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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Structure of Dispensational Theology (2):

The Hermeneutic – I

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the opportunity again to consider the teaching of the word of God. We thank Thee for the way in which in holy Scripture Thou hast made it so plain the important features of our Christian faith. We thank Thee that the ultimate goal of the Divine Purpose is the glorification of the triune God. And we thank Thee for that which we have seen already and we look forward to the unfolding of the greater glory that lies ahead. We pray that our study may enable us to think more clearly with reference to Scripture and understand the Bible in a clearer way. We pray, Lord, too that Thou wilt motivate us not only to study but to the application of the word of God to our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. May this hour be part of our preparation that prepares us essentially for that the living of the word of God. Be with each one of us give us clarity of thinking our subject is not easy. Help us, Lord, to be able to follow along and profit be edified from what we hear.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The Structure of Dispensational Theology, the distinctive features, the first of the, Hermeneutics or the Hermeneutic. Hermeneutics is a term that refers to the science of interpretation. And so we could say the distinctive features, the principles of

interpretation. But since the term the Hermeneutic of a particular theology so common, I think, you ought to get acquainted with that fact. The Greek term *hermeneueo* means to interpret, and so hermeneutics is the science of interpretation.

Now, it is obvious that hermeneutics is important in the study of any subject because it has to do with how we approach a subject, the presuppositions with which we come to a subject. In fact, in the case of the study of the Scriptures Hermeneutics is believed by many scholars today to be the central question in theological study. So many things are settled by the way in which we come to Holy Scripture.

Now, this is not simply an ancient problem nor is it a theological problem in current theological thinking but it is a question that affects our everyday life as a citizen of the United States of America. One of the most interesting applications of this very principle is the debate that is going on now over our judiciary in the United States. We have a few weeks back the Supreme Court justice William Brennan in a well-cited speech seeking to answer our Attorney General Edwin Meese's claim that the Judiciary is to go back and follow the intent of the original of the framers of the Constitution. And in settling Constitutional questions we should pay careful attention to the intent of the authors of the Constitution. Rather than arguing that the situation of today is different we, therefore, are free to, well I don't know exactly probably the best word to use would be to adapt, to adapt the Constitution to the values and the life of the present day.

Now, William Brennan is probably the most liberal member of the Supreme Court of the United States and so you are not surprised because judicial activism is characterized that body of men for a considerable period of time ever since Earl Warren was the head of the Supreme Court. Well Mr. Brennan has been a little disturbed over the fact that conservatism and that viewpoint has become more and more prominent and so he has decided to speak out against the Attorney General over this point. What you'll notice is that the question is really should we follow the intent of the ones who authored our Constitution or are we free to adapt the Constitution to the present day life.

Now, as I sought to analyze this and I've been very interested in it not simply because it is an interesting topic but because it has so much application to the problems that face us in the study of the Bible. The interesting thing, and I should go back and say the way in which I have in my own mind sought to simplify this problem, is to say that what Mr. Meese is saying is, essentially, we should follow the intent of the framers of the Constitution and we should apply the Constitution and its principles to the problems of everyday life. But Justice Brennan's position is not that we should follow the intent of the ones who authored our Constitution and apply it to our daily life but rather we should adapt to our daily life. In other words, if there are values that we have now that the framers of the Constitution did not have in the eighteenth century we are free to follow the values that we have now.

Well, I think, you can see that this raises the question of why we even have a Constitution because if it is possible for us to adapt this document to the values we have today then there is not real point in having a Constitution at all. So this is really the issue and obviously the Supreme Court Justice William Brennan would like to say, “I want to follow the Constitution but I want to be able to adapt it to the values of the present day and therefore I want to be more,” he wouldn't want to say he wants to be an activist because that is not what he should say, but “I want to properly interpret the Constitution whereas the other viewpoint is to the effect in order to interpret the Constitution we must follow the intent of the authors of that Constitution.” Now Mr. Brennan said we don't know what the intent was and on the other hand those who sought to answer Justice Brennan have said, “Wait a minute has all historical information been lost since the eighteenth century, did we not know what these men publicly said and what they have written before us.” And so the debate has continued and has become rather hot because Mr. Brennan has suggested that what this really is is a political type of thing and the others of course standing on the other side of the political matters are seeking to take the other viewpoint.

Well this is exactly what has happened in the interpretation of Scripture. And the question that has been before New Testament interpretation and Old Testament interpretation has been essentially this since the rise of existentialism. When we come to the Bible do we interpret the Bible by the intent so far as we can tell of the original authors of Scripture as they were guided by the Holy Spirit or are we free to take the biblical text and to make it speak to our present day as we since those words may apply to us not considering the intent of the original authors. In other words, is the text itself as it is sovereign or are we to be careful to attempt to discover precisely what the authors of Scripture were intending to say when they wrote the things that they wrote.

Now, if you are familiar with Existentialism as a philosophy you can see why that would be a natural outgrowth. The words of Scripture are not to be followed in acceptance so far as taken apart from the historical background apart from the intent of the author may speak to us in our situation today. So Hermeneutics is not only important in biblical things, Hermeneutics is important in the national life of the United States of America and, ultimately, is important in your life because you are affected by the decisions that are made by our Supreme Court. So it is a very, very critical question. Incidentally, there is a misspelling in the first word. I apologize for that. The contemporary struggle over, I don't even know how to pronounce what I have here, that is not Mrs. Ray's error. Somehow or another it has sneaked in but, you know, if you look at roman 1, roman 2 and roman 3, I got it right three out of four times at least, so Hermeneutics.

Now, the reformers were individuals who taught the grammatical, historical, theological method of interpretation. That is, we as we read them hear them saying we should pay attention to the words of Scripture and we should pay attention to the syntax of Scripture and we should also remember that the Bible is unlike any other human book. It is, ultimately, authored by the Holy Spirit. What we have in Holy Scripture is a work that is a product of dual authorship; the Holy Spirit and the individual authors of Scripture

to follow the grammatical, historical, theological method is to interpret according to the laws of grammar and the facts of history remembering that, ultimately, we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for the meaning. Some of the expressions that have often been used in this connection are *scriptura sui ipsius interpret* or “Scripture is the interpreter of it itself.” In other words, if you want to understand Scripture you read Scripture primarily, or another particular Latin statement that was very common in the writings of the reformers and those that followed them was *Scriptura, scriptura interpret*, Scripture is the interpreter of Scripture. One that I’ve often cited when this matter comes up in your ears “*Scriptura ex scriptura explicanda est*,” or Scripture is to be explained by Scripture. Fundamentally, this means that then we should cultivate the habit of closely observing the Old Testament authors use of Scripture in the Old Testament. The New Testament authors use of Scripture from the Old Testament and then also the New Testament authors use of earlier New Testament Scripture. So in order to find what the Bible says about Hermeneutics we, first of all, and primarily study the ways in which the authors of Scripture regard previous Scripture. That’s very important.

In other words, to put it very practically if you want to understand how the writers of Scripture used Scripture use this kind of thinking. As you read on into the prophets for example, notice how they use the Pentateuch, notice how they use Moses. In what way do they interpret Moses? Do they interpret Moses in a spiritualizing way, a spiritual way, or do they interpret Moses and do they use Moses in a grammatical, historical, theological way? And when we come to the New Testament do the authors of the New Testament citing the Old Testament do they follow a particular kind of method that might be called symbolical or spiritualizing or grammatical, historical method of Scripture. And then later on in the New Testament when you come to the Book of Revelation, for example, how does the author of the Book of Revelation regard previous Scripture. Putting all of this material together one arrives at a biblical hermeneutic or the principles of interpreting the Bible derived from Scripture itself.

One well-known man who was liberal in his general viewpoint said, “The doctrine that the Holy Spirit as the supreme interpreter of Scripture is the highest attainment of interpretation.” And in the seventeenth century John Ball put it this way, “We are not tied to the expositions of the fathers or counsels for the finding out of the sense of the Scripture. The Holy Ghost speaking in the Scripture is the only faithful interpreter of the Scripture. The Westminster Confession followed Ball and Usher and others in the same sentiments. The biblical justification for this method is not simply what I have just said but we have precise statements that make this point. For example, in Hebrews chapter 9 in verse 8, we have this particular phrase as the author of the epistle is describing things within the tabernacle. He says these words, Hebrews chapter 9 in verse 8, the author says, “The Holy Spirit signifying this that the way into the holiest while the first tabernacle still had standing had not yet been manifested.” But notice it’s the Holy Spirit signifying this. In other words, the author looked at the original of the Day of Atonement and he noted the fact that only once a year and on that one day was the High Priest enabled to the holiest of all. And he saw in that an indication of what the Holy Spirit intended when that particular regulation is set about in the Mosaic Law. The morning star of the Reformation John Wycliffe echoed the thoughts of these when he said “The Holy Spirit teaches the sense of Scripture as Christ opened the Scripture to his apostles.” So as our Lord opened up the word to them so we as we read the word of God are, ultimately, dependent upon the Holy Spirit as the interpreter of Scripture. This does not mean, of course, that we do not use every possible interpretative help that we might use but we simply mean that the ultimate decision with regard to the meaning of Scripture lies in the hands of the author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and we also believe as Christians that in the study of Scripture we may have the assurance that the Holy Spirit will guide us in the meaning of Scripture. As the Lord Jesus said when he promised the coming of the Holy Spirit “he will guide you in all the truth.” So this is the position that the reformers have taught and really the position that the orthodox have generally taught.

Now, let's come to Romans 1, Evangelical Hermeneutics, grammatical, historic, theological method. Now, I am going to go through this rather rapidly. I think, that it will be fairly plain to you in the light of what I've just said. The first step in the interpretation of any document is to be assured that the text you are interpreting is really the text. And so in approaching Scripture the first thing that you must consider is what is called “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.” I have before me a book in which I have the Hebrew Old Testament and I have the Greek New Testament and particularly in the Greek New Testament at the bottom of the pages are filled with rather technical looking material which we call simply a textual apparatus. And in the bottom of the page there is a simplified indication of the variant readings in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament. You'll remember that almost six thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament of varying lengths that are in our hands some complete most not complete because they are old and have been used for some of them centuries.

And then there are translations of these documents made in the earliest times in to old Latin and the Latin Vulgate and into Syriac into various other languages, Coptic languages and so on, many different versions and they are important also for the ascertainment of the precise text. So it's the work of the interpreter first of all to be sure that the text he is interpreting is most likely and certainly as we can be the text that the authors wrote. We do not have any of the autograph, any of the original writings themselves.

Now, don't be disturbed by that we have more manuscript evidence for the New Testament that we have of any other ancient volume. And not only that not only is it more but its better. The evidence that we have goes back closer to the original in fact there is no illustration of any original document of an ancient, an original manuscript, an autograph, any ancient writing in our hands. If you go to school and you studied Caesar or Cicero or Virgil or you studied Euripides or whatever you would not have any of the original documents, none of them are available, only the manuscripts and many of

them separated from the original by as much as nine hundred years. In other words, there is no document that will give testimony to the text between and the original and nine hundred years later. So we are much better furnished with the New Testament in fact, the fact that we have so many manuscripts of the New Testament is one of the things that makes it difficult to be absolutely certain of the precise text in some points. But anyway I'm sure you can see that the first thing that you must do in studying any ancient document is to be reasonably sure that what you are reading is what the authors of Scripture wrote.

Now, secondly, Grammatical and Syntactical Criticism. The term grammatical, incidentally, comes from the Greek word *gramma* which is the same as the Latin *littera* and it means a letter. A grammatical analysis is that which involves philological and syntactical analysis. That's fundamental to accurate interpretation obviously one must be able to read a sentence and to analyze a sentence. Grammatical exegesis is itself dependent upon philological analysis that is the study of words because only a philologist can be an interpreter. Linguistic studies are exceedingly important and therefore in the interpretation of this document it's important to pay attention to the words. Syntactical analysis is equally important it has to be exact and exacting and you have to know how to distinguish a subject from a predicate and an object from a subject. You have to know how to distinguish modifying phrases and clauses. You have to understand purpose clauses, result clauses, substantial clauses -- all of the things that go to make up the analyses of the grammar and syntax of a language. It's clear then that if a person cannot read a text and make those distinctions, he cannot accurately read and understand the word of God. It's very important to pay attention then to what you're reading. Too many people do not.

Remember a statement Professor James Denney once wrote back in the earlier part of this century. He said, “Philosophers used to be our botheration -- now it's economists - - but they all have souls above parsing.” Now, if you have studied the ancient language

you'll understand what “parsing” means and you're getting down right to the well like McGee would say, “where the rubber meets the road” in the understanding of a text. That is true in Biblical studies not simply in economics. Both Luther and Calvin emphasized these things. Luther said once, “The science of theology is nothing else but grammar exercised on the words of the Holy Spirit.” Listen to Calvin who was even more of a scholar than Luther, though if he did not have that magnificent flash of spiritual insight that Luther manifested so often. Calvin said, “The science of theology is nothing else but grammar exercised on the word” that's Luther. Calvin words were, “We cannot understand the teaching of God unless we know his styles and languages.” Notice the plural and “we must know his languages” that is it is not necessary to simply to know Greek it is important to know Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic as well because the Old Testament and the New Testament were written in three languages Hebrew, Aramaic a brief part of the Old Testament and also Greek. So John Calvin said, “We cannot understand the teaching of God unless we know his styles and languages.”

Now, I am not trying to dissuade you from the study of the Bible. As a matter of fact, as I have so often said if you have two or three translations made fairly accurately, like the New American Standard Bible or the International version and then the old King James Version if you have those three versions before you and you studiously studied them you would be able to be a premier student of the word of God without any knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. For the simple reason as you read and pondered those texts in English you would be able to discover where the problems were because the authors would differ here and there in their renderings of the text. And then by the study of their context you would be almost always able to make a decision that would be the right decision, because almost all interpretative problems are solved by an accurate, careful, perceptive knowledge of the context. That will tell you whether this word is to be preferred as over against this word and you won't need any Greek and you won't need any Hebrew to make those decisions. Study the Bible for yourself. The Lord God

never made it necessary for individuals to know the original languages in order to study the Bible. But occasionally preachers, like me, like to give that impression because it sort of makes us the priests of the truth of God. In other words, to understand you must come through me and I'll give you the Greek and I'll give you the Hebrew. And I taught as you know, I taught Greek for thirty years and I taught Hebrew and I want to tell you that some of the biggest errors that have been made in interpretation have been made by those Greek and Hebrew. They just did not pay attention to the context. That's anybody who studies the word of God in the original languages would confirm just what I said.

Capital C, Higher Criticism. Now if Evangelical Hermeneutics acknowledges that it is important to know “Higher Criticism.” In other words, we must not only know the words themselves and their relationships, grammatically, syntactically, and but we must also know the broader critical aspects of the truth as well. Historical Criticism is important. To study the setting of a text in time and space, literary criticism is important. The composition, structure and rhetorical style of various authors are important. Various other types of criticism have some application to the word of God and there is no need to go into things like form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism they do not contribute a whole lot to the understanding of the Bible. Maybe every now and then some little light will come from these things. But if a person really pays attention to the historical background and studies the text carefully and follows the grammar and syntax of the passages he will have essentially what is meant by Evangelical Hermeneutics in the grammatical, historical theological method. Dispensationalists, like many others, like to claim that this is the key to their system. We shall see.

Roman 2, Evangelical Hermeneutics, Prophecy and Typology. The problem with prophecy, now here I just want to deal with a couple of questions. One a broad question and the other is a narrow one. Both come to the heart of the dispute over Dispensationalism, Covenant Theology, and Millennialism. And the first is the problem of a dual hermeneutic. It has long been the contention of Pre-millennialist that Amillennialist really

follow a dual hermeneutic. Not a single hermeneutic, grammatical, historical, and theological but they follow a dual hermeneutic. They use a literal method or a normal method, grammatical, historical, theological method in all of the areas of theology except that of eschatology. But when they come to eschatology or the study of prophecy in that area Amillennialists are often accused of following a hermeneutic of spiritualization, that is, terms no longer mean what they mean in a grammatical, historical, theological of looking at the text but they've taken on different meanings. Listen to a recent accuser from the Dispensational standpoint, accuser of those who hold other views. This is Professor Earl Rodmarker he is the President of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon, a former student of mine years ago incidentally. But Dr. Rodmarker makes the common claim. First he says, “The literal method is the method of historic orthodoxy from Tindal on. In fact, it was the method of the Syrian school of interpretation in Antioch.” Second, Professor Rodmarker says, “Amillennialist depart from it in eschatology.” He cites Weingarten a well know amillennial interpreter saying “Even if we should say that prophecies are fulfilled literally as a rule we find a series of exceptions to this rule in the future state of Israel in the eschatology of the theocracy, in the spiritualization of the kingdom of priests, the holy nation.” And this after having said previously that the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Christ the ancient cities of the Old Testament and Israel as a theocratic nation remarkably are so exceeding literal.

Now, Professor Rodmarker goes on to say note particularly that he admits that prophecies of the Old Testament writers were fulfilled literally according to history. But many of those made by the same prophets if they concern our days and last days are to be fulfilled spiritually or in a spiritualized way. Rodmarker in his discussion deduces familiar citations from Lorraine Betna whose books we sell in our book room and Floyd Hamilton. Betna a post-millennialist writes, “It's generally agreed that if the prophecies are to be taken literally they do foretell a restoration of the nation of Israel with Palestine with the Jews having a prominent place in the kingdom and ruling over the other nations.”

And St. Floyd Hamilton, now I put that in quotes “St. Floyd Hamilton” because Floyd Hamilton was a well-known Amillennialist but he made a statement that played so much into the hands of pre-millennialist that I’ve conferred upon him the title of “saint”. Now, it’s not official in any way but this quotation has been made use of by practically by every pre-millennist who’s ever argued this question. St. Floyd Hamilton whose canonization has been granted by pre-millennialist for having written words that have proven to be the most useful to pre-millennialists since the days of the early church fathers has written this is what he wrote. “Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an early reign of the Messiah as the pre-millennists pictures.” So Professor Rodmarker goes on to say, “Why should we abandon our hermeneutic in parts of our eschatology if we follow a grammatical, historical, theological method? Why when we come to eschatology should we engage in spiritualization?”

Now, I must exercise a little bit of a critique of my former student who is a very distinguished teacher and preacher of the word and an important man in evangelical pre-millennialism of the Dispensational background. First of all, if his method is that of historic orthodoxy then why has historic orthodoxy reached different exegetic conclusions? In other words, if it is true that this is the method that historic orthodoxy has followed why has not all historic orthodoxy then reached the conclusion that the Scriptures are best understood in a dispensational framework. That seems to me a reasonable question. So I first want to say that. The answer becomes plain when analysis is made. Historical orthodoxy has another principle up its sleeve besides literal interpretation. It’s the principle of spiritualization.

Now, I should say this in all fairness. Not all amillennialists today exercise the same degree of spiritualization that used to be exercised by amillennialists John Wycliffe. For example, Anthony Hokomer his book *The Bible in the Future* makes the point particularly that pre-millennialists have been right, he thinks, about the understanding of

a number of the passages of the Old Testament. They should be understood in a literal kind of way. And so Professor Hokomer has decided the best way to understand them in a rather literal way is to place those prophecies in the new heavens and the new earth. And placing them in the new heavens and the new earth period of time one can have a literal fulfillment of the prophecies and avoid a great deal of spiritualization. Now, Professor Hokomer doesn't avoid all spiritualization but he avoids a great deal. He is in the vast minority among the Amillennialists who haven't yet taken to Professor Hokomer's methods but at any rate not all Amillennialists follow spiritualizing method to the same degree. In fairness to historic orthodoxy it should be said that orthodoxy feels the principle of spiritualization as necessary for biblical reasons. In other words, what we come down to is Scripture is to be understood by Scripture and if we look at the way Scripture uses Scripture and if we find that that Scripture spiritualizes certain prophecies of the Old Testament as they are cited in the New Testament than we should follow the principle spiritualization. That is the use of a dual hermeneutic that's not a double hermeneutic that's a single hermeneutic. A single hermeneutic is simply interprets Scripture as Scripture is interpreted by Scripture. So, I think, occasionally people forget that when they say one must follow dual hermeneutic is not really thought through some of these issues. That leads to a conclusion this; it will not do to simply plead consistency leaning upon presumed inconsistency of the dual hermeneutic. It's the contention of many Amillennialists that the literal interpretation of the apostle's use of Scripture from the Old Testament leads inevitably to the use of the principle of spiritualization in hermeneutics. Passages that might be cited are citation from Hosea 11 in verse 1, and Matthew chapter 2 in verse 1, the citation of Isaiah 53:4 in Matthew chapter 8, verse 14 through 17, and then someone mentioned this the other night the citation of Hosea 2:23 combined with Hosea 1:10 and Romans 9:25 and 26. Now, you can see that not too many illustrations can be brought forward but some may be brought forward.

Well that takes us to the question of reinterpretation. Now it looks like I may have to use two nights on this subject because I want you to be able to ask a few questions. So let me deal with reinterpretation and maybe we will just stop there and pick this up next week.

There is another question that we need to discuss with reference to the problem of the prophecy and that is the problem of reinterpretation. It is the contention of some students of scripture, let me name some names you should be familiar with, George Ladd, he's now with the Lord he died just a couple of years ago, Professor Ladd was professor of New Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary an evangelical institution in California for a number of years and wrote a number of books and I would imagine probably some of his books have been sold in our book room.

One of his books was the 'Presence of the Future' and he has written a book on the kingdom and written a book on the Rapture and written a book on several other topics as well. Professor Ladd, who was a Pre-Millennialist but not a Dispensational Pre-Millennialist, contended that the New Testament authors reinterpreted passages from the Old Testament. By this he means that they found senses in the Old Testament text that by a grammatical, historical method of understanding the Old Testament could not be found. In other words, the New Testament writers' found things in the Old Testament that the writer of the Old Testament text did not see was there. In fact, he goes on to make the statement and these are his words “The fact is that the New Testament frequently interprets the Old Testament prophecies in a way not suggested by the Old Testament context.”

Now, the three passages he uses to illustrate this are the three I just referred to. The quotation from Hosea 11:1, the quotation from Isaiah chapter 53 and the quotations from Hosea in Romans 9. Concerning Matthew 2:15, and Hosea 11:1, Ladd says, “The Old Testament is reinterpreted in the light of the Christ event.” In concluding his discussion of

other passages he said, “With regard to the first coming of Christ the Old Testament is interpreted by the New Testament.”

Now, Professor Ladd, of course, is making the point simply that the Old Testament text when it is cited in the New Testament has a meaning that is not really found in the Old Testament. Take the illustration of Hosea 11, Professor Ladd says if you look at Hosea Chapter 11 in verse 1, “Out of Egypt I have called my Son” and then you look at Matthew chapter 2, where Matthew cites that text, “Out of Egypt I have called my Son” and says it’s fulfilled. You go back and you look at Hosea, Chapter 11:1, and there isn’t a thing in Hosea 11:1, “Out of Egypt I have called my Son” that indicates that that’s a prophecy. As a matter of fact, the author of Hosea is looking back and not looking forward at all. But Matthew has looked at that text and he has said that that text refers to Our Lord’s coming out of Egypt in his ministry after he had gone there and he was now coming back out of Egypt. So what was a text that had to do with history in the Old Testament is looked at by Matthew as if it were a text of prophecy. So the New Testament has reinterpreted the Old Testament text. That’s what Professor Ladd means by that.

Now, Professor Ladd goes on to say, “Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then squeezes the New Testament into it. A non-Dispensational eschatology forms it’s theology he says from the explicit teaching of the New Testament. And the critics of Professor Ladd have said and then they have to squeeze the Old Testament into the New Testament. So this is a debate obviously between very intelligent people, and the question is more serious than it might appear at first hand. What this suggests is that it cannot be sure how the Old Testament prophecies of the end are to be fulfilled. For the first coming of Christ was accomplished in terms not foreseen by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and they are unavoidable indications of the Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the Christian church. Some of you have read things by Clark Pinnock. He is a well known evangelical scholar. Professor Pinnock is a very respected man, a Christian man, listen to what he has to say.

“Let us by all means begin with the original and sense of meaning of the text.” Adding in a new paragraph “but when we do that the first thing we discover is the dynamism of the text itself. Not only its basic meaning forward looking, the text itself records a very dynamic process of revelation in which the saving message once given gets continually and constantly updated, refocused, and occasionally revised. Just consider the progression between the Old and New Testament out of the coming of the Messiah introduced crucial reinterpretations into the earlier revelation process.”

Now, do you find anything strange about that? Do you find anything difficult about that? I find a great deal of difficulty in that. Even if we were to say the New Testament authors wrote from revelatory stance that is they were justified in writing as if they were prophets giving new revelation. That’s still reveals to me a great problem and therefore it seems to me that this kind of approach to Scriptures suggested by Professor Ladd and by Professor Pinnock is really an attack on the infallibility of the word of God itself. In other words, the Old Testament which meant a certain thing in its context is by the New Testament author given another interpretation. So how can both be true? Obviously, an individual like that cannot believe in the infallibility of the text as we have it and Professor Ladd and Professor Pinnock have both abandoned the inerrancy of Holy Scripture.

So let’s stop at this point because I know this is rather heavy for you, you haven’t been to a Theological Seminary and sometimes it takes a little bit to get into that kind of life. But I’m sure some of you have some questions at this point. I’d like to try to answer them. So we have a few minutes. Let’s listen to your questions and don’t hesitate to ask a silly question. Somebody else is anxious to know the answer. You’re in a daze aren’t you, in a daze.

Yes, go ahead Bill speak loud enough so I can hear. [Question inaudible]

[Answer] Now the reason you have that impression and the impression is probably a good impression. By the way these two figures are figures derived from a river which as you

know has its high reaches where the waters begin in the mountains then it flows down and finally opens out into the Gulf of Mexico in the case of the Mississippi River so that lower criticism has to do with the text as we have it and, therefore, it's a study of textual criticism. It is simply a text a study by which we seek to understand the very words that the authors of Scripture wrote and the principles that are applied are well-known principles of textual criticism that are applied incidentally to non-scriptural works just as to scriptural works. Questions of extrinsic criticism, intrinsic criticism, questions of manuscripts, age of manuscripts, circulation of manuscripts, various things like that. The kinds of errors that scribes make, errors of the eye, errors perhaps of the ear because some dictation took place as is evident in Paul's own writings. That's lower criticism. Higher criticism as you go up the river to the reaches you're talking about the source of the waters of the river. And so higher criticism is primarily the study of things like the authorship of a book, the place from which the book was written, the people to whom the book was written, the ways in which the author composed his work, the influences that he might have had from other writings. Like Luke says, he wrote the Gospel of Luke having taken in hand to having studied the writings of a number of people who took it hand to write an account, he said he wants to write a more accurate account.

Now, the reason that higher criticism so often is identified with unbelieving criticism is simply because that kind of criticism is less sure of certain results by the very nature of the case. And secondly, the individuals who have practiced it have been, the great majority of them, unbelieving critics. But strictly speaking from the standpoint of the practice of criticism itself, there is no reason why it should be unbelieving. It just so happens that those who practice it have been largely unbelieving. But evangelicals also practice higher criticism as well. If I stood before you and I said I'm going to give a series on the Epistle of the Hebrews and I'd like to devote the first hour to an introduction to it and I would discuss the authorship of the epistle I would discuss the question of to whom it went because Hebrews doesn't really tell us to who it was sent. If I were to discuss the

location of the author at the time he wrote it that's what stated specifically in the epistle.

You know all of those questions would be higher criticism. Does that answer your question?

Yes Sir, Dave. [Question inaudible] Yes, I resolve it only in this sense that I don't think that it takes place and I have sought in detailed studies on this point to take up Professor Ladd's three outstanding illustrations and show it is not necessary to hold what he holds at all. In fact, take the case of Hosea which is the first one he uses the one about which he speaks probably most significantly. The interpretation of Hosea 11:1, and Matthew chapter 2, verse 15, if you have studied the history of the interpretation of that passage the majority of the interpreters both liberal Roman Catholic and Conservative have stated that Matthew used Hosea 11:1, typically. In other words, he sees a relationship between Israel and our Lord and the experiences of Israel and the experiences of our Lord. Now, when he uses the term fulfilled as is often the case he uses fulfilled in the typical sense. He is simply saying that there is an analogy between the way God dealt with the nation Israel and the way he has dealt with the last and final Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that obviously to do justice to it you'd have to debate on all of these claims text by text. That was a statement I was going to make next time. Greg Munson, a young interpreter who has been a professor in school, likes to say something which I think is very true that is in matters like this we can't solve matters like this by theorizing, what we have to engage in is to use Greg's term "hand to hand exegetical combat" over these individual passages. So that is what, I think, one must do. But, I think, a favorable outcome results from that. I might say, of course, that if you could show one principle, one instance that seemed clearly to be spiritualizing, that is, taking a term giving it a meaning that it didn't have in its historical context, if you could show one case of that that would be a far cry from establishing it as an interpretative principle to apply very widely.

Yes, Lois [question inaudible] Can you talk just a little louder so I can hear.
[Inaudible] Yeah, hermeneutic [inaudible] One must distinguish between typology, symbolism and allegory and spiritualizing. What you are thinking about, I believe, is symbolizing. See the author of the Book of Revelation right in the beginning says that he “set and signified these things.” The word that he uses is “sei mano” from which we get the term “sei maon” which is used in John’s gospel for the signs performed by our Lord so they were symbols, symbolism. But now spiritualizing I’ll give you an illustration of it in Acts chapter 15, the statement is made that the Tabernacle of David which had fallen is going to be restored or built again. Now Oswald T. Allis a well-known conservative professor at Princeton Seminary, later at Westminster Theological Seminary has expounded that passage in his book ‘Prophecy in the Church’ and in it he says, “The Tabernacle of David equals the Church.”

Now that’s spiritualizing in other words the Tabernacle of David in the Old Testament would not under any circumstances refer to the Church. Tabernacle of David would be a reference to the Davidic rule. And probably encompassing also the later manifestation of it and those that followed Solomon and others. David is a term that is used and I don’t know whether it’s fifty-nine or sixty but it’s around that many times to my recollection. It never means anything but David but now it is given the meaning “church.” So that is spiritualizing. So if you see, in other words, that’s not symbolism you may have symbolism a lot of symbolism appears in the Book of Revelation. Symbolism appears in certain parts of the Old Testament but in that case you are given the word an historical meaning it did not have at all. So that’s what is meant by spiritualizing. It’s to take a text of the Old Testament that referred to Israel and give it to apply to Gentiles in the New Testament. Again an illustration of it is Galatians 6:16, which we will discuss soon where the apostle says, “Many have walked according to this rule, peace be upon them and peace be upon the Israel of God.” And many have sought to show Israel of

God is a reference to the Church. But the term Israel never means anything but ethnic Israel. So if you give it that meaning you are doing what is called spiritualizing.

Now Amillennialists will grant that they do that kind of spiritualizing. They don't like that term. For example, Weingarten the man I quoted, he says “I don't like the term spiritualizing but I don't know of any better term so I will admit that's what I do.” I should say, of course, that he would say too that he doesn't do that all the time but that is a principle with them. Does that help?

Any other, yes one last question. [Question inaudible] The what [question inaudible] I would not call that spiritualizing myself. I would call that the use of a symbol with significant meaning. In other words, what he is saying is that they are symbolically what the circumcision was. Now, you do have expressions like that. You have symbolism, you have analogy, in fact if you didn't call it symbolism you would call it analogy and there are a number of analogies that are true of the Church which in their historical beginnings were references to the nation Israel. That's the way in which, I think, a text like that is to be understood. That's, incidentally, the passage that I was going to say something about too.

Well our time is up let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father [End of Tape].