the judicious application of the knowledge you have.

[6 : 57] Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge. Pure knowledge just for the sake of knowing facts is not all that beneficial. In fact, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said, knowledge puffs up.

In other words, if all you have is a head crammed full of knowledge, that tends to make you big-headed. Some would say fat-headed.

A swollen head and a swollen ego, because we've crammed so much knowledge into our heads. But simply, the acquisition of information and facts is not adequate.

We need to be able to judiciously use that information. And, what one apostle has to say about another, I think, is very, very enlightening.

Now, I want you to understand this. This is really important. There is no conflict between the apostles, Paul and Peter. Granted, they had a little set-to.

[8 : 01] In Galatians, chapter 2, when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood into the face because he was to be blamed. And there was a shootout of types in Galatians, chapter 2, between Peter and Paul.

And, Paul, called Peter on the carpet. And he chewed him out about his hypocrisy. And, I get the impression that Peter swallowed hard and said as much to the effect, you're right, Paul.

My bad. And I think that's exactly what he did. So, Revelation becomes the absolute critical issue. And we've posed a question before, what did Peter know and when did he know it?

And what did Paul know and when did he know it? Neither of these men were out of step. They were simply acting on the basis of what God had revealed to them at that particular time.

and the information between the two is radically different. Because the information that was provided to Peter by Christ when he was here on earth had to do with anticipating the arrival of the kingdom of heaven come to earth.

[9 : 24] Peter was really locked into that. He saw that as the plan and program of God and there was no possibility that it could not fail to come to pass.

Well, it hasn't failed to come to pass but it is postponed in its coming to pass. And it will be here eventually but it is not here now. We are not now living in the kingdom except to say we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear son but that is a spiritual kingdom that's not a literal kingdom where Christ is ruling and reigning on the earth.

So, what we know and why we care about what the apostles of Christ knew and when they knew it becomes very critical because it impacts what we know and when we know it and that impacts what we teach and what we believe is our critical message.

A major misunderstanding has existed for nearly the length of time since Christ that those who knew him talked and walked with him knew the most about him what he came to do and what he actually accomplished in his death and resurrection that they knew all about it after all they were there and we weren't.

That is a serious miscalculation because what Paul is going to receive by way of revelation is something that surpassed anything that the twelve had ever had revealed to them and basically it had to do with non-Jews or Gentiles being put together with the Jewish community who believed in Christ and have one body made of the two and Peter was the first one to bristle at that and I'm not going to return there again.

[11 : 23] Well, yes I am too. Let's go to Acts chapter 10 and then we'll get into chapter 11. This is so critical and I just cannot leave this without getting in a couple of more jabs.

Acts chapter 10 gives us the account of Peter going to Cornelius and what happened there when they got there and what a breakthrough it was and how confusing and stunning it was to Peter.

So after he had done that and Cornelius and his household received the message we take up in chapter 11 and verse 1 now the apostles and this of course means the 12 and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God and when Peter came up to Jerusalem those who were circumcised and who were they?

Fellow Jews. He probably knew all of them personally. Those who were circumcised took issue with him. They said Peter we've got a bone to pick with you.

We've got a real problem. Do you know what we've been hearing about you? And they go on and they say you went to uncircumcised men which is another name for Gentiles and you ate with them.

[13 : 03] And the question is how could you? How could you do that? This is completely unacceptable. We don't understand you Peter. Where are you coming from? How could you do such a thing as that?

Now we in our culture and our background today we say good grief what a bunch of snobs. What's wrong with socializing a little bit with people of a different race or different background or different ethnicity?

What's the big deal about that? Well if you understood this culture in which they lived you would know it was really a big deal. people and Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence saying listen listen guys I know how this looks I know how it makes me look and believe me I was really uncomfortable let me tell you exactly how this thing happened this is the way it all went down I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision a certain object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky and it came right down to me and when I had fixed my gaze upon it and was observing it I saw the four footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts wild beasts by the way are unclean they're not acceptable to offer in sacrifice they're unclean and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air now some birds of the air were acceptable for sacrifice turtle doves were acceptable for sacrifice but many of the species of birds were not and here they're all in together

I also heard a voice saying to me arise Peter kill and eat now you've got to understand this is not asking him literally to arise and literally physically to kill and eat this is a trance this is not in actuality but he is saying I had this vision this trance this is what I saw and in the voice in the trance the voice said arise Peter kill and eat but I said by no means Lord for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth unthinkable but a voice from heaven answered a second time what God has cleansed no longer consider unholy now what is this analogy here what is he saying with the commonality of all of these animals indicating that the distinction between clean and unclean doesn't exist any longer what's he getting at and why is he using the animals to illustrate it because the animals were something that

Peter and every Jew was very familiar with in so far as clean and unclean animals was concerned but the real story behind this that you absolutely got to see doesn't have to do with the animals has to do with people has to do with people who are Jews and people who are not Jews that's what this is all about it's not about animals the animals are just an illustration of the point that he's trying to make and what he is saying is Christ died for humanity Jew and Gentile and because he died for all all are eligible to come to him no restrictions for and Paul will later say in Galatians there is neither Jew nor Gentile bond nor free male nor female you are all children of

[17:17] God through faith in Christ Jesus that's the story here Peter is scratching his head and saying I don't get this what is this what is this and the spirit of God is going to tell Peter what you have just witnessed in this vision with the animals we are now going to provide an upgrade we're going to move from animals to people and behold verse 11 verse 10 says this happened three times and everything was drawn back up into the sky in other words rise Peter kill and eat no nothing doing the scene is repeated again rise Peter kill and eat no I'm not going to do that I don't know what he thought maybe he thought this was the devil tempting him or something and then the third time same thing repeated and Peter says no and then at that moment everything was drawn back into the sky and he heard this voice say what

God has cleansed no longer consider unholy and verse 11 says behold at that moment three men these are messengers from Cornelius probably enlisted men in the Roman army three messengers appeared before the house in which we were staying having been sent to me from Caesarea and I gave you some erroneous information in our last session I suggested that this was quite a distance wasn't really that far because Caesarea there are two Caesareas in Israel there is a Caesarea Philippi in the north up near the Galilee in the Galilee near the Sea of Galilee and this is where Peter made his remarkable confession thou art the Christ the son of the living God but there is another Caesarea and by the way Caesarea was just the name of the city that were that were named in honor of the Caesars and it was given the Caesars name and Caesarea by the sea was right on the

Mediterranean coast and right up the coast from that is it up or north I don't remember but anyway Caesarea and Joppa which is present day Jaffa are both right on the Mediterranean coast and this fellow by the name of Simon isn't it Simon the Tanner tanner yes he lived by the sea and he was a tanner the man tanned hides for a living and they had need for great amounts of salt water in order to ply their trade and of course he was right there on the coast that way and it was accessible to him so we read then in verse 11 these three men appeared before the house in which we were staying having been sent to me from Caesarea and the spirit Peter said told me to go with them without misgivings it's okay Peter you go don't worry about it and these six brethren also went with me now I can see Peter standing here where I am talking and he's got three of these brethren here and three of these brethren here and he says these six guys went with me and these guys are standing there nodding yeah we were there we went with him we saw they're verifying these are

Peter's witnesses and we entered the man's house and he that is Cornelius reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying send to Joppa and have Simon who is also called Peter brought here and he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved delivered rescued you and all your household and I remember when I read that as a young Christian many many years ago a question came to my mind was well why didn't the angel tell him why drag this thing out why didn't the angel just say Cornelius your prayer has been heard and God sent me to tell you what you need to know and this is it and yet we are told that angels do not have a real handle on our redemption there is no redemption for angels they do not understand our salvation

Peter says that the angels desire to look into our salvation but they don't comprehend it they can't put it together they don't get it despite the fact that angels surpass us in brilliance in a lot of ways and certainly in strength and power in just about every way there are certain limitations that angels have that God did not give them a capability to enjoy and our salvation I think is one of there is an old hymn that has the line in it that goes and when we sing redemption story they will fold their wings for angels never knew the joy that our salvation brings and I suspect that this has got something to do with that the angel is as much as saying

[23 : 15] I don't understand this thing Cornelius and I just can't tell you what you need to know but I know what your concern is and I'll tell you if you will send men to inquire after this fellow Peter he'll be able to tell you what you need to know so Cornelius dispatches three underlings and they arrive there and tell Peter what this is all about and verse 13 he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing and he will tell you words whereby you can be saved and as I began to speak Peter says and when I got there as I began to speak the Holy Spirit fell on them that is this household of Gentiles that as far as we were concerned God wouldn't have anything to do with but it was unmistakable and when he says the

Holy Spirit fell on them just as he did upon us at the beginning what's he talking about he's talking about Acts 2 the day of Pentecost he is reliving that he's saying you remember what that was like you remember how the Spirit of God came and how people were speaking in languages that they had not learned well same thing repeated right there in this Gentile house and this place is just reeking with everything that's unclean I mean it was just wall to wall Gentiles and here the Spirit of God was visiting them in the same way he did us we would have never considered that possible but it was right there before my very eyes and I couldn't deny it and Peter is saying what is this what's going on here anyway and I remembered the word of the

Lord how he used to say this is when Jesus was with him in his earthly ministry how Jesus used to say John John the baptizer baptized with water but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit and I am confident that was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and then Peter goes on and he says now if God I can just see Peter making his case and all of these devout Jewish brethren who are so steeped in the law of Moses and tradition and everything and they're all standing there looking at Peter and Peter is trying to make his case and telling them he's really squirming he's in all this hot water you know and they're accusing him of being a fraternizer and being a turncoat and how could you do this and Peter is laying it out and explaining how it all happened and if God therefore gave to them the

Gentiles the same gift as he gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ who was I that I could stand in God's way hey guys what did you want me to do am I supposed to stand there and say hey God you can't do that this is his show he's the sovereign Lord he does what he wants when he wants we are the ones who have to get with the program he doesn't need to change the program to suit our prejudices and our histories we are the ones who need to make the change and when they heard this they quieted down in other words they started backing off and they said well then God has granted to the

Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life and this repentance is the same for anybody anywhere anytime it means to change the mind and it's always about the same thing you need to change your mind by admitting you are wrong and you've been wrong and now you've got new information that shows you that you are wrong and it requires an attitude adjustment this means you've got to own up to your sin you've got to acknowledge your sin you've got to admit your sin when you confess your sin it doesn't mean that you articulate it and blab it out and say well I did this and I did that and I did three other things and you're talking about this long string of things that you've done that's not what it means to confess your sin confess your sin means homo legato it means to agree with

[28 : 35] God when you agree the defenses are gone the objections are gone the excuses are gone and it's time for an admission it's time to take ownership for your sin and say you know I do have a rebel heart I am selfish and self centered and self seeking we all are and I'm no different and no better than anybody else I'm made of the same stuff as they are and apart from Christ I have nothing to commend me to God can you admit that that's real repentance nothing delights the heart of God more than a person coming into the real truth of their condition

Jesus said there is joy there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents and even though they may not understand our salvation and all the rest they obviously know when somebody comes to the truth something happens I suspect that the grace and the power of God is dispensed to the human spirit of that believing one in a way that we don't understand or appreciate but angels seem to know that something has taken place and it is wonderful and they are rejoicing so these Gentiles have repented and believed but I want you to read on now this is really something don't stop reading now look at this verse 19 so then those who were scattered because of the persecution that is

Jews who scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen and who are they running from who are they scattered by fellow Jews the Jewish religious establishment they were the ones who physically literally stoned Stephen to death in Acts chapter 7 and everybody else who was a believer in Christ at that time knew full well what happened to Stephen and their thinking was oh they're coming for us next and they lit out they scattered they took off running for their lives this is the diaspora or the dispersion they made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus Antioch speaking the word oh my goodness can you believe this look at this speaking the word to no one except the Jews alone why was that the doors already been open to the

Gentiles why weren't they speaking the word to everyone tradition done that's why locked into this thing this was not an easy mold for them to break out of they were just used to this is a Jewish thing this is it well what about Cornelius well yeah there was that thing about Peter and Cornelius but that doesn't mean that the flood gate is open to everybody that's not a Jew oh but it did that's exactly what it meant but they just couldn't come to grips for that they just could not come to turn for it took a long time for that to really settle in so they are speaking the word to no one except Jews alone but but there were some of men of Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch and this is Antioch in Syria and began speaking to the Greeks also preaching the Lord

Jesus now there is a tendency to think well these are Gentiles I'm not so sure I don't think they were Gentiles they are Greek speaking Jews they are Greeks who have become they are Jews who have become acculturated in the Grecian philosophy and the Grecian culture and the Grecian everything because and the Greek language of course because it just permeated the whole Mediterranean world at this time so they were taken in and understandably so and a large number who believed turned to the Lord now question I want to leave you with actually question I want to end with is to what extent did they understand and a question was asked earlier someone submitted it in a written question about how much

[33 : 51] Peter understood when he preached this message in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost because really contrary to what most would say Peter did not preach the gospel of the grace of God which is and the marvelous thing that makes the gospel of the grace of God what it is is not only the full free covering blanket of grace that permeates and that covers that just cancels everyone's sin who believes in Christ but it also has to do with the extent to which it is given or made available and that is to everybody in other words Christ died for as many as fell in Adam's transgression and that's everybody that's the whole human race but the understanding of that was not readily available and

Peter here in Acts chapter 2 rather than preaching what we consider to be the gospel of the grace of God he charged Israel with the crime of crucifying their Messiah he preached the death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ but he was not able to make the connection that that death burial and resurrection provided redemption for the whole human race and you don't find that in Acts 2 it's just not there what is there is he was the Messiah God demonstrated that by the miracles performed through him and you crucified him with wicked hands you have slain the Lord of glory but God raised him from the dead and there is not a hint that this glorious gospel that we have liberty to preach today was preached then now the forgiveness of sins absolutely that was still in place and I want you to understand the dynamics of this and if you will come back for just a moment to

Matthew or to Mark's gospel chapter 3 I hope that's where the way these passages move around anymore yes oh my well it did move well anyway this is the man this was the man born of four who was let down through the roof yeah it's right it moved it's in it's in Mark chapter 2 now okay and this poor man was a paralytic those of you who are familiar with stroke victims know how debilitating this is to be paralyzed and they came bringing this paralytic in in verse 3 carried by four men being unable to get to him because of the crowd they removed the roof above him you've got to understand how roofs were constructed there and I won't go into that now this is no time for construction lessons but they were able to do that quite conveniently and they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying now the roof was flat they had a flat roof but feature this if you will they had straps or ropes probably one on each corner of this beer that they were carrying this man on and he is just helpless as all get out and he's lying there all stretched out on that thing and these four guys are standing up here and one on each corner with this rope or whatever and they're all easing him down from the roof above and Jesus is down on the floor below sitting there teaching and the place is just packed with people wall to wall people so that they couldn't even get in the front door and here they're letting this guy down through the roof and Jesus looks up and here comes this stretcher and this human being laid out on this stretcher just comes right down from this and these four guys standing up there grinning looking down

Jesus looks up as if I don't believe this and when the man gets down right at about the level of Jesus he looks over at him and in verse 5 we read Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic my son your sins are forgiven well now wait a minute that's not what we came here for I mean the religious stuff is all well and good and sins forgiven everything but really my physical needs is what the real problem is and you know what our Lord is saying here is no that's not your real problem and nothing has changed today our physical debilitations and I've got some and so do you they are not your real problem we tend to think they are because they are so much with us and sometimes they really hurt but they are not our real problem our real problem is our relationship to our creator that's our real problem and the barrier that hinders that relationship is the same as it has always been it is our sin that separates us from God and Jesus looked at this poor pathetic man and said my son your sins are forgiven and I can just see these self righteous

Pharisees standing there looking at each other squinting their eyes and saying did you hear what he said did I hear him right did he say sins are forgiven they were reasoning in their hearts and they said why does this man Jesus that's who they're talking about that's who this man is why does this man speak that way he is blaspheming who can forgive sins but God alone good question good question who does this guy think he is God yes matter of fact he does he is now that thought never entered their mind they just saw Jesus as someone who was attempting to pass himself off as God and in doing that he's guilty of blasphemy and the law is quite clear what do you do with blasphemers you stone them to death that's precisely the way they read this and Jesus said why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts which is easier to say to the paralytic your sins are forgiven or to say arise and take up your pallet and walk but in order that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins he said to the paralytic

[41 : 46] I say to you rise take up your pallet and go home and he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in the sight of all so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God saying we had never seen anything like this well I guess not I can just see this guy getting off that pallet standing and walking looking at his legs looking at his arms and he takes a couple of steps and the crowd that had been so abundant so you couldn't even get in the front door just starts parting and making a way for this guy and he kind of shuffles his feet and starts walking out the front door and they're standing there with their mouths open and saying I've never seen anything like this before what is this who is this and Jesus addressed their question this way tell me something which is easier to say your sins are forgiven or take up your bed and walk and the point he's making is this anyone who has the power and ability to say either one of those and make good on it can do the other also

Jesus is saying it's just as easy for me to say your sins are forgiven as it is to say take up your bed and walk because one who has the power to do one also has the power to do the other neither is too difficult for him amazing and what Jesus did here is he extended to this poor man not only a healthy body but a healthy spirit a healthy soul he forgave him but how did he do that because the price for sin has never been paid yet Calvary is still off in the future the balance scales of

God's justice have not been balanced yet and won't be until he makes that ultimate payment for sin he forgave this man the same way that Noah was forgiven in the same way that Daniel and Isaiah and Jeremiah were forgiven in the same way that Elijah and Elisha were forgiven because God had the ability to forgive sins and dispatch forgiveness to whomsoever he would and Jesus often did that too even though the price was not paid these are the times that God winked at in Acts 17 until the time should come when the payment would be exact all of that is involved with this but this forgiveness of sins is just absolutely monumental do you realize that there is no greater need that any human being anywhere in the world has ever had or ever will have that equals the forgiveness of sin nothing is so liberating so freeing so full of rejoicing so full of comfort assurance everything that goes with it when you get forgiveness from the only one who is authorized to give it so that you may know that the son of man have power on earth to forgive sins wow what a savior pray with me please father there is yet so much here that could be said but we trust that what has gone before is adequate to be used by the spirit of god to awaken any hungry searching heart for any that might not be searching we pray that you will be patient with them and bring them to the place of where they can really begin to grasp the true condition and the seriousness of their lostness before you and may they be willing to face the truth honestly within themselves and admit that they are what you say they are without

Christ they are undone and lost and miserable and halt and blind and poor and naked and they don't even know it but for those who are dealing with that reality and understand it we pray that they may have the courage and honesty to say even right now oh God I understand this is my true condition and despite that you love me with an incredible love so much so that you sent Jesus to do for me what I couldn't do for myself and right now I want to embrace this Savior I want to claim his salvation I want to take him as my very own and make him the Lord of my life giving him the rightful place thank you for what you did for me now I give myself to you dear friend if you make that your prayer you will never ever live long enough to regret it you will enjoy the reality of that throughout all eternity and our prayer for you is that you will not delay in making that decision if you haven't made it already and if you have tell someone they want to love you and encourage you and help you get started in your new found spiritual life thank you father for this time to share and enjoy together thank you for the truths that we have understood and for those things that we don't may these lead us to further appreciation that which lies ahead in

Christ's name we pray amen