

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 3

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1301-A

We wanna share tonight in a time of question and answer. For our guests, we might explain to you that normally we are studying through a book in the Bible; but, periodically, there...there is a piling up of Bible questions that occurs; and so we halt somewhere in the process and devote a Sunday night or two to answering questions. Some of you have asked questions that have rather lengthy answers. Many questions, to me, have rather lengthy answers; and...it's very difficult to give a short answer. And in many cases, those questions are related to passages which I have already taught to you in the text of some book that we've studied. So if you have asked a question say on an interpretation of Acts or Hebrews or Galatians or something, and that's already in the tape ministry, and it's already available to you through the tape library or through the purchasing of it or whatever, we're gonna assume that you can check it out at that point, if it's a long answer, and not spend our time repeating something, unless it's been so long ago, and it's a little bit off center of the way we discussed it on the tape.

Now, in addition to that, I...I would encourage you to get in the habit of...of having your own questions answered by your own study. I think it's very important that you answer your own questions. You know, there are books that are published that are titled *The Bible Questioned Answered*, and there have been several in that same category. I have yet to find in those books really an answer that fully satisfies me, because I may come at a problem with just a little bit different outlook, and the only way I can be fully satisfied and cover all the bases is to get it for myself; and I think that will be true with you. I will answer your question, but it'll be an answer coming from my mind to the question, rather than yours, and it may come at it from a little different angle. So if we don't just exactly meet on what you were asking, then take note of the fact that you can take what I said and maybe go from there to dig out your own answer.

Then the other thing that I wanted to say, just as an introductory comment is that there's one verse that I claim continually in answering Bible questions, and that's Deuteronomy 29:29, which says, "The secret things belong to the Lord." And there are many things that can't be answered; and there will be many mysteries. There will be many answers that will be given as Biblical answers, but they will have loose ends on them. People always ask those ultimate questions like why did God allow evil. Or how can you choose to come to Christ when it's all predetermined before you're born; and if it's predetermined before you're born, why bother to evangelize, and so forth and so forth.

And there are always gonna be those questions where, even after you've answered the whole thing, there's a little leak in your answer; and the reason there's a little leak in there is because that's God. That's where God gets into the answer, and you don't have revelation on that subject. So we'll try to give as complete answer as we can. Now, also, we could never answer all the questions that were asked. You may think that yours was the very most important, and it may not get answered this time, but I'm keeping a file, and we're going to answer them one way or another, either here or you'll get instant answers in the Rapture...

Okay, let's begin with this question. Is the Rapture before or after the seven-year Tribulation? I didn't even realize that was an issue. No, it's an issue. Is the Rapture before or after the Tribulation? It's become kind of popular today in the last two or three years to believe in the Rapture occurring at the end of the Tribulation. There have been three positions historically, pre-Trip, mid-Trip, and post-Trip. What that means is the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, post-Tribulation; the middle of the Tribulation, mid-Tribulation; the beginning of the Tribulation, pre-Tribulation.

Now, if you wanted to catalog me, I would have to acclaim to be a pre-Tribulationist. I believe the church will be taken out before the Tribulation. Now, if you would like a full-length answer of that, we have a series of tapes on that very subject, so I'm not gonna go into that, other than to just give you two reasons that I believe are the most difficult reasons for a difficult argument for a post-Tribulationist to deal with.

If a person comes along, and this is popular today, there are a lotta people who...who wanna go through the Tribulation. It's become...we got sort of a martyr complex, you know? In a very mechanized society and a...and very high-powered society and a very...a very easy kind of existence, a lotta people would try. They kinda think it's neat to go through the Tribulation, and they see the movie about thief in the night, and they can see themselves running from the beast and all this intrigue; and...and I think, really, now, I'm saying this truly, because this is happening in the...in the minds of, not the...not the educational people, not the theology people so much as it is it's a popular kind of thing; and there is, I think, Hal Lindsay's books, which took a firm pre-Tribulational stand, forced some theologians out of the woodwork to write on a post-Tribulational position. So you have the theological battle, and it's going on in those two positions, but you have this new popular thing, and I've been...sometimes I'll listen to a Christian...those Christian television programs, and they're talking about, "Well, you know, I'm not convinced that we're going to be taken out. I think we may go through a whole..." you know, and it's all very dramatic.

Listen, folks, well, I don't wanna be there. It doesn't sound good to me at all. If I have my choice of being here with the beast, to be in Heaven with Jesus, it isn't even a question. But, aside from that emotional argument, which doesn't hold water, that's just me, there are two primary things that you have to deal with if you're going to take a post-Tribulation position. One is the sheep and goat judgment. In Matthew chapter 25, at the end of a Tribulation period, Matthew 25, you have a

judgment occurring. We know that it's at the end of the Tribulation, because discusses the Tribulation period in chapter 24. We...we know that the...the abomination of desolation occurs in the Tribulation, 24:15, and all these things and so forth; and then verse 31 of 25, "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, and to sit on the throne of His glory."

Now, what's that? That's not the Rapture, is it? That's got to be the Second Coming to set up the Kingdom. When He comes in His glory to sit on His throne. Now, the post-Tribulation position says this. Watch. That at the end of the of the seven years, there is a quick Rapture and a quick return. You go through the Tribulation, then up and back. There's a big problem with that, and it's this. If...if all the regenerate people go up and come back, then how come, when Christ comes back, the first thing He does is separate the sheep from the goats? Who are the sheep? See? Who are the sheep? The Cri...It can't be Christians, 'cause there aren't any left. They all got Raptured. But if you move the Rapture to the beginning of the seven years, then you have a seven-year period in which people will be saved that will constitute the sheep at the end of the tribulation. Understand? So if you jam it all at the end, I see that as the major problem of a post-Tribulation view. Where do you get the sheep for the sheep and goat judgment? Because if Christ takes all of us up and comes right back, there aren't any sheep left. It's not gonna be a problem to say, "You sheep come over and go into My Kingdom, and you goats here." There aren't any sheep left. They've already been Raptured and glorified and all set...

That's the first problem. The second one, and I think they have to face if they take a post-Tribulation view, is 2 Thessalonians 2:1. These are primary arguments. There are many others, but these are just ones I'll give you quickly. Second Thessalonians 2:1, and I think maybe these are the two best arguments against a post-Tribulation position. Some of you don't even know what I'm talking about. You just relax and do whatever you want, and we'll be back in a minute. Second Thessalonians 2:1..."Now we beseech you, brethren...now listen...by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him." "Jesus is coming," says Paul to the Thessalonians, "and we will be gathered together unto Him." *Epi su nago gace*. A gathering together. It is used only one other time in the New Testament. That's Hebrews 10:25, and in Hebrews 10:25, it says, "Forsake not the *su nago gace*, the assembling of yourselves together. It is a word reserved in the New Testament for gathering together of believers.

So the Thessalonian Christians were saying, "Oh, are we already in the time of trouble? Is it already too late?" And he says, "Now, wait a minute, we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus and our...our specific...gathering together to Him." Don't be shaken. Let no man deceive you; and then he says, "I believe that after that will come the Day of the Lord, and then the falling away, and...and the man of sin is revealed," and all of that. But I see as the primary event the gathering together. A special gathering together, a special coming together of the church, a unique one, separate from anything else; and I think 2 Thessalonians 2:1 has a great amount of weight for that end.

So my belief is that the church does not go through the Tribulation; and, again, I...I would say that that's just putting it together the best way I can. It's a very difficult problem. There are many other reasons that I've tried to share with you, and I stand on that ground; and we'll find out sooner or later; and I feel like Dr. Sochi, who said, "I know there are some errors in my theology. I just wish I knew where they were." And there will be some somewhere. We'll see whether that works out.

All right, is there a time before the Rapture when the Spirit ceases to deal with a man? There's no Scripture that says that...The Bible says in Genesis 6:3, "My Spirit will not always...what?...strive with man." But there's it's talking about generic, and it's a warning of the flood which was universal for the whole world. There's no scriptural indication that God will stop speaking to a specific man. I mean it doesn't just say that. But the implication, certainly, of the general broad character of Genesis 6:3, and the implication further of the unpardonable sin of the Jews, and Jesus turning to the Gentiles again to a collective group of people indicates that there comes a time when the patience of God and the grace of God has extended itself to the limit; and a man has disqualified himself from further information and further wooing of the Holy Spirit, because he has rejected at the point of full revelation. Only God knows when that comes. I think that's why we can say with a sense of seriousness to any sinner, "Do not continue to procrastinate until you come to the place where your hardness is so hard that God no longer woos you. Where you have so convinced yourself of the untruths of Christianity that you are irreconcilable with God." That's a terrible place to be.

Will there be an opportunity for salvation after the Rapture? Will there be an opportunity for salvation after the Rapture?...2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 8 is the passage that raises this question, and we could spend a lotta time dealing with it, but lemme just give you the passage and then another passage or two and an answer...2 Thessalonians 2:8, "And then shall that wicked one be revealed," and this seems to be the... the picture of the Tribulation time. Clearly it's that. "And then shall that wicked one...the beast, the antichrist, if you will...be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." The antichrist kingdom will be destroyed when Christ returns. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

And some people say that proves that if you're alive in the Tribulation, God will send you a delusion and make you believe a lie and not believe the truth. Now, some people say that once the Rapture takes place, nobody gets saved after that. The reason is because we will be given by God a strong delusion that we should believe the lie...I have a problem with that. I think that's a general statement. I think there will be among the godless in the world who are already committed to Satan, who are already sold out to the beast, who are already engulfed in his system, there will be a convincing in

their minds that Satan is the right ruler, that the beast and the false prophet are the ones to be worshiped. I think God will let that delusion run its course; but, at the same time, I don't think that passage is meant to say that there won't be anybody who believes. And the reason is all you have to do is look at Revelation chapter 7. Revelation chapter 7...verse 9.

Here we are in the midst of the Tribulation. We know that, because there's no question about that. Chapter 6, we've already seen the first six seals unfolded, which is the unfolding of the Tribulation. There's been the...the antichrist, war, terrible famine in verses 5 and 6, death in 7 and 8. We see the martyrs in verses 9 to 11, crying unto the altar. The collapse of Heaven in verses 12 and following. So we're in the middle of the Tribulation some time, or at the latter part of the Tribulation, really. The latter part, and it says in verse 9, "After this I beheld." After what? After the 144,000 of Israel. You say, "Who are the 144,000 of Israel?" They are the witnesses. They are God's witnesses in the Tribulation. During the Tribulation, chapter 7 says, there's going to be 144,000 Jews; 12,000 out of each tribe. People say, "Well, how are they gonna know? They don't even know what tribe they're in." Well, God knows that. God's gonna organize it. Twelve thousand from every tribe. They're gonna go out to preach, and the result is in verse 9. "After this, I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb!' And all the angels stood round about," and so forth and so forth.

Who is this multitude? Who are these people that have been saved of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues? Who are they? Well, that's the question of verse 13. "Who are they, and from where did they come?" And verse 14, "I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' And he said to me, 'These are they who came out of the great Tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" See? Those people are saved during the Tribulation. They have to be. That's clear. So you gotta have some people being saved in the Tribulation. I believe that a man has his lifetime. If he lives 35 years, the Rapture takes place. He's got seven more before the return of Christ, at least, to make a decision. Any period of time in there, He can make that commitment.

There's also an indication in chapter 14, where we find that there are those are redeemed. You don't need to turn to it. We don't have time at this point. Now, in addition to this tremendous group of Gentiles, who are the 144,000? Jews. You think these are unconverted Jews preaching the Gospel? No, can't be, they're converted. That's Romans 11:25. "So all Israel shall be saved." So there's gonna be a great revival. God is gonna sprinkle clean water upon Israel, Ezekiel said, put a new heart in them, a heart of flesh, take away their stony heart. They're gonna be reborn spiritually. They're gonna be the catalyst to reach the world. In addition to that, there are gonna be two amazing witnesses in chapter 11, proclaiming the truth about the Gospel; and the great story about them is that they are killed by the beast and his system. They let 'em lie in the street and so forth, and they rise from the dead. So there's gonna be preaching, and that means there's gonna be people saved.

So every man has his lifetime. You don't need to say, "Well, if the Lord comes and you're still here, it's hopeless." It isn't hopeless. It's gonna be terrible, though. Zechariah says two out of three of Israel who are converted in the Tribulation will be killed by the beast. They'll be chased from one end of the world to the next. The beast is gonna chase them right out of the area of Jerusalem. They're gonna run to Edom to try to hide in the mountains, and the beast and his army's going after them, and Revelation says the ground's gonna open up and swallow the beast up. It's gonna be exciting. Many of them are gonna starve. Many of them are gonna be slaughtered. If they don't take the mark, they'll be killed. A tough time. The rest of us who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ will be at the marriage supper of the Lamb, enjoying His blessed presence and feasting in Heaven. That's a far better place to be, far wiser to come to Christ before the Rapture takes place.

Another question that was asked is this. Will babies be Raptured? In the Rapture, what happens to babies? That's interesting to think about, and I know mothers always ask me this. It's funny. I've never had a father ask me that. What is it about us, men? But, you know, there are only three answers to this. Yes, they will be. No, they won't be. Or, as Calvin said, "The elect ones will be." ...That isn't...it was never a very popular doctrine...The Bible doesn't say anything about it; but if you wanna know what I believe, I believe God'll take them with Him. You say, "Why do you believe that?" I just believe that Jesus said, "Of such is the Kingdom," and I just think He'll take them to be with Him in His Kingdom. That's just a personal belief in the grace of God, and I really...there's no Scripture along that line; but I just believe God for that.

What happens to children during and after the Rapture? People say, "Well, all those little kids, and they're...they're beautiful." I mean we just, you know, not only my three up here, but everybody's. They're just super little, little guys, and I can appreciate the rest of the kids more than mine, 'cause I don't see the other kids when they're not like they oughta be. You know, I see 'em up here, and they look, you know, all hearts and flowers and everything else, and they're beautiful kids, and we love these children, and they're...they mean so much to us, and we say, "Well, what happens in the Rapture if they're all here singing a concert, do we all leave, and they're just sorta standing here? What happens to children?"

That's a fair question. The answer to that question is that there is no Scripture that says anything in particular about children in the Rapture; but there are some Scriptures that say something about children. There are many in the Gospels. Jesus said, regarding little children, "Of such is the...what?... Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not." Jesus said, "These little ones are Mine." Now, it's my personal conviction, my personal belief that, in the Rapture, every child that is too young to have made a conscious, willful, rebellious, sinful rejection of Jesus Christ will be taken to be with the Lord. I believe that it would be just the same as if a little child died before he reached that age. He would instantly go to be with the Lord.

David's little boy died, 2 Samuel, he says, "He cannot come to Me, but I shall go to him." He knew where he was. He knew he was in the presence of God. I believe when the Rapture happens, all the little kids that are under the age where they made a conscious, willful, sinful rebellion against God, where they willfully turned their back on Him, I believe the Lord'll just take them right with us. You say, "Do you believe that about the children of unsaved parents?" Yes, that's just my personal opinion, 'cause the Bible doesn't say. But if Jesus said, "If anybody offends one of these little ones, it would be better for him...what?...that a millstone were hanged around his neck and he would drown in the sea." He said, "If anyone offends one of these, My little ones."

I think He possess them. I think they belong to Him, and I think they'll go in the Rapture. Now, those who have grown past the age where, or to the age where they have made a decision, I think, if that decision has been against Christ or if they've never come to know Christ, they'll be left in the Rapture and, perhaps in the grace of God, be a part of the great revival that occurs after the Rapture in coming to the Lord Jesus Christ." But that's the best we can do with that question. Any unregenerate children who are old enough to have made that decision, and I don't know where that age level is, but God does, would be left as anyone else who refused Christ, hopefully, to open their hearts to Christ in the great revival that occurs during the Tribulation recorded in Revelation 7 in chapter 14, as well.

The question is regarding the interpretation of Colossians 1:15, a very important passage, and one that is attacked continuously by cults and various isms. Colossians 1:15. Now, in reference here to Christ, it says, "Who is the image of the invisible God...and here comes the problem part to some people...the firstborn of all creation." Now, some would say that, because Christ is called the firstborn of all creation, that He was the first one created; therefore, He is a created being. Therefore, He is less than God, and the cults love to come to this verse to prove that.

Well, let's look at what it says. First of all, it calls Christ the image of the invisible God. Notice it doesn't say Christ is in the image of the invisible God. It says He is the image. He is the image. If you want a clear understanding of that, all you have to do is go to Colossians chapter 2 and verse 9, and Paul makes it very clear what he means. "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead in a body." When it says He is the image of God, it means He is God in a body. The word image, icon, means a precise copy or a replica. Today, it would be the equal of a photograph. Jesus is the iconion. He is the perfect portrait of God. He is God made visible in a portrait. He is the manifestation of God.

In verse 19, it says, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all playaroma, all fullness dwell." What fullness? The fullness of the Godhead, chapter 2, verse 9. He is the manifestation in a visible picture in a physical body of all that God is. Now, it also says He is the firstborn of all creation. Now this word protakashas been so maligned and so misunderstood. What does it mean that He is the firstborn?

People, it has nothing to do with time. It has only to do with position. It has nothing to do with origin. It has only to do with position. The prototakas was the primary one. The primary one. If you would rather translate it that way in your Bible, it is proper. For example, look at 18, verse 18. "He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning...now watch...the firstborn from the dead." Now lemme ask you a question. Was Jesus, in time, the first person raised from the dead? No. There were some in the Old Testament. There were some previously in the New Testament that Christ Himself raised from the dead. He is not the first in time from the dead. He is, however, of all of those who have ever been resurrected, the primary one. Do you see? That's what it means.

So when you go back to chapter 1 verse 15, it is not saying the first one created was Christ. He is saying, "Of all of God's total creation, of all that there is in God's universe, the primary being is Christ." ...He is the Son who receives the inheritance rights. His is the place of privilege. His is the honor. He is the Father's heir, the head of God's household.

Now, this also ties in with another Scripture in Revelation chapter 3 verse 14. "And unto the angel of the church...church of Laodiceans write: 'These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness...now watch...the beginning of the creation of God.'" Now here, again, the word translated beginning is not really a word that can always or must always mean beginning. It is the word arkay. The English here is terribly ambiguous. Arkay means first cause. Sometimes could be translated the author or the pioneer or the generating power. The first cause, read it that way. "He is the first cause of the creation of God." That is not saying He was created by God. That is saying He is the Creator...

When Jesus is seen in His incarnation as the Son, He is the primary one of all of God's creation. When He is seen here in Revelation 3:14, He is the cause of creation, and John puts it clearly in John 1, "Without Him was not anything made that was made." He is the source of all creation, and in His incarnation, was the supreme creature God ever made, and that refers, of course to His physical body.

What does it say in Scripture? Where does it say in Scripture that Jesus Christ is God? Now, I know you confront people who wanna argue about that. Jehovah's Witnesses, other people. There's a lotta ways to approach that, and we've approached it in the Gospel of John. You could sit down and listen to the whole series on the Gospel of John. It'll come through loud and clear; but lemme approach it from a different angle. Where does it say in Scripture that Jesus Christ is God? Now, get your Bible handy, and I wanna close by giving you a little study here that I think you'll find very refreshing and exciting.

Isaiah 43 verse 10, "'Ye are My witnesses,' saith the Lord...Isaiah 43:10...'and My servant whom I have chosen, that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. Even I am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Savior.'" How many Saviors? One. "I have declared and have saved, and I have shown, then there

was no strange God among you; therefore, ye are My witnesses,' saith the Lord, 'that I am God.'" How many Gods? One God, one Savior. Isaiah 45:11, "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask Me...that is the Maker of Israel...Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons...that is Israel...concerning the work of My hands command ye Me. I have made the earth and created man on it; I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded."

How many Saviors? One. How many Gods? One. How many creators? One. Now, go to John 1..."In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now, they wanna say the Word was a god. Don't worry about that at this point. Go to verse 2, "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." How many creators are there? One. If there is a creator in John 1 and a creator in Isaiah 43 and 45, it must be the same person, right? Who is Jesus Christ? God. No other conclusion is reasonable.

Lemme take you somewhere else. Jeremiah 10...Jeremiah 10:10, "But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God... Jeremiah 10:10 says...and an everlasting King. At His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall you say unto them: 'The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by His power; He hath established the world by His wisdom; and hath stretched out the heavens by His understanding. When He uttered His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasure. Every man is stupid in his knowledge; every goldsmith is confounded by the engraved image; for his melted image is falsehood, and there's no breath in them. They are vanity and the work of errors; in the time of their judgment they shall perish. The portion of Jacob is not like them...that is, the God of Jacob is not like those idols...He is the Former of all things; and Israel is the rod of His inheritance; the Lord of hosts is His name."

Now, there is a tremendous statement about God. Fantastic statement about God. You go to Colossians chapter 1, and it'll knock you over to read this. Here it's talking about the Son. Colossians 1, "His Son...verse 15...who is the image of the invisible God, the prototakasof all creation, the primary one. By Him were all things created in heaven, in earth, visible, invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

Listen, that sounds like an echo of Jeremiah, doesn't it? Only here it's referring to Christ. The conclusion is absolute. Jesus Christ and God are one in the same. There is no other conclusion possible...You go to Isaiah chapter 6, Isaiah's in the temple. He sees the vision of God, a tremendous cry from his lips, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. Woe is me,

for I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Jeremiah says, "I've seen the Lord, and He's holy, and He's high, and He's lifted up, but I am unclean." That's God. That's the Lord...

John 12, interesting...John 12 verse 37, "But though He had done so many miracles before them...Jesus...yet they believed not on Him...Why?...that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: He's blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes or understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them...Listen...These things said Isaiah when he saw...what?...His glory."

Wait a minute, you mean to tell me that Isaiah 6 where Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, he was seeing Christ? That's exactly what John 12 says. No other conclusion is possible. Beloved, it goes like that again and again and again and again in the Old Testament. Isaiah 40, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people," saith your God." That great statement about comfort; and then it says, "The voice of Him that cries in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for...whom?...our God.'" And what did John the Baptist say when Jesus came? Same words. The exact same words. Matthew chapter 3, John the Baptist said the very same thing, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His path straight."

You see, it all comes together, people, to say that Jesus is God. It's exciting to know that you and I both can have a personal relationship with the living God through faith in Jesus Christ who is God incarnate, who died, rose again for our salvation. That's exciting; and isn't it exciting to get into the Bible and study what God has for us? Thrilling to know that we've not only been saved, but we've been given a chart and a compass to take us all the way through life into eternity with joy. That's thrilling.

All right, another question. Is there a reference where Christ is called a carpenter? Now, I recently saw an article in Moody Monthly or something, a little ad that said, "Jesus the carpenter." Well, there isn't any reference in the Bible in which Jesus is called a carpenter. The only indication that that is possible is in Matthew 13:55, where Joseph is called a tecton. Now, you don't need to look it up, 'cause it doesn't say that much, but it just says that Joseph is called, in the Greek, a tecton. You say, "What does a tecton mean?" Some lexicons say it means a carpenter. Others say it means a mason, a bricklayer. I mean I know it would shoot down a whole lotta tradition if it turns out when we get to heaven that Joseph was bricklayer; but that's very possible. But the word tecton means any craftsman... any craftsman. Joseph was a craftsman. It may have been in wood. It may have been in the laying of bricks. That's all we know, and we assume carpenter, and we assume Jesus, therefore, living in his father's house, would've followed the trade that His father knew well, and I think we would rightly assume that.

Do the promises in Revelations 2 and 3, Revelation 2 and 3, belong to all Christians? Let's look at 'em. Do the promises in Revelation 2 and 3 belong to all Christians. The promises, look at them, chapter 2 verse 7. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." What does that mean? Means you're gonna go where? To Heaven. All right, that's a great promise. Who is it given to? To him that what? Overcometh. Look at verse 11, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." You say, "Fantastic, you mean the second death, that's the eternal death is not gonna touch the overcomer." That's right.

Chapter 2 verse 17, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows except he that receives it." Here's a tremendous promise. Some kind of hidden manna. You say, "What is it?" I don't know. It's hidden. Secondly, "And I'll give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written," and I'll not tell you how many times people have asked me what that new name is. The next line says, "Which man knows." I do not know what that new name is. You say, "But who gets that hidden manna, that new name?" The overcomer.

Look at verse 26, "And he that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, rule them with a rod of iron; the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received from My Father. And I'll give him the morning star." I know who that is. Who's that? Jesus Christ. The overcomer again.

Chapter 3 verse 5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Great promise. Verse 12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God; he shall go no more out; and I'll write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and I'll write on him My new name." God's gonna say, "This is mine, and he belongs in this town, and so forth." That town is the New Jerusalem. Who's all that for? The overcomer, the overcomer.

Verse 21, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame and set with My Father on His throne." Now you say, "All these fantastic promises are given to these overcomers in these various churches, but who is the overcomer?" Listen to this. I'll tell you who the overcomer is. Listen as I read 1 John 5:4. "For whatever is born of God overcometh the world. And this...and this is written by the same writer, John...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith...Now listen...Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Who's the overcomer? The Christian. Who receives all of that? The Christian.

Beloved, think about it. Incredible promises given to the believer. Think about them again. "To him that overcometh I'll give to eat of the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God." The promise of an eternal heaven. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." No need to fear hell. No need to fear judgment. "To him that overcometh, hidden manna." Some kind of super-Jack in The Box talks about secret sauce. Listen, this, you know, this is some kind of hidden food. This is some kind of eternal sustenance. The hidden manna and "a white stone, and on the stone, a name written which no man's knows except he that receives it." Some very special gift. Some very special privilege. Some very special divine right imparted to us, and we could talk a lot about that. Won't take the time.

Then he says, this is the supreme thing, "Power over the nations in the Kingdom...verse 26...but I'll give him the morning star. I'll give him Christ." Just think, for all eternity, Christ is mine. "To him that overcometh...verse 5 of chapter 3...the promise that he'll never, ever have his name blotted out of the Book of Life." Never, and the overcomer is the one who believes. If you believe, never will your name be blotted out. Security. "And he'll become a pillar in the temple of my God...chapter 3 verse 12." In that particular city, they used to put their dignitaries' bust on a pillar, and they used to, or they used to carve their name on the pillar when they were celebrated citizens, and God says, "The temple of My God in Heaven is going to have pillars marked with the names of these, My people. They're gonna have My name, God's name, the name of the New Jerusalem, a new name." Further, "They will sit on My throne...chapter 3 verse 21." All those promises, fantastic to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is he that overcomes? "He that believeth...Jesus is Christ." I would close by just saying that. God has made some marvelous promises in His Word. There are a lotta questions that we ask, a lotta things we'd like answers to, and there are answers as we've seen tonight. There are other things that we just probably never will have answers to; but there are some things we know for sure, and those are the promises of the Scripture. There aren't any questions about them. They're clear; and God promises marvelous things for time and eternity to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If there are some here tonight with us who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, you've never opened your heart, you've never accepted Him, you've never believed in Him, you've never responded to Him...then our first question long ago relates to you. You're gonna spend an eternity as the victim without God, without Christ, sentenced to a hell where Satan and all his angels had been planned to go. God never intended you to be there. It was prepared for the devil and his angels. You go there only if you choose. It all begins when Satan...captures the hearts and the minds of men through the system, and they love his activities more than they love God; and then those people become eternal victims of that choice.

On the other hand, God says, "I'll give you this. I'll give you this. All this eternal joy, all this eternal bliss, all this fulfillment, all this meaning, all this purpose, all this security if you just believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ." That's your choice. I pray to God that if you have not chosen Jesus Christ, that before this night is out, you would.

Here's another question. Is there any room for dinosaurs in the Bible? I guess it depends on how big your Bible is...Lemme answer that a little more honestly. Yes, there...there is room for the inclusion of animals like dinosaurs in the time before the Flood. You realize that from the creation of man until the Flood, the Great Flood occurs about 6th chapter of Genesis, until that time, men lived a long time, right? Nine hundred and many years. Adam lived. Methuselah lived. They lived a tremendous amount of time, approaching even a thousand years. At that time, prior to the Flood, there was no rain upon the earth. It had never rained before it rained then. That's why nobody believed when...when Noah went around saying, "It's gonna rain." They were saying, "It's gonna what?" Because there was no rain, see.

So prior to that time, there was a canopy over the earth, and the canopy filtered out the rays of the sun, consequently, preserving life and life was elongated; and it was during that period prior to the Flood that such things as the dinosaurs most likely existed. And then, of course, at the great holocaust of the Flood, they were captured and trapped, and we have found bones from such a time. You say, "Well, now wait a minute, wasn't that millions and millions of year?" No, it wasn't at all millions and millions of years ago. It was a few thousand years ago, truthfully. And so some of these things are still preserved even today. So there is certainly room in the pre-Flood time for the inclusion of dinosaurs.

Another interesting question that came in was this one. How can we say the universe is so young when the stars are millions of light years away? Now, this question has come up before; and what it means is this. You know, they tell us that certain stars are X number of light years away. Millions of light years away, and so the argument is, "All right, if you say that God created everything, say 10,000 years ago, that's not time enough for the light from the stars that He created to get to the earth. You see, you've gotta have millions of years for that light to get here so that we can see it, so that the beam of that light gets out far enough so that our naked eye can see it." So they say, "There's no way God could instantaneously create the universe in a six-day period so that man would arrive on the seventh day and see the stars. They're...they need millions of years to get here."

The answer to that is simple, people. The answer to that is when God created, He created with maturity. When He created the stars, He created the stars, zap, with all their light already created clear to the earth. When God created man, one second after you met Adam, you would've met a full-grown man, right? God created him with maturity. All of creation was that way. God didn't...when God created the animals, He didn't create a whole bunch of little fetuses. He created animals, full-grown, mature animals. It's true in the...in the New Testament. We were talking about this the other day that the miracles of Jesus were always instant. There was no process involved. When He would create a new limb for a person, it was a mature limb. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he was raised

from the dead instantly, mature, a grown man. When Jesus made wine, it didn't go through a process. It was wine. He created all things with maturity; and so we can say, "It doesn't matter how long we calculate the light would've taken to get from there to here. It matters that, when God created it, He created it there and the light in the middle and us here.

Okay, do you think a Christian can become a police officer? It's very interesting. All of you who are police officers, stay where you are for a minute, you'll answer it. With the power to kill, if necessary, having such powerful position in this worldly kingdom, which, according to Scripture, is not of our own. Now, the person who asked the question apparently has in mind the fact that we are not of this world, and that the police are of the world system; and so the question comes can a Christian be a police officer, and particularly adding the problem of having the power to kill, if necessary.

First, lemme say this. It is wrong to confuse human government with a world system. Human government was invented by whom? God. God is the one who began the process of government. Back in the Book of Genesis, God gave the right of capital punishment to government, and we just read a portion that, where God Himself states a life for a life. So the idea of government was given by God for the protection of good men and the punishment of evil men for the preservation of society.

So, in the purest sense, human government is not a part of the world system. The term that we used, I think so freely and most of the time accurately, the world system has to do with the evil corruption of Satan in the world; but human government is an institution of God. We would not say that marriage is the world's system. We would say marriage is an institution of God, but it has been corrupted by the world, right? So has human government. Probably the biggest problem going on today in law enforcement is to try to find people who will be faithful to their duty.

I was talking to an individual the other day about some of the corruption in Chicago, talking about some of the police force. And some of the policemen were actually bought off as hit men in Chicago and are recently being put on trial for this. The problem that arises in law enforcement is that the corruption of sin has seeped into a God-ordained institution. I'm convinced that what we really need on the police force are more Christians, not to eliminate them; because I think they have the highest level of ethical responsibility. And you say, "But what about the right to kill, or what about that? Doesn't that violate the standards of the Scripture?"

Turn to Romans 13, and Romans 13 gives us a good picture of the relationship that we are to have to government...You say, "Well, you know, the Scripture says here, 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. There's no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive for themselves judgment.'" You say, "Well, that's a different government than today." Yeah, you know whose government that was? Nero. Nero's government.

The Apostle Paul says, "This government is ordained of God." Government as such is ordained of God. It has been corrupted, obviously, but the institution is still ordained of God. Government represents God's rule in the world. It is God's way of ordering society; and even the worst of governments, even if you talk about communism, somehow, somehow, even the worst of governments, for the most part, apart from Christian persecution, secure the good and punish the evil, do they not? Most governments still do that. It is when governments become very intellectualized and very sophisticated and...and so forth like our kind of government that that becomes a problem, and that the courts can't really bring about what should be done justly to the criminals.

But notice verse 3, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil." You don't have to fear the police if you obey the law. That's what it says. "Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same." In other words, if you behave yourself, you don't have anything to worry about. Watch. For the policeman here is view. The man given the power of keeping order in the government is a minister of what? Of God. He carries about a God-ordained function. "A minister of God to thee for good. But if you do that which is evil...what?...be afraid...why?...for he bears not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Put it in the modern vernacular, he doesn't have his gun for no reason.

Now, here you see, "These men are called the ministers of God, and they bear the sword not in vain. Wherefore, you must needs be subject not only for wrath...not only because you're afraid what'll happen...but because of conscience' sake." Just because it's what? It's right. God gave them a sword, and He gave them the sword to use. This is to keep goodness prevalent and evil subdued.

You'll notice in 1 Peter 2:14, don't look it up, I'll just read it. "Governors, we are to be subject to, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers." That's the police. They are sent for the punishment of evildoers. They do not bear the sword in vain. Yes, I think a Christian can be a policeman. I wish we had more.

Another question. Please give a scriptural view of capital punishment. God did design capital punishment. No question about it. People say, "Does the Bible teach capital punishment?" Of course, it teaches it all over the place. In Genesis chapter 9 verse 6, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man." Because of the sanctity of man, because he is created in the image of God, God instituted a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc...Murder is a crime against God in whose image man is made. It defiles God, so capital punishment is required; and if you read through the Old Testament law, you'll find there was capital punishment required for many sins.

For example, sex sins required capital punishment. I'll tell you another one. You read Exodus 21:15 to 17, and you'll find that capital punishment was enacted against those children who were disobedient to their parents. Capital punishment. In Exodus 21:16, kidnapping. You know something interesting? In those periods of time in the Mosaic era, do you know who the executioner was? When there was a sex crime or when there was a murder or when there was a dishonor to the parents or when there was a kidnapping or any of these crimes that were capital offenses? The agent of vengeance who carried out the death penalty was the able bodied male most nearly related to the victim. You know what that did? Boy, that really made society conscious of it. We say today, "Capital punishment isn't a deterrent." Of course not, nobody's involved in it. It happens somewhere in the corner somewhere in a private little deal with nobody there, when nobody knows, and we don't understand the agony of it. But, then, it was very public. It was a family matter. It was right out there, and people lived with the consequences of facing what sin brought and what crime brought; and, believe me, it came as a deterrent.

God had four purposes, I believe, in punishment in the Old Testament. Four purposes. No. 1, retribution. Make him pay an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Just taught people God's way. He requires payment. The second thing was not only retribution, but deterrence, and I believe that God had these punishments in order to deter men from committing crimes, and the punishments were very public, very obvious, very open, very out there because that made it very apparent what the consequence were. Thirdly, I think these punishments were for protection. Retribution, deterrence, and protection, because if you would isolate or remove an offender, you protected the community, right? That's why we have prisons, to lock up people that can't live in society without hurting other people. And, fourthly, I think God's purpose in these kinds of punishment was purification. He wanted to keep Israel pure, so he wanted to remove the evil people.

For these reasons, God instituted capital punishment. There were three methods in the Old Testament: stoning, with the sword, burning. Stoning was used for those morally guilty. Swords were used for those who committed murder, and some even were burned. There is an interesting incident there in Leviticus 20 verse 14. "If a man take his wife and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire." Sexual sin there. Burned with fire. Leviticus 21:9, "The daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot, profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire." Does the Bible teach capital punishment? Yes, and I believe that if it was still done in a Biblical fashion today, we'd have a lot less crime than we have now.

I feel that there are some questions that you just really can't answer. Questions come in, for example, where did Cain get his wife; and it's very obvious where he got his wife. He married one of his relatives. He married, very likely, his sister or some other relative. That's not a big problem. Obviously, that's how it had to be.

All right, another question. This is one that I know many of you are asking. Is the charismatic movement a Christian movement? Now, this is a very important question; and I can answer that question simply. Is the charismatic movement a Christian movement? Yes and no...I have stated myself on this. I have a chapter in my book on it for which I have been panned and whatever; but I hesitate not to answer what I believe is true.

I believe that the charismatic movement, as most of us understand it, is Christian, but not Biblical. By that I mean this. There are many Christian people in it. They're in it because they do not understand the Word of God. The charismatic movement is a sweeping movement. It's taking vast strides in the church, and I think one of the reasons that it does is because, basically, human beings are creatures of emotion. Secondly, Christians are ignorant, and it feeds on those two things.

I...I don't want to tell you some of the things that I know about with some of the personalities that are in it, because that isn't the issue. But, believe me, there is sordidness in many ways. There are many things that problematic about it. Without going into a tremendous amount of detail, I believe that many of those people are genuine, sincere Christians who are ignorant of the Word of God, who are substituting a false experience for true knowledge.

Lemme show you why I think it's problematic. In the first place, tongues speaking has led many new believers to live by feelings, rather than by faith; and they operate on their feelings. In that sense, it's a subtle movement...and I think a devastating one. People who live completely on experience are deceived. Secondly, I think it is problematic, because it has led many Christians into the error of believing they did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at salvation. That is false doctrine; and, people, if I can only tell you this. I turn on these charismatic television programs from time to time, and I am appalled at the doctrinal ignorance that is manifest. It is incredible that they could be as ignorant as they are of doctrine. Why? Because they have totally abandoned themselves to an experiential definition of truth apart from the Word of God. Even though they talk a lot about the Bible, they haven't got the faintest idea, in many cases, how to interpret it.

Thirdly, the charismatic movement is problematic because it is one of the most divisive influences in 20th century Christianity. Satan is using it for that end. Fourthly...the tongues movement has been a bad witness to those who don't know Christ. They write it off as whole lotta strange, fanatical people. It associates Christ as approving of all kinds of violent jerkings and all kinds of convulsions and ecstatic gibberish and emotional excesses. Even Paul didn't wanna be associated with that.

Another problem with it is tongues have fed the pride of many hearts, many hearts. Another problem with it is tongues speaking, as manifested today, is a heathen concept. Listen, never since the Fall has God employed such a method to enable people to communicate with Him. Never. Never. It is entirely unnecessary. It is pagan. At its roots are a merger of Christianity with paganism. Did you know Tibetan monks speak in tongues? Did you know that certain tribes of Eskimos do? That the

Whirling Dervishes of Persia do? Did you know that one of the basic tenets of Mormonism is speaking in tongues? Another problematic fact is that tongues speaking, as manifested today, has led to all kinds of superstitious beliefs. Beliefs in special revelations, in visions, in strange demonic activities. The centrality of the Word has been totally lost, even though they talk about it all the time; and they have given divine significance to all the experiences of life. Nothing just happened. Everything is God doing it, or a divine thing, or a miracle this and a miracle that and a miracle here. There's so many miracles, I doubt whether they would know one if it happened.

I believe the charismatic movement is within the framework of Christianity in many cases. I believe there are a lotta people who are in it who are charlatans, and who are milking those people for every dime they can get out of 'em. I believe some of them are genuine, sincere Christian people. Some of them that I would love personally, dearly, appreciate their love for Christ, but totally disagree on that. If you want further detail on that, we have some tapes available for you in that area. But I don't hesitate to bring anything, I don't care what it is, I don't care what your experience is, anything must be brought to the test of the Word of God. And, people, when you see a movement that has absolute, total disregard for sound Biblical doctrine, you got problems, no matter what the experience is; and I think we need to remember that.

Why is there much division over doctrine among Christian leaders with the same Holy Spirit...and the same available knowledge? Now, that is a...that's a question that perplexed me a few years ago to the point where I struggled and struggled and struggled in my heart with that question. And I kept saying, "How come everybody doesn't always agree with me?" Because, you know, I studied so hard, and I come out and say, "How can they...?" and then I begin to say, "Well, how come I don't agree with them? Maybe it's me."

So I began to sit down and try to figure why, and I'll give you why from my own mind and from my own observation. I think there are four basic reasons why there are differences. No. 1, theological bias...I think that some of us are victimized, because we grow up in a certain theological system, and we become indoctrinated by it, and we begin to live out its patterns, and we've spend so much of our time believing it, that we wind up defending it, and we spend so much of our time defending it, that we could never get rid of it. So we bring a theological bias from our background into a passage.

And, for example, if I've been raised all my entire life to believe that such and such a passage teaches a certain thing, and I have wound up defending that because it's an out front position, if I spend enough time defending it, I'm not about to give it away. So I think we all suffer from a certain amount of theological bias; and I'll tell ya. This comes a lotta ways. You know, one of the worst things is you write a book; and once you got it in print, you gotta defend it the rest of your life or else you're gonna say, "I'm wrong, I'm wrong." That book was wrong. I got a new one...There have been people that have done that. I remember the book came out on demons written by Dr. Unger in which he said that he did not believe that a demon could be inside a Christian. Several years later, he wrote another

book, *Demons in the World Today*, said, "I was wrong in the first book. I'm right now." It can happen, and he defended it. So there has to be that; but there is a certain theological bias.

Second thing is a lack of careful study. I think all of us are...are...are victimized to some degree by our failure to be diligent. There's so much material available, boy, it just, you have to be diligent. The third thing, I think there are differences because of a...the absence of conclusive information. The reason there are differences is 'cause all of us...all of us are dealing with some missing links, and we're trying to fill in the gaps. We can't know fully the mind of God. We say, "Well, the best way I see it it's here, and it's this way." And then the next time you come to that same concept, it's this way; and pretty soon you've built your whole system around that realizing that, at the bottom, it's just a very good, strong guess at something that could go a couple of ways.

So I think there's theological bias. There's a lack of careful study, and that is a real big reason why people disagree. They just don't bother to study the Bible. But the third thing is there's the absence of conclusive information. There's insufficient revelation. Fourth, tradition. I think some things have always been believed to be a certain way, and you just believe they're that way; and when somebody comes along and says something different, everybody goes, "Yikes, we've always believed the other way." Tradition. So those would be some reasons that you might find for that.

All right, another question, and I think this is an important question. What are the spiritual gifts, and how do I discover mine? We've talked about this a lot in the past, but not recently. First thing I would suggest for you, and I'm not selfish in doing this, is to get the book, *The Church: The Body of Christ*, which I've written. It's in the bookstore, and it goes into all of the details about spiritual gift. Suffice it to say this. If you wanna know what the spiritual gifts are, read Romans 12 verses 3 and following. Then read 1 Corinthians 12 verses 1 to the end of the chapter, verse 28'd probably be far enough. Read those two chapters and make a list of the spiritual gifts. Be sure to distinguish which ones are permanent edifying gifts and which one are temporary sign gifts.

When your list is complete of those that are permanent edifying gifts, you have some basis to discover your own. You say, "Then how do I discover my gifts?" Simple, walk in the Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit do what He will through you, and you'll see what He does with you. If you feel a desire towards something or another, follow that...if you sense that God has created that desire within you; and I really think that God works through our desires.

I was telling somebody this the other day. If God really wanted to lead you, and He wanted to lead you the simplest way possible, how best could He lead you? By making you desire what He wanted for you, right? Well, I assume that God is way ahead of us in that area. "If we delight in the Lord...Psalm 37 says...He'll give us the desires of our heart." In other words, if He is first, He'll plant those desires and then fulfill them; and so you can follow your desire. When I entered into the ministry, I didn't even understand what spiritual gifts were, and I was preaching and teaching and

exercising my gifts long before I knew what they were. It isn't nearly so important that I've analyzed myself, as I've been obedient to the Holy Spirit and followed the desire that He places in my heart...Walk in the Spirit, and He will do, through you, what must be done. Your gifts will be manifest.

All right, another question. We'll look at Matthew 7:6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and lacerate you." Our Lord, in giving instructions to his disciples, and to, really, the Sermon on the Mount, had them in mind much of the time, warned them about a certain thing; and that was giving good things to evil men. What does it mean, "By that which is holy"? Because whatever it means, it's synonymous with pearls. Pearls in the Greek is margaritas, from which you get Margaret and Rita. It's a precious thing. That which is holy is something specially set apart to God. What He's saying is this: Do not continually offer holy things to people who devour them, reject them, and turn them back to you, lacerated and torn apart. You know what I believe He's saying? I believe He's saying that you only need to present the Gospel to a certain point; and when then people become abusive, blasphemous, it's time to cease, at that point at least, the offering. There is a limit. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank You for tonight. It's been good. Good to share. Good to fellowship with those we love...It's been good to look into Your Word and consider various things. Many things, Father, we didn't get to. We'll do those another time. We thank You for the deep mysteries of Your Word, that no matter how deep we study, it stretches even yet beyond us. No matter how far we reach, we never touch its borders. No matter how well we know Thee, Thou art yet even beyond us infinitely...We thank You, Father, for the fact that we can spend every waking hour of the rest of our lives in Your Word and never, ever, ever...grow weary...of its riches. Teach us, Father, to search its truths, that we may better know You, better know ourselves, better know Your will for us. We thank You for giving us clear insights, principles that can become patterns of life. We would pray, Lord, that, tonight, if there are some here who have not yet known Christ, that they might turn to Your revelation, to Your Word. They might search it, find therein the truth, the answers to the questions of life. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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