

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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 15

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1301-M

Tonight we are going to have just a little fellowship time here with some question and answers. We've been doing this now for all the time that I've been at Grace Church. In fact, we used to do it on Sunday nights and we just had a great time. And then we got so many people, we couldn't cover everybody so we do it on Wednesdays from time to time. And it's an especially great time for those of you who have some questions to fire away. I'll do the best I can in answering them. The idea is not Stump the Pastor; the idea is (laughter)...that's easy to do...but to just ask whatever question you might have and we'll give it a shot and do the best we can on maybe a Bible question, a question related to the church or the ministry or something practical that's just been bugging you. And whatever it is, we'll fire away.

Now, we put some mikes in the aisles, but if you feel somewhat intimidated about getting out into the aisle and asking your question, just have somebody on the end reach and pass the mike down to you and that'll work just as well. But if you can, step out into the aisle and speak into the microphone and we'll just start whenever you're ready. That's your cue, so if you want to go directly to a microphone, do that.

Yeah? Right there in the middle would be great.

QUESTIONER: Okay, I hope you'll excuse this question being phrased in the first person. However, I belong to a church denomination that practices infant baptism, as does all my family. I'm in question regarding my status spiritually. It appears that it would be necessary for me to leave my family church, causing a lot of anxiety, and actually join another denomination in order to fulfill what I feel is obedience. My family and our family pastor argues this point, sometimes very convincingly, that this move really isn't necessary. Your comments and opinions would be appreciated.

JOHN: Well, that's a very important question. What you're basically saying is that because you have a conviction that infant baptism is not the biblical mode, you feel some pressure to leave because your church teaches that it is. Right? Two questions are there. The first question is what about infant baptism. The second question is what about identifying with a church that has a theology maybe a little different than your own.

The first question relative to infant baptism...I believe, obviously, because we don't baptize infants, it reflects what we believe. But I believe that the New Testament is extremely clear on the fact that we

are to express our faith in Christ and then be baptized. There is no data, and I've tried to find it and tried to study it, but there is no New Testament indication of infant baptism. The obscure passage that is used by what are called pedobaptists, those who baptize babies...but the obscure passage is that the Philippian jailer and his household were baptized. But you certainly cannot take the word "household" and make it mean his infant children. The word "household" is broad enough to include his servants and would encompass all of those who believed following in his own faith. So that's really the only stretching conclusion they can come to. The issue of infant baptism is a broader issue. It's not a textual issue, because there are no texts that indicate it. It is a theological issue and the substance of the theology is this, that in the Old Testament, Israel was God's covenant people. Right? And the sign of the covenant was what?...circumcision or the removal of the male foreskin on an infant at the eighth day after birth. Now, that was an outward sign of the covenant. Now, what is known as "covenant theology" teaches that the church is the new Israel. All right. We have replaced Israel. God has set Israel aside. He is through with Israel. The church is the new Israel. They teach, then, that there needs to be a covenant sign and so carrying the circumcision concept into the new era of the New Testament, infant baptism then becomes their theological equivalent to circumcision. That's essentially the theological justification for infant baptism. It is not a textual one because there are no verses that indicate it.

Now, the basic assumption then is that we are the Israel of God. I don't know of any group who baptizes infants who believes that the church is distinct from Israel. You understand what I'm saying? If you believe that the church becomes Israel, then there's no more future for Israel. They're done with. For example, John Stott, who would teach this and is a very fine man of God...his works and his writings have been just tremendous...but John Stott was asked in Switzerland recently the significance...what is the significance of the rise of the nation of Israel in our day, biblically. He said it has no significance at all. That was his answer because in his system Israel has no significance anymore. The church has become Israel. The teaching is that when Israel set aside its belief in Messiah and when they called for the death of their Messiah, the covenant was removed from them and the church was postulated in their place and we are the new Israel of God and that Jews can be saved, of course, today by entering into the church. But there will be no restoration of Israel and the ultimate end of things is what is known as amillennialism, no kingdom, because there's no Israel to have a kingdom. So, all of the promises to Israel are fulfilled spiritually in the church.

So, the reason I point that out is because it isn't just the issue of baptizing infants that is the issue theologically. It is a much bigger issue. Infant baptism, then, encompasses covenant theology. It encompasses an amillennial viewpoint. In other words, it gives you real fits when you get to the book of Daniel or the book of Isaiah or Revelation. You just don't know what to do with those things.

Dr. Feinberg, when we were in Israel, in Jerusalem one time, there was a guy who gave a speech and David Ben-Gurion was there and Teddy Kollek, the mayor of Jerusalem. Ben-Gurion was the prime minister of the country at the time. And this fellow got up and said that the church was the new

Israel and there was no more prophetic place for Israel as a nation, as a constituted nation. And Dr. Feinberg got up after that and said, "I cannot come, in good faith, to this place and tell you that you get all the curses and we get all the blessings," because that's what the covenantal position ultimately comes to. Israel got all the curses and all the blessings are transferred spiritually to us. And he was not willing to make that the message of the moment to Israel.

And so I would say this. I would say that if it's only an issue of infant baptism, maybe that is not a big enough issue to make a change. But if you're talking about the substance of an entire theological framework which you do not feel comfortable with...I believe one of the reasons God has given us alternatives in this era...it's interesting to me that as the church as moved in history, it has constantly refined its theology. Right? We have more books now than we've ever had. Sure. And all the time we are refining and refining and refining our theology. And the Lord knows that as that gets refined through the years of the church, people will get down to finer points in their theology. And it seems to me that the Lord has even given us the opportunity to identify with as many...there's so many places, right, where you can identify on those fine points and have a fullness of fellowship and feel like you're really not fighting against something.

As to the personal answer to that question, I really don't know what God would have someone do. I think that's very subjective. If I was in that situation and felt I could make a contribution to it and God wanted me there, I'd stay. If I felt that He wanted me, down in my heart to go, I'd go. And I guess I would have to feel this way about it. If I was there as a learner and that's not what I wanted to learn, I'd probably want to take advantage of what I wanted to learn somewhere else. If I was there as a teacher and they were willing to allow me the privilege of input, I think I'd stay at least to see how they responded to try to balance out their viewpoint.

That's a very difficult question and I'll tell you, one of the things that concerns me is we are concerned, you know, when people come here from other churches that other churches don't get angry with us. But when you do teach a definitive theology and people want to identify with that as they see the truth of the Word of God, that's part of the fact. That's what happens. So I don't know the individual issue in each case and I guess I'd have to say, if there's any way possible that you sense God leading you to stay, then stay. That's very subjective but I don't know any other way to say it. Especially if they believe in the authority of the Word of God and the deity of Jesus Christ and all of those things, you know.

Anybody else have a question, just feel free. Yes, right over here.

QUESTIONER: How'd the different colored people come in the world?

JOHN: How do different colored people come into the world? Because they have different colored moms and dads (laughter).

Let me tell you. That's a very good question. It's the old question of...well, I won't get into that. Anyway, basically, you go back in your Bible to the 9th chapter of Genesis and you will find in that chapter that God determined certain features for the three sons of Noah. He had three sons. Their names were, what?...Shem, Ham and Japheth. Shem formed the Semitic people...Shem, Semite. That's where Semite comes from. The Semitics are Arabs, Jewish people. The whole of the human race flows out of those three men. Right? Because after the flood, that's it...Noah's family.

Ham was a servile people and most historical sociologists and anthropologists believe that Ham gave birth to the Phoenician people, the people who occupied the ships and so forth in the Mediterranean area.

"Japheth," it says, "shall enlarge" and most anthropologists believe that Japhethites moved to the European continent and became the colonizers. "Japheth shall enlarge" was the prophecy.

Ham became the servile people and Shem became the oriental people...the Jewish, the Arab people and then whatever may have gone from there east. Ham seems to have gone south and Japheth seems to have gone west.

Now, through, I believe, the direct act of God, God distinguished between those people. A couple of chapters later you come to Genesis, chapter 11 and what happens there?...the Tower of Babel. And God scattered all those nations, scattered all those people. And I believe, in scattering them, He developed, by His own supernatural, providential will, distinctive characteristics of those people to identify them uniquely to their own areas and their own culture. In other words, God was trying to eliminate amalgamation and make them distinct. And I think there's some adaptation, isn't there?...darker skinned people living in areas where the sun was more severe. I don't think that's a process of evolution; I think that was a supernatural act on God's part.

So the answer to your question is, God made the races the way they are. And God put them in certain places of the world and adapted them to that in a distinction. So I think it's just a divine act by God. Now, that is not to say that God wants everybody to make sure they stay in their own race. I think when you come to the New Testament, it's very clear that there's neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male or female. Right? We're all one in Christ. Certainly among Christians there is a oneness. Okay?

Ed?

ED: I've heard a number of testimonies, quite a number of testimonies over the last year and a half about the benefits and the blessings that are coming out of the studies of the sabbatical year of the Jewish and how it should be practiced today and even so much that people who have had a number

of years of seniority with their company, they left their company just to have a sabbatical and how it's been a blessing to them and their church. I'm curious, in your study, what you have learned from this and what you think at this time.

JOHN: Well, that's one of the reasons, Ed, that I decided to go away for three months. I've talked to some pastors who have said to me things like this: I left my church and it was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life. If I'd have just taken a year off, I could've come back with a renewed vigor, a renewed heart and I think I would have fulfilled my ministry there. You can get under the pressure so much that you can never see any light at the end of the tunnel. You know how in a workweek you look forward to a weekend? You know how in a work year you look forward to a vacation? Well, that's very necessary. You know, you enjoy the anticipation of that probably as much as you do the reality of it...the planning of it, the anticipation and so forth. For someone like me in the ministry, there is a certain relentlessness to the ministry. There's a certain...you know, there's no light at the end of the tunnel. I mean, it's your life. You have no options. If God has you here, that's it. And the only way you can have some of the freedom to get through some of the hard times is to sense that there's gonna be a time when you can kind of regroup, you know, and yet the struggle will cease for awhile. If you try to do it in a week or two, it never happens. Maybe three months isn't long enough, but at least it's step in that direction.

On the other hand, biblically, there's really no such standard in the New Testament. You don't see anybody in the New Testament just bailing out. The Lord, of course, retreated to a place of quiet with the Father and that's a daily kind of thing you have to do. But...so, I don't think you can give a biblical justification for this. It's just a time of refreshment. I know that over in Britain they very frequently send their pastor on a full one-year sabbatical. In fact, when I was over there a year ago, I was talking to one man who was just finishing up his yearly sabbatical and he felt it was tremendously profitable. The ministry here at Grace is very unique, though. In that country there's some traditions that kind of sustain things.

Yes?

QUESTIONER: May I ask two questions?

JOHN: Sure.

QUESTIONER: The first one...they're unrelated. The first one is on physical death.

JOHN: Mm-hmm.

QUESTIONER: We know that we pass into the presence of Christ, our souls, upon death. But does the Bible teach us what we should do with our physical bodies? Specifically, is there anything wrong

with donating any organs to medical research? Is there anything wrong with cremation? That's question number one. Number two: In the Gospels, the four Gospels, the authors refer to our Lord as Jesus Christ. But Paul often reverses that...Christ Jesus. Is there a reason for this?

JOHN: Yeah, I think there is. Let me answer the second one first. I think the reason is this. The Gospel writers were writing when Jesus was alive. And so, to him, He was Jesus because that was His human name. You understand what I mean? The Gospel writers using Jesus Christ would be referring to Him as they knew Him to be Jesus. Paul, you see, is reflecting backwards on the theological reality of the Christ. And so Paul's look at him is not as personal as it is theological. And so Paul would be more prone to identify Him first by His theological name, the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed, whereas the Gospel writers who walked with Him and experienced His life, you know, in the way that it's written in the Gospels, would be more prone, I think, to refer to Him in terms of His humanness.

The first question, let's see. Specifically, in regard to death, the Bible says in Philippians, chapter 1, "absent from the body, present with the Lord." II Corinthians, chapter 5, "better to depart and be with Christ." So there's instantaneous soul presence in the presence of Christ. Now, about the physical body, to me, and I don't feel there's any biblical problem with this, to me it's utterly insignificant what happens to the body. It doesn't matter. People say sometimes, well, what about cremation? What about in the Rapture? What'll happen? Listen, most people, by the time the Rapture comes, they're gonna be such a mess anyway, it wouldn't have mattered if they'd been burned. You know, to me that isn't an issue. If you want to donate your body to medical science, that's great. I think...I've seen some of that going on. We have a little guy in our church, for example, Danny Dodge, who is blind and has congenital kidney failure and he's on a dialysis machine. He's just waiting for someone who can donate the organs he needs, probably in death. And he's already received one and it didn't take so they had to remove it again and they're waiting again. But...so I think this is a wonderful thing. Now some people can't handle that. Right? I mean, some people can't handle that. Like Melinda said to me not long ago, she said, "Daddy, when I die will they throw dirt on me?" Well, some people have an emotional problem. A little child would. I don't want to go in a box and have them throw dirt on me. So when I go down there, don't let them put that dirt on me. So there are certain, you know, psychological or whatever attitudes we have. Some people can freely donate their body and not even worry about it. Some people would want to be cremated, others whatever. I don't really think that's a biblical issue at all. I think you don't worry about what happens to the body because you're gonna get a new one anyway. So, it's insignificant. I don't think there's any biblical word on it at all. Okay?

Any other questions? Yes?

QUESTIONER: Is it biblical for the church to incorporate with the state? If so, what verses do you use to establish this truth?

JOHN: Okay, I got the first part. Is it biblical for the church to incorporate within the state?

QUESTIONER: With the state.

JOHN: With the state.

QUESTIONER: Yes.

JOHN: Okay. Yeah, the answer to that is this. It is biblical in this sense, that we are subject to the powers that be for they're ordained of God. All right? You could put it another way. Is it biblical for you to have a marriage license? Well, the Bible doesn't talk about a marriage license. But if you want to have a relationship with a woman that is properly recognized as something other than adultery, you better get a marriage license. Is it biblical for you to have a driver's license? Can't you just say the Holy Spirit is my guide? I'm just gonna go puttin' around, you know. Well, no, you're gonna get a license because you're gonna get in a lot of trouble because this is the law of the state. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Marriage licenses and driver's licenses and corporate licenses are rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's. All that the government is asking you to do is to identify yourself within the design and the framework of a legal description so that they can understand how you function within that society. I don't think you're giving anything away.

Now, I feel that there has to be a separation in a sense. The state cannot tell the church what to do because we have a divine mandate. Right? But it's no problem for me to...if the city says, for example, we would like you to build your parking lot with so many spaces per person in your church, that's fine. That's Caesar. Right? That's rendering to Caesar. If the state says to me, you will not preach this, that's when I bail out. So I think you have to keep your perspective. As long as you're dealing with the issues related to Caesar, I don't see any problem with it at all.

Okay, yes?

QUESTIONER: When we, the church, are raptured out is the blessing of the indwelling Holy Spirit going to be taken also? And if so, what about the new believers in the Tribulation period? What's going to sustain them?

JOHN: Just keep this in mind. The Bible nowhere says that the Holy Spirit will be removed during the Tribulation. This is a misconception of II Thessalonians, chapter 2 where it says He who restrains or He who hinders will be taken away. Now, there's a lot of discussion about He who hinders and who it is. I am of the conviction that it is the Holy Spirit but it is talking about the Antichrist. II Thessalonians 2:3-12 talks about Antichrist who comes with lying wonders and so forth, the man of sin, the son of perdition who deceives many and so forth and the whole world follows after him and all this kind of

stuff. And in the midst of all of that, it says He who restrains will be taken away. Now, here's the key. During the time of the Tribulation, evil reaches its apex. Right? I mean, all hell breaks loose. For example, the demons that have been bound...and there are demons now that are bound in the pit...according to Revelation, chapter 9, during the Tribulation the pit is opened and all these other demons come gushing out and overrun the earth. So that during the Tribulation you not only have the intensity of satanic activity like we have today, but you will have massive more demons infiltrating the system. You also have, according to Revelation, chapter 12, that the demons are cast out of the sky. Right? Michael defeats them and they're cast to the earth so that the demons coming from above and the demons coming, as it were, from the pit beneath converge upon the earth and there is an utter holocaust of evil across the face of the earth. So much so that men slaughter one another in it. It's an incredibly evil time.

Now, what I believe is this. But up until that time, the Holy Spirit restrains evil from reaching its apex and the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers is the restrainer. We are the salt. Right? And we are the light. If there's any light and any salt, it's the believers. So we act...as the Spirit works through us and as the Spirit, perhaps, working even independently of us, restrains evil, but when the man of sin comes, the son of perdition, during the time of the Tribulation, then the church goes. There goes our influence. No salt and no light initially. Right? And the Spirit of God, I believe, takes away His hand of restraint from evil and evil runs to its gamut.

But people are going to be saved. We know that. Revelation 7 says Israel are going to be saved. And it says so many Gentiles will be saved they couldn't even be numbered of all tribes and peoples and nations and tongues. There'll be a great salvation. Now, anybody who is saved, the Bible says, is born of the...Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit of God would have to be here or that couldn't occur. So I don't believe that it teaches the Spirit of God won't be here. I just believe that the salt and the light is gone and the restraining work of the Spirit which retards evil from reaching its fullness. For example, even in the world today, there are some good men, aren't there, who have moral standards. But when the Antichrist takes over the whole world and starts laying out policy, he is so vile that all good men will have nothing to say. Even men with some, whatever you call them, milk of human kindness or virtue or whatever.

So I just believe that's the essence of what that means. Not that there will be no Holy Spirit or else no one could be saved. And I believe it is the Spirit that upholds us and sustains us. It is His life in us that continues to cause us to know God. Therefore, He's gonna be there with that community of believers. Okay?

Yes?

QUESTIONER: A few times in the Gospels, Jesus made the statement where the vultures are gathered or "where the carcass is, there the vultures will be gathered." I think He made most of the

references in regard to the last days. And every time I look at that verse I end up scratching my head.

JOHN: Yeah, it's Matthew 24. It's the idea of...I think it's a statement...the best way to see that is that it was a proverbial statement of the time. And the fullness of its meaning was known to the people at that time. My feeling is that it is just a general reference to coming judgment. I mean, to say where the carcasses are, the vultures will be, conjures up in my mind devastation, judgment, destruction. And so I think the Lord is simply using a proverbial statement. We have a lot of those. We say a stitch in time saves nine or a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. And, you know, I mean, we have proverbial statements or colloquialisms in our own time. And I think the best way to perceive that statement by the Lord is that it was also a proverbial statement of the time, that they understood the fullness of it and the basic thing was that it referred to judgment. Okay?

Yes?

QUESTIONER: I understand that...no, I don't understand; that's why I'm asking a question. I'm nervous.

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: They say that there is a counterfeit healing by Satan and that I do not understand because I believe only God can heal and if it's a counterfeit healing, is it temporal and if not, how do you know the difference between that which is counterfeit from Satan?

JOHN: Well, I think it's an oversimplification to say that only God can heal because...I think that's true in a sense. God has built into our bodies _____ healing mechanism, you know, and so forth. But I do feel there is indication in the New Testament and the Old Testament that Satan can do lying wonders. For example, you see the plagues of Egypt and when God did a certain thing with the plague, the magicians of Egypt had their ways of trying to copy it. Now, you have to keep in mind that Satan is a supernatural being. Right? He is not natural; he is supernatural. He can do things on a supernatural level. And I am convinced that there is a certain element of truth in the fact that Satan can heal. Some of the deceiving and lying wonders of the Antichrist could be in this very area. For example, the Bible tells us that the Antichrist will come in the end time as a beast who will be wounded in the head to death and then will be revived. Remember that? Now it is possible that Satan pulls off some kind of counterfeit resurrection. Now, that would be a deceiving resurrection because I don't think he can give life. You find in the book of Acts, for example, that there were Jews who went around casting out demons. And Paul rebukes the sons of Sceva for their casting out of demons. There were many of the Jews, who from time to time through Jewish history, went around casting out demons through exorcistic rites. Now, we know that demons can cause disease. Right? Because we know in the New Testament that there were people who had diseases, right, the dumb and the blind and the deaf could well have been because of demonic obsession. So in that sense, certain men

going around casting out demons could be relieving disease. It would be Satan casting out Satan, Jesus said. But I believe that Satan can counterfeit miracles. He can falsify them and he can do some very astounding supernatural things, you know. And so he can make it appear as though he has healed and I'm convinced that he can even, perhaps, heal in some cases. I don't think he can heal an actual organic illness, but I think he can make it look like he can. You know what I'm saying? I do not believe, for example, if you have cancer, that Satan can heal that cancer. He has no life-giving principle. He's a creature. But I do believe that if your illness is related to demon activity in your life, right, and, for example, a person filled with demons can be a very sick person, very sick, and it can manifest itself...I believe that Satan, by altering the function of those demons, can relieve that sickness. I'll put it this way, I think he can heal what he causes or what his system causes or he can falsify and counterfeit the healings.

Yes?

QUESTIONER: John, I have, basically, two questions. One is, how would you answer a person that, if...the expression goes, if you think the sin, you've committed it. And they say, well, if I think of it, I might as well go ahead and do it.

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: That's the first question. The other question is a curiosity question and that is, where did they get the name _____?

JOHN: The name what?

QUESTIONER: Getting the name of the seats, calling them pews (laughter).

JOHN: Pews (laughter). I'll tell you. Pews, p-e-w-s, is a...years ago there's a...I don't know if you've had any...any of you that study languages. There is what's known as Middle English and Middle French. Some of you remember that...Middle English and Middle French. There was a old word called "puie," p-u-i-e, as I remember, and it was a word that meant "balustrade" or it meant "podium." And in the old churches, they had seats, pews...not pews, but seats boxed off with balustrades or banisters and you went into your...have you ever been in an old church like that where you actually walk in a little door and everybody bought a pew. That's how the Free Methodists got their name. They didn't think you should pay for your seats, so they called them the Free Methodists and threw them out and they started their own group (laughter).

But anyway, they had these little seat sections with a balustrade or a banister around it and the old Middle English, Middle French word was puie. And so as time went on, puie became an English word and it was just adapted to speak of the seats in the church. So that's where it came from I think.

The other question which is not nearly as important (laughter) was about sin, yeah (laughter). The question of if you thought the sin, you've already done it so you might as well go and do it. You know, that's just a device of Satan. That's a fine line. There's really...I think James...let me show you the point in James just to give you...there's a lot of Scriptures we could go to, but this one kind of hits me at the moment. That's if I can find it. Let's see...James 1:13, and this is an important word. It says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." And here's the process: "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Now, temptation...is temptation sin? No. No. Christ was tempted, right? Did He sin? No. Temptation is not sin. Temptation is the enticement to sin. Now, in order for it to be a temptation, you have to think the thought. True? If you didn't think the thought, then you didn't get tempted with it. Right? So that initially, to think the thought is simply Satan or the flesh or the world planting the temptation. Now, that is when you are drawn away by your lusts and enticed. I don't believe that that constitutes the sin at that point. I put it this way. The first thought is the temptation. The second thought begins to breed the sin. Right? I don't know how you deal with temptation, but I have a lot of ways of doing it. Sometimes I sing a song, a good Christian song. Sometimes I quote verses. Sometimes I just put my attention immediately on Christ or on a passage of Scripture. But when the first thought comes, that's the time to act. Because what happens is, when you have the first thought, that is the attempt of the enemy to draw you away of your own lusts and entice you. But then "when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin." Now all of the sudden it stops being an enticement and you begin to dwell upon the thought and to enjoy the thought and to indulge the thought, whatever thought it is...covetousness or lust or greed or pride or whatever. You begin to indulge that, it "bringeth forth sin." And believe me, sin always occurs first in the heart. That's always where it starts. If you look after a woman to lust after her, you have already committed a sin in your heart. Then if you take it a step further, you commit the sin outwardly, that is to double the sin. So that would be to say, well, if I've already done one sin, I might as well do two. But the reasonability of that is foolish. You shouldn't have done the first one to start with.

Temptation is simply the enticement. When lust...you let the lust conceive and by conceiving it means this. It's one thing to be approached, it's one thing to be attacked, it's something else to give entrance to that. And that's why he uses the word conceive like a man and a woman. It's one thing for a woman to be approached by a man and to say no to that man; it's something else for the woman to be approached by the man and then to conceive with the man. And the point being that the approach is not the issue; it's the reciprocation that becomes the issue. As you feed upon the thought and then, having fed upon the thought, you can go to the next step and actually do the deed. But even if you didn't do the deed, if you conceived the thought and let it bear reality, that constitutes a sin. And the key to dealing with any sin, I really feel, anybody who would say, "Well, I've already done that sin, might as well do another one," is never gonna be able to stop because you're failing at the very vital point of reality and that is that sin dishonors God. And if you don't hate sin all the way along, you're not gonna stop yourself anyway. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Do you think a person such as a barber should declare their tips and pay taxes on that as part of their income?

JOHN: Hey, that's great! Do I think a barber ought to declare his tips? I think that you ought to declare whatever the government says you ought to declare. Now, I think that means everything you get as income. I think that's the way it ought to be. I mean, it's a...to me, paying your taxes is an act of worship. I just paid...I worshipped yesterday (laughter). I paid my taxes. And I, actually, I sat down, I wrote out these two checks, you know, one for the Internal Revenue Service and the other for the Franchise Tax Board. And I actually, well, I just felt in my heart, you know, a certain amount of joy because I said, you know, this is honoring to God. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, to God the things that are God's." I share my ministry here. I want to do what's right in terms of my obligation to the government.

I do believe in my own life, for example, as a minister, I receive a salary from the church. But then I go speak somewhere, sometimes people give me money, sometimes people give me a gift. If I do a wedding, you know, somebody might give me some money, although I normally give it back. Sometimes they're persistent, you know, and so if people give me money or something, then I feel that every dime of that that I receive I have to keep a record of and I have to include that because that reflects exactly what I have received because that's just as much a stewardship before God as anything else. That's what I believe. And I also believe it's as much a stewardship before God as anything else to take every single deduction I can find (laughter) because the government's provided that. And so a good citizen will take all his opportunities and so forth.

QUESTIONER: I'd like to ask, John, if as a Christian, should we as Christians believe any part of the theory of evolution?

JOHN: I think as Christians that the theory of evolution is unnecessary. The Bible does not teach evolution in any way, shape or form. To believe it is to concede to the pressure of what you'd have to call scientific theory rather than scientific fact. So there's no way that we have to capitulate.

And we have, of course, Fred Barchow's done a lot of work on this, but we have about a dozen or more scientists in our church with doctorates who constitute our Bible science fellowship group. And they have done some tremendous work in this area. None of them makes any concession whatsoever to evolution. It's unnecessary. If you believe the Lord created the world in six days, where's evolution? And if you believe on the sixth day He made man and man had all of his faculties like Adam did and he's smart enough to name all the animals in the world and smart enough to commune with the living God, then where's evolution? I believe there is change within a species, but evolution is indefensible, utterly indefensible. See, what you really face is a faith problem. If you don't want to believe in God, then you have to believe in evolution. You either have a cause or a no cause,

and if you don't want to accept the cause, you have no cause. But for Christians to accept evolution is an unnecessary concession.

Yes?

QUESTIONER: Yes, John, I'd like to know if... _____ say...if they...why do they celebrate Christmas...wait a minute. Is it paganism? Excuse me.

JOHN: Why do we celebrate Christmas?

QUESTIONER: Yeah, is it paganism?

JOHN: No, I don't think so. Let me go back to the...same thing with Christmas or Easter. Just to point this out very simply, we have a right to remember great events in Christianity; do we not? Did the Jews do that? Just because the world corrupts those things is no reason for us to junk the whole thing. Now, I believe that's what Satan wants us to do, just scuttle the whole thing...listen, at our house, we have Christmas. We don't have Santa Claus. At our house we have Easter, but we don't have a bunny rabbit. As long as the distinction is made...sure, Easter is from Astarte, which is another name for Ashtoreth, the mother of Baal; it's pagan. But to us, Easter is not Astarte; Easter is simply a term used to refer to a period of time when we remember the resurrection. It is the content of it, not the terminology.

Christmas, sure, you could talk about all of the stuff, the peripheral stuff, but to me, the kernel of truth is that Christ was virgin-born and that is significant enough to demand our attention. And so I'm not willing to capitulate to all that stuff although I think we have to be careful in how we define our celebration and our worship to make sure it doesn't smack of any paganism.

QUESTIONER: Yes, John, why did Jesus, being God, call out to the Father, "why have you forsaken Me?" on the cross?

JOHN: You're asking why Jesus on the cross said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And what you're really doing is opening up the mystery of the trinity. The Bible tells us that God is one God. Deuteronomy 6: "The Lord our God is one God." That is the uniqueness of Judaism, that is the uniqueness of the Christian faith. There is one God as opposed to many gods...polytheism, many gods. We believe in one God, but that one God encompasses three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I don't understand that, I just believe it. So that on the cross and all through the life of Christ you have Him communing with the Father. He would pray to the Father, John 17, that masterful High Priest-ly prayer. Why, you even have Him in the garden prayer, Jesus saying "not My will, but Your will be done," as if there were two wills, see. In his humanness there was a distinctiveness from the Father that was absolutely inexplicable. The answer to your question is there's no answer.

Deuteronomy 29:29, "the secret things belong to the Lord." That's one in that category. All I know is that they're one and yet they're different. Jesus said to Phillip in John 14, "If you've seen Me, you've seen..." what?... "the Father." So there's a sense in which Jesus is unique and yet in which He is the same. "I and the Father are one."

QUESTIONER: I was told by another pastor that He was fulfilling prophecy of Isaiah 53.

JOHN: You mean, by saying that He was simply fulfilling prophecy?

QUESTIONER: Yes.

JOHN: Well, that's true. By saying it He was fulfilling prophecy, but He would never have said it to fulfill prophecy if it hadn't been true. So it was utterly true. He and the Father are one and yet they're distinct. He said it in fulfillment of prophecy because it was true. Jesus would never have manipulated some words in order to convince somebody that He was somebody that He wasn't. So it was legitimately true.

QUESTIONER: Yeah, mine is a three-part question. It has to do with things relevant today. I don't know if I'm coming across _____. And that is, because of mass media and things like this, anything really you want to see on television is practically there by either...by implication or by observation.

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: And that is, first of all, there seems to be a lack of material, Christian and otherwise, that actually specifically points out Christian morals as they relate to society. Also, for instance, I ran into a guy some time back who said he was a Christian nudist and he felt no stumbling, therefore it was not a sin to him. And also...

JOHN: Christian nudist (laughter)?

QUESTIONER: That's what he said. He said he believed in God and everything else but he says it did not cause him to stumble, therefore, it was not a sin.

JOHN: Yeah, right.

QUESTIONER: He had no incest. He had no fornication, this type of thing. And also, if there is a standard, does it apply to all men equally?

JOHN: Yeah, I think there's a biblical standard. Absolutely. And I...that's, you see, you're hitting me right, you know, on the nerve because this is exactly what's happening in Christianity today. Anything goes. Everybody's a Christian. You know, it's like Donna Summer, you know, who is the, what do

they call her, the disco queen or something? I saw her one time in an article. I couldn't believe it. And she says, "I have become a Christian but don't think it'll have any effect on what I sing or my act." Well, what kind of Christianity is that? See...that's unacceptable. The Bible has absolutely high moral standards and they're explicit in Scripture. I mean, I've been trying to preach them for 12 years here and they're absolutely explicit. I Thessalonians, chapter 4, we're to avoid fornication. We're not to defraud one another, that is, use one another for any kind of a sexual advantage. We're not to behave as the godless pagans, that is, driven by our own desires and lusts. The Bible is explicit about those things. It lists them in Galatians, the things that are characteristics of the flesh like drunkenness and immorality and fornication and adultery. It lists them in Romans, chapter 1, explicit factors of moral behavior.

But the thing that's so tragic about it in our day is if you preach those things, you get accused of being narrow-minded, you know, fundamentalist, old-fashioned kind of a thing because everybody wants to tolerate everything. You know, there used to be a standard about marriage and divorce and now anything goes. Anything! And trying to hold up the standard in this day and age is even more difficult than it was in the past.

I don't know if that answers your question but all I can say in general is that I will affirm in my own heart, in my own ministry, some absolute standards in terms of behavior for a believer. I think that comes right down to what you watch on television and whether you go to a movie. You know, I really do. I feel it comes right down to what you read, what kind of books you read, what kind of magazines you look at. I think it's gotta come down to that. If you don't control your television set, you're letting the sewer unload in your house. See. And it'll be there. I mean, let's face it. It's so bad, you know, we watch the television, I think, in this sense. We watch programs; we don't watch television. If it's a program worth watching, we watch it; if it's not, we don't turn it on. And few and far between are the things worth watching. Even the ones that aren't dirty are dumb (laughter).

QUESTIONER: Last night I was watching a movie on Jim Jones...

JOHN: Oh, yeah.

QUESTIONER: ...which was really very scary to me because they started this out and he seemed to be a very sincere and legitimate fundamentalist pastor.

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: And so then, you know, he developed into a false prophet. My question is related to Jim Jones and salvation. If you look at John 6:37, it says "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out." So, assuming that the movie was a legitimate representation of Jim Jones and he was a sincere and honest real Christian but then he

changed, what happened to him?

JOHN: Yeah, the answer to your question is in John 8:31. John 8:31, it says in 30, 31 and 32, "Many believed on His name, but He said unto them 'If you continue in My Word, then are you My real disciple. And then you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free.'" Jim Jones gave evidence of the fact that he was never a true disciple because he didn't continue in the faith. I John 2:19 says "If they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out from us that it might be made manifest that they were not of us." You see, the great verifier of salvation is continuance. In James, chapter 1 it says the same thing: "This is true of you if you continue in the faith and be not moved away." You see, continuance in the faith is the validator.

Jim Jones is no Christian. In fact, Jim Jones was a false prophet from the very beginning. I think, I think Satan was probably more active in the early career of Jim Jones than he was in the end of it. I don't think Satan wants to make bad people...I don't think Satan wants to make good people bad and bad people worse. I think he wants to make bad people look good without Christ. You see, Satan is deceiving as an angel of light. He wants to make bad people look good. And so I think he was more involved overtly in the development of Jim Jones when Jim Jones was playing the game of being a true Christian. And it was his own lust and the vileness of his own nature that drew him into the way he ended up. I don't think that brought any honor to Satan. That's the kind of stuff he's trying to cover up but he can't control his own system. He wants to disguise himself as an angel of light, see.

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