

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

### **Bible Questions and Answers, Part 39**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 70-11

Well we're going to have some time for question and answer again as we did the last time and many folks said, "Well, we need to do this again because questions didn't all get answered." And I just want to encourage you to ask questions that you feel are relevant and important and be as direct as you can. As I did last time, maybe a point of departure, and I get questions, believe me, I spend a great portion of my life answering Bible questions. I generate questions constantly. I think I'm answering them but what I'm really doing is just creating them, I think. But one question that was handed to me this morning, what does "hate" mean when God says He hates Jacob. Does He actually hate the person or does He hate what the person does?

You remember in Romans chapter 9 God says, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." It doesn't say He hated Jacob as the question indicates, but He says I love Jacob and I hate Esau.

Now the question is, does God hate the person or does He hate what the person does? Well, what does John 3:16 say? "For God so...what?...loved the whole world." So we know that everyone falls under the general category of the love of God. But there are a number of times in Scripture when God is expressed as hating.

I was thinking of Psalm 5:5 where it says the boastful shall not stand before Thine eyes, Thou dost hate all who do iniquity. And then over in Psalm 11 verse 5 the Lord tests the righteous and the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. And then over in chapter 26 or Psalm 26 I think it's also verse 5, "I hate the assembly of evildoers."

In Proverbs even more extensive statement is made in that familiar text of chapter 6 verse 16, there are six things which the Lord hates, seven are abomination to Him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utter lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. And then, of course, in Proverbs 8:13 you probably have something which makes it very clear, it says the fear of the Lord or true worship of God is to hate evil, pride, arrogance, and the evil way and the perverted mouth I hate.

Now in all of these cases you can see clearly that what it is that God hates is not the individual, but what? The sin, He even lists the sins that He hates. When a person persists in those sins it is the sin in the sinner persisted that God hates. Even God says I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The New Testament says that the Lord does not desire that any should perish. And so it is the sin

that He hates.

In Jeremiah, I was just thinking of chapter 44 verse 4 it says, "I sent all My servants, the prophets again and again saying, O do not this abominable thing which I hate." It is the deed of the sinner that the Lord hates. It is the act of sin that the Lord hates. But it is also true that the sinner who does not repent, who continues in the sin will feel the fury of God's hatred. And in Malachi 1:4 it says that the Lord toward people who sin is indignant forever. So God hates the sin but if the sinner persists in the sin, then the sinner feels the hatred of God.

With regard to Esau, I just might say as a footnote, no where in Genesis does it say that God hated Esau. It doesn't say anywhere that He hated Esau. It was only after Esau had chosen sin and abandoned God for many, many years, over a thousand years before God would look back and say, "Esau have I hated." By that time it was clear to all where Esau stood. So once the sinner is inexorably and finally identified with the sin, then the sinner feels the hatred of God. Okay?

Now that kind of gets us started. So I think we'll ask if you if you want to step up to a microphone, there should be somebody there from our pastoral staff to help you. Yes, give us your name first.

RAY: Hi, John, my name is Ray. Forgive me, I need to read this question to you, so how would you reply to a believer in the Charismatic Movement who agrees that revelation cannot be added to Scripture but would still argue that God still gives words of knowledge in the church for direction as long as it falls in line with Scripture?

JOHN: Well, I think in answering a charismatic there are a number of ways. My book on the charismatics goes in to that in some detail. But revelation is revelation and if a person says I am getting direct words of wisdom, knowledge, revelation from God then that equates with Scripture in the sense that it is the pure unadulterated true revelation of God. And so it confuses the issue. We have, according to what Jude said, a faith once for all delivered to the saints. We have, according to what John writes in Revelation, a revelation which does not permit addition. If anything is added, it shall be added to the person the plagues that are written in the book. The idea that God is giving revelation and that it is somehow not equal to Scripture or not on a par with Scripture poses some difficulty. If it is absolutely true and divine and from God, then it is divine revelation. God reserved divine revelation for special times which were encompassed in the written Word. And since that time revelation has ceased.

Let me give you an illustration of that. At the end of the Old Testament era there was a 400-year period in which there was no revelation and then God spoke again the New Testament. So having that time period in which there is no revelation is not new. When God completed the Old Testament He stopped speaking. And then He spoke again in His Son, Hebrews 1 says. And I believe when He

completed the New Testament He ceased to give revelation and we have the once-for-all, delivered-to-the-saints faith.

Furthermore, I would say to a charismatic the same thing that they say to me all the time whenever I've talked to them, how do you know it's from God? And inevitably they will say, "Well, we think it's from God," because they can't know. Why? Because it was very, very clear in the New Testament era who the prophets of God were, who the apostles of Christ were. And the Word came through recognized authorities. Today anybody and his brother might get a revelation from God. And on what basis are we to assume it's from God? Is it attendant with signs and wonders? Can they heal the sick? Can they raise the dead? Can they cast out demons at a word authoritatively like Jesus and the apostles did? Those were the signs of an apostle.

See, anyone who had the ability to give revelation had to be accredited. And the accreditation was, according to 2 Corinthians chapter 12, the signs of an apostle. And it was known to all who these people were or the fact that they were apostles or they were those who were associated with the apostles. So I think it's very, very important to understand that one, revelation ceased; two, even when it was being given not everybody got it and it never was something that God just passed out indiscriminately to all kinds of people. So I think that those would be the approaches that I would take.

I remember reading a book that was published by one of the Pentecostal presses in our country in which it said, this pastor was pleading for people to stop standing up in churches and saying, "I have a word from the Lord." And he said that it is either from the Lord or it isn't but we don't know how to know which. It's very confusing. And this pastor gave an illustration of a church that was in the process of calling someone to be their pastor and some lady stood up and said, "I have a word from the Lord, this is the man." And immediately it threw the church into chaos because they didn't know whether it was from the Lord or not. That's very typical.

I know very well a man who took me into his office, a very well-known charismatic pastor and said God had given him a vision. And he showed me on a board the vision that God had given him for an area of the city which the Lord had set aside for him. Within five year that vision was gone, that board had disappeared in the trash barrel somewhere and he had a new one. So, and this would be a man that everyone would assume if anybody was going to be able to know when he got a revelation he might. Again it's very whimsical.

It's very frightening also to say you have a word from the Lord. In the Old Testament if you said you had a word from the Lord and it was tested and found to be not from the Lord, you were killed, and that's how important the issue is because you can't have people running around loose saying God told them this and God told them that. And so before anyone would ever say anything like that they would want to take very careful stock of the issues at hand.

Furthermore, are we to assume that somehow the Spirit of God can't do His work unless He gives revelation to some people, unless He gives revelation indiscriminately to all kinds of people? I think not.

Furthermore, it seems to me of grave concern that those people who are getting revelation tend to be in a movement which is the most biblical illiterate, to be real honest with you. They don't know theology. They don't know doctrine. They don't know how to interpret the Scripture very well. And because of that lack of content they fall into a mystical category because they're not able to really carefully exposit the Word of God. Without that content orientation they fall into the category of looking for an experience.

I'll give you an illustration of it. I was watching the television program today from Church on the Way. And there was a guy singing a song and the song went like this, "When there are no answers, there is Jesus." And he went on to say, "When there are no answers, there is Jesus." And I thought to myself, "What in the world does that mean? Does that mean that you can either go with a cognitive approach and find answers to questions, or you can just junk that and grab Jesus?" See, that is a very mystical approach to truth. Where there are no answers, there is Jesus. Wait a minute, that's abandoning the search for an experience. The song should say, "When you're looking for the answer, Jesus has it...the Bible has the answer." But there's a very experiential milieu in which many of those dear people exist. And I think they substitute those revelations very often for understanding.

So I think there are a lot of ways to approach that. I don't say that with unkindness, I say it because I believe that it's true and it's correct. Thank you for asking.

QUESTIONER: I've been reading, or I've read in the past, where Spurgeon and Luther and Whitefield were all drinkers. They were imbibers of the fruit of the vine, if you will. And I've always been taught to pattern my life after godly men and so on.

JOHN: Well I would suggest you try the living, not the dead.

QUESTIONER: Right, right, I'm kidding. My question is, and I've heard a lot of...heard this and that about what you believe on this issue, but I'd like you to answer the question in light...in light of this, and that is Psalm 104 and Deuteronomy 28 and Proverbs 3 all talk about wine and it's in the context of a blessing. And what I understand is that the same Hebrew word in Psalm 104 and Proverbs 3 and Deuteronomy 28, that same Hebrew word is the same Hebrew word used for the wine that Noah drank and that Lot drank. And so you're really thinking that's all grape juice, just sort of throw it out.

JOHN: No.

QUESTIONER: But it's...the way I understand it, at least the way I do, is that it's wine, it's real wine and it's a blessing and it's from God. And wine makes glad the heart of man and God. What do you...where do you stand on the wine issue and why?

JOHN: Well, first of all, I don't know about Spurgeon, Whitefield, and who else?

QUESTIONER: Luther. Well actually the book you recommended, Spurgeon At His Best, you put a recommendation on the back of it. And he quotes...and he says, "Although I'm not a total abstainer," in the column of drunkenness.

JOHN: Right...Right, yeah, all I'm saying is I don't know what the source is and I don't know how accurate it is. I don't know what they did but what they did was between them and the Lord and their understanding. Personally there's a lot of involved in this, let me see if I can give you just a couple of brief statements.

First of all, I don't drink wine. I don't drink anything with alcohol in it, the simple reason is I don't need to so why would I put myself in a position to be controlled by something when it's not necessary. In other words, I live in a culture where it doesn't have to be that way. The reason there are so many strong warnings about drunkenness in the Bible is because they were living in a society where everybody drank the fruit of the vine and without refrigeration process everything fermented. And so in biblical times when you talk about wine, you're not talking about grape juice, all of it would have been wine in effect because it wouldn't take very long for it to ferment. So the process of fermentation, and I don't want to go into all of this, the process of purging and separating out the vinegar and pouring it from bag to bag to bag to bag and all of that, bags of skin, to get as pure a wine as possible, did not preclude the fact that it could be alcoholic. But the best indications and the best evidence continues to be that there were two kinds of drinks, one was called strong drink and one was wine and you will see those distinguished words in the Old Testament.

Strong drink was unmixed and strong drink is not commended. Wine was mixed, strong drink unmixed. And the mixture of wine with water was the common...the common means of dilution of the alcohol so that that which had to be drunk would not make you drunk. Now if you're living in a culture like Palestine where it's hot and you have this very dry and arid kind of climate, obviously there would be a major thirst problem and if you're working in the heat of the day you just keep drinking straight wine all day because you can't drink water because there were not the purification processes necessary and in those days bodies of water tended to be bodies of sewage as well. And they had problems with that.

The mixture of water with wine did two things. One it diluted the wine, and two, it also purified the water because the alcoholic content of the wine would act in a disinfectant way on the water to purge it from whatever might be there. So it was common, and you can check all kinds of historical sources on this. The best one was an ad...was an article in CT a number of years ago on this very issue, Christianity Today, in which the historical data was pretty well pulled together and the resource material was given, but the bottom line was they mixed their wine anywhere from three, four to one to eight to one so that it was greatly diluted so that you could not hold enough of that liquid to be drunk. And that's...but the warnings against drunkenness are repeated in the Old Testament and the New Testament because it was so easy to fall into that pattern because that was basically all you could drink was the fruit of the vine. There were no, I suppose what we would call, artificial drinks, you know, there were no Coca Colas and Seven Ups and that kind of thing.

So I believe out of necessity they would drink real wine which would ferment but they would mix it with water so that it would not be full strength. After all, a glass of wine has the same basic alcohol content as a can of beer which has the basically the same alcohol content as a shot of whisky. The reason you get drunk faster on whisky is because you can consume so much more of it than you can the volume even of wine or beer.

But I believe that...what the Scripture was indicating was that you want to avoid anything that can have an undo influence on you. Certainly drinking mixed wine for the quenching of your thirst and drinking a pleasurable tasting drink would bring pleasure, would bring joy to you, and joy to God just as God would rejoice when you ate the food that He created in the world. But I don't think that there was any joy on the heart of God at all for a person who drank something that affected their thinking and that is really made clear in Proverbs 31 where He says, look, when it comes to the role of leadership, spiritual leadership, there has to be a different standard. It says in verse 4, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, lest they drink and forget what is decreed and pervert the rights of all the wicked. Give strong drink to somebody who is perishing." Give strong drink to somebody who is in such physical pain they need some anesthetic and give wine to one whose life is bitter. Not to get him drunk but to give him a little of the joy of what God has provided in the good things of life.

So, when you come to the New Testament it talks about elders and deacons, it says an elder...well, let me just point you to the text, 1 Timothy chapter 3 and it says that he is not addicted to wine or not to be beside wine, that's true of an elder, that's true of a deacon, he is not someone who is beside wine, who sits and consumes wine for obvious reasons, because in positions of spiritual leadership it would be too easy to become skewed in your judgment. So I think that God knew the danger of it, the system of mixing it with water took care of that danger. But we live in a time when wine is not mixed today and can cloud someone's thinking and someone's judgment and I don't want to have part in anything that does that.

Furthermore, the principle of Romans 14 and 15 enters in, I don't want to do anything in my life that makes somebody else stumble. And I'll tell you right now if I drank wine somebody would say...a lot of people would say...John MacArthur drinks wine, I can drink wine. And they would become alcoholics and destroy their lives. I don't want to set that kind of pattern. So I think that from the standpoint of making sure you don't set a pattern that others follow and stumble, that I would abstain from that as well.

So, that's my own position. Recently somebody at a certain institution in this country announced to the students that John MacArthur...they don't think John MacArthur drinks, but a lot of his staff members do, a lot of the pastors do. And I would just affirm to you that none of our pastors or elders do and we collectively take the same position on that. So in case anybody wonders about that, that is the case. So I hope that gives you a little bit of input into that.

QUESTIONER: Right, and so you would say, if you saw somebody drinking wine you wouldn't...you couldn't actually point your finger at them if they're drinking it in moderation, you couldn't point your finger at them and say you're in sin. Is that correct?

JOHN: Ah...

QUESTIONER: Because, I mean, actually it...

JOHN: Yeah.

QUESTIONER: It was diluted, I mean, it had some alcohol in it so obviously you can't say somebody is in sin for drinking some alcohol because they did it then if they're doing it in moderation now, then...

JOHN: I think...I think there are compelling reasons not to do it. I wouldn't say that if a person happens to drink a little wine that they have committed some kind of sin unless...unless they have done that...

QUESTIONER: To make somebody stumble...

JOHN: Knowing that someone seeing that would stumble.

QUESTIONER: Right.

JOHN: But I think the greater part of discretion is abstinence, that's the better judgment. Okay?

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: Good question.

Yes.

QUESTIONER: One thing I remember from your sermon on that, John, is that there was either a Greek or a Roman writer who even considered most of the wines we have available today, people who would drink those would be called barbarians.

JOHN: Barbarians, right.

QUESTIONER: Even by them.

JOHN: Right.

QUESTIONER: I'm going to save my heavy theological question for you some other time, what I have on my mind today...

JOHN: Okay.

QUESTIONER: I've been here at this church for quite some time and I remember back when we used to call the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead Resurrection Sunday, and I'd like to know why we went back to using the name of a pagan goddess?

JOHN: That's a good question, let's call it Resurrection Sunday. I buy that. That's good. Put that in the bulletin, whoever does the bulletin, I don't know...thank you for asking. We always called it Resurrection Sunday. In fact, we used to give out little tags you could put on your lapels that say, "He is risen," have everybody wear them for a week. And a...we might do that now but it's a little more complicated. In those days we didn't have quite as many people, but it is Resurrection Sunday, let's call it that. Good point.

QUESTIONER: Yes, John, I'd like you to explain on the last chapter of 1 Corinthians...

JOHN: You just want me to explain the whole chapter?

QUESTIONER: Well no, no, the whole book, actually.



JOHN: The whole book...

QUESTIONER: I know it is the disciplinary to the people of Corinthians, but...in what...why would Paul will say in verse 22, "If anyone does not love the Lord let him be accursed?" I mean, I get the point, the idea, but did you understand what I'm trying to say? What..I mean, if he's talking to Christians...

JOHN: Oh...well,

QUESTIONER: But it is disciplinary ??????

JOHN: Yeah, he's talking to Christians with the recognition that in the Corinthian assembly there always is the reality that some may not know the Lord.

QUESTIONER: Yes, okay.

JOHN: And you have that in many, many places. I mean, I would stand in this pulpit and say to you...you're the church, you're my church. But I would say if any of you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ you're going to be cursed. That's...I mean, he's speaking to a wider audience. And obviously there were people in the Corinthian church...for example, if you look at...all through Corinthians, the Corinthian letter, I mean, it's apparent that they had a lot of problems. There were people obviously who were claiming to be Christians but one could make the argument that if indeed they were making the claim, they were lacking the reality. I'm thinking particularly of chapter 10 comes to mind, where he says in verse 12, 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed...what?...lest he fall."

Some of them were acting immorally. Some of them were in idolatry. And he's saying, you know, you better make sure your heart is right and he uses the illustration of Israel, people destroyed in the wilderness, never entered the promised land, sort of an analogy. So I think...I think also in chapter 12 verse 3 it's indicating that some people under some satanic influence were cursing Jesus and he's saying if people are standing up cursing Jesus, it's certainly not by the Spirit of the Lord.

So, there must have been an awful lot of confusion in the Corinthian church. There obviously were people confused about spiritual gifts, confusing all kinds of pagan ecstasies. So that it was very likely that what Paul is saying at the end is, I don't care what your claim is, if you don't love the Lord Jesus Christ you're going to be cursed. I think that's the best way to understand that.

And that could be true of any church, or any congregation. You don't make the assumption that because people are there in that congregation they necessarily all know Christ.

QUESTIONER: Yes. Is he warning the Christians here? I mean, let them be accursed, and the last thing is maranatha...well, that's kind of what...

JOHN: Well what he is saying is if anybody doesn't love the Lord Jesus Christ let him be cursed, that just reiterates God's...God would say that. And then he says maranatha to indicate Jesus is coming, so whatever you do you better do because there's an inevitability when the Lord comes.

QUESTIONER: Thank you.

JOHN: Judgment. Sure. Good.

QUESTIONER: Hi, my question is three fold, and the first one is how can the Bible be read to teach limited atonement, and how can the Bible be read to teach unlimited atonement, and what do you believe that it teaches and why?

JOHN: Okay. Let me qualify this cause this is a little bit of a theological question. There has been through the years a debate about the atonement and the debate basically is...did Jesus Christ die for everyone? In that sense His atonement was unlimited. In other words, He died to pay the penalty for sin for the whole world and then the gift of salvation is generally offered to the world.

The second viewpoint is that Jesus Christ died only for the elect, that it is more logical to assume that if only the elect are saved that Jesus died only for the elect otherwise Jesus died for people who He knew would never be saved and what's the point of that?

So this particular debate rages hot at this particular time in history. There are some who believe in a...in a total redemption, that is that Jesus Christ provided a full redemption for all human beings. And there are some who believe in what is called a particular redemption, that He died providing redemption particularly, that is only or specifically for the elect.

I find in my own mind and my own study of Scripture a strong case for a general atonement, for a universal atonement, for an all encompassing provision, for Jesus dying for the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but the sins of the whole world. Tying it in particularly with John chapter 3, "God so loved...what?...the world," not the elect. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." It seems to me that the giving of the Son was in response to the loving of the world. And that the propitiation which Christ was was sufficient for the sins of all the world. And so I would say that I believe, and I think this is maybe one way to understand it, I believe that the atonement of Christ was sufficient for the world but is efficient for those who believe.

I believe in, I guess, what you could call a limited and unlimited atonement. It is unlimited in the sense that it was sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world, it is limited in that it is applied only to those who believe. And I don't like to get pushed beyond that but I don't like to just take the title of believing in limited atonement, or particular redemption, that Jesus died only for the elect because I think that has some exegetical problems. I think you have problems explaining certain passages of Scripture. But I admit to you it is a very difficult issue because there are many passages that apply His redemptive work only to the elect, only to those who believe, but I believe when compared with other passages His redemption encompasses in its sufficiency the world.

It is no more a contradiction than many other things that appear to be contradictory. Like how is it that people are saved by the election of God and damned by their unbelief? I mean, I think there are other issues in theology that are very difficult for the human mind to resolve and that have passages apparently on both sides. For example, you have passages in the New Testament on eternal security that say God keeps us. You have passages in the New Testament that says you'll be saved if you persevere to the end. So I think we can't get too threatened by the fact that with regard to theological issues, particularly in the realm of salvation, we may not be able to harmonize everything.

You can read some Scriptures which appear to be limited, some Scriptures which appear to be unlimited. The better way to understand that is in somewhat paradoxical terms. In some points it is limited, in some points it appears to be unlimited. Okay? Thank you.

JEFF: Yeah, my name is Jeff.

JOHN: Hi, Jeff.

JEFF: I saw Dan Korum(?) at the Master's College and it really opened up my eyes to a lot of things Wednesday night. And I had a question going away from that that I was going to write to you about and I was wondering in the Bible in the Old Testament he was referring to the Baal worshipers wanting to call down fire if they could, and say wanting to do that but it didn't happen. And then also in Egypt as Moses did the miracles, the magicians counterfeited some of those. And my question was and especially a lot of areas in the Old Testament talking about witchcraft and all that and stoning those type of people, how do you discern between that and just a regular magician who does acts of delusion like Dan does. And as a Christian, you know, most magicians who aren't Christians, of course, will claim that it's powers from whatever. So I was just wondering how we as Christians are supposed to discern that, whether it's all delusion or whether there are some real stuff and how are we supposed to discern that?

JOHN: Well, yeah, you're asking a very significant question, Jeff. I'm not sure I can discern that so I'm not sure I can always give you the answer. I...what you're asking me is how to you tell the difference between a guy who has a technique and a method and a guy who has satanic power, right?

JEFF: And whether...okay, even, you know, a Christian was asking me should we even have Christian magicians, you know? I don't know if it's lumped in the whole thing or whether it's going to...

JOHN: Well, yeah, it depends on what you're doing. Magician is the wrong word, in a sense, because that conjures up the occult and mysticism and all of that. And what we know today as magicians are not functioning with supernatural power, they have technique, they have just mastered a certain technique and they deceive you with that technique as Danny Korum can illustrate to you. I mean, he can stand there and tell you, you know, your name and your grandmother's name and what it's done...it's what called cold reading(??). He actually gets you somehow to say that and you don't even know you said it and neither does the audience. He is...it's the power of suggestion and so forth, that kind of cold reading is a technique. When they do tricks with cards, that's all a technique. When they do disappearing tricks, that's all a technique. It's all that kind of stuff.

When you're talking about satanic activity and how much power Satan has, that's a very difficult question for me to answer. We know that during the time of the end, certainly 2 Thessalonians talks about it, that there's going to come certain powers. Jesus in the Olivet Discourse talked about Antichrist who would deceive and even deceive the whole world. You know, Revelation we find the Antichrist with an amazing ability to deceive people. Just how extensive and how that functions and so forth from a satanic perspective, I'm not sure I really know. The Bible doesn't really give us watch you could call a breakdown of how that works. But I really think for the most part, what we're dealing with magicians is just merely technique, it's just deception by trickery. They...there's a way they do them. In fact, Danny has told me in a number of private conversations that he knows how they do those things, it's just a technique. But they want you to believe that it's supernatural.

JEFF: Do you think the magicians in Egypt were doing it by technique or by...by satanic power?

JOHN: Well, Scripture doesn't say...Scripture does not say. But I would tend to think that they would be able to do it by some trickery, that they had learned how to deceive, that they were bright, smart people. After all they were further back the genetic trail toward perfection than we are so they were more clever than we think they were. And if we can come up with that kind of stuff, they probably could have also.

Again, I don't know to what extent Satan can counterfeit. There's no real indication, for example, in Scripture that Satan can raise the dead which is a divine act. I don't think there's any indication that Satan can raise the dead. I don't see any...any evidence in Scripture, and I'm trying to think this

through, of Satan actually performing great wonders that were identified as such, I don't know that there's a catalogue of that in Scripture. In fact, I don't know that Satan ever healed anyone. Do you in Scripture, Dick, ever come across that? So we don't have any indication of when he does what he does what he does. So I would be hesitant to say that, you know, Satan is making an ace of spades appear in somebody's back pocket, you know, when some magician does a trick. I think it's pretty much entertainment.

But it spills over, just further, Jeff, it spills over into the occult at the point at which they claim supernatural power. For example, these ridiculous Filipino healers who reach into a body and start pulling out big pieces of bloody flesh, and Danny Korum has pretty well debunked that stuff. You know, it's sleight of hand. They've got all kinds of bloody animal parts and they're there doing all this bloodless surgery and throwing out, you know, a cow's liver and all this stuff that they've got up their sleeve or whatever. It's all just deception. The guy that he unmasked on national television who was supposed to be able to make objects move and wave and bend nails and all of that and showed how that was all just a deception.

JEFF: Would those kind of people in the Old Testament be stoned though for being false prophets or dealing in that kind...?

JOHN: Well they would if that was associated with a false prophecy, or if it was a competing power to the power of God, yes. But I'm sure if a Hebrew father figured a fun way to play a trick on his kids God wouldn't stone him because he, you know, he made three stones look like two, you know. So it would...it would have to be some kind of spiritual deception sort of built into the thing.

JEFF: Right...right...right...right. Okay.

JOHN: I'm sorry, the Bible just doesn't say anything specific about how Satan does what he does. I think he's much more limited than we think he is.

MARK: Okay, hi. My name is Mark, my question is this. In Genesis 1:28 it says that God gives Adam the command that says be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. In Genesis 9 he tells Noah to multiply and fill the earth. There's no indication of subduing it, why is that no mentioned and is that part of the whole kingdom?

JOHN: Well, I think when Adam in his innocence was created he could rule the whole creation, he was king of the earth. And it was a question simply of having access to the whole of God's created environment and he could be fruitful and multiply and the earth he could sort of oversee that replenishing and he could subdue it in the sense that he harnessed all of its assets and powers and all the things it yielded, he was the king and he could do that because the earth was a willing servant.

But as soon as you have the Fall then immediately thorns and thistles and man in order to control a tiny little piece of ground has to work by the sweat of his brow to even eke out a living.

So by the time you come to Noah, Noah can multiply children and replenish the earth but it's impossible to imagine that he could totally control it because it's cursed. I think it has to do with the curse, okay?

MARK: Okay, thanks.

JOHN: Thank you.

Vince.

VINCE: John, I have more than just a comment than question and I've discussed this with close friends of mine as well.

JOHN: Just get to the question real quick, okay? We're running out of time.

VINCE: Okay, I ride the buses quite frequently.

JOHN: Pardon me?

VINCE: I ride the buses...

JOHN: You ride the buses.

VINCE: And what I'm about to say is separate from what I've told you in other times. I see on these buses these advertisements for this guru, have all your spiritual needs answered. And in light of 1 Peter 3, Romans 13, I tear them down because I cannot, you know, get my being of beings allow this to influence other people on a bus. And I would like your comment on that because it's something that I feel...if I have to pull a verse out it would be John 2:17 about you're my zeal for the kingdom of God.

JOHN: Well...

VINCE: And I would just like your comment with regard to those actions in light of such things as Operation Rescue etc.

JOHN: If you feel that that's a blasphemy to the true God and you tear it down in good conscience, then you have to be ready to pay the consequence.

VINCE: And I am.

JOHN: And if you're willing to do that which I think is part of your good citizenship to accept the consequences for that, then that's your prerogative. I mean, I don't think it's...if you are offended, if I am offended by something that blasphemes God and I feel that I need to react to that offense, then I can react to that offense in good conscience recognizing that whatever the consequences are I must bear. Okay?

VINCE: Thank you.

JOHN: You're welcome.

CHARLES: Hi, my name is Charles. In the Bible St. John chapter 3 verse 3 through 5 it says here, "You must be born again to see the kingdom of God." And then in 5, after Nicodemus questioned some it says, except...Jesus answered, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." I always understood that to mean it's like accepting the Word...accepting the Word of Jesus and of the Spirit, being born of the Spirit, being baptized by the Holy Spirit. I'm curious, like the church teaches ceremonial sacraments, the seven sacraments, plus the Catholic Church I think does nine, something like that. How do you relate that to the holy sacraments?

JOHN: Let's look at that chapter again, okay just look there now for a minute. Did you say your name was Charles?

CHARLES: Yes.

JOHN: Okay, Charles, good question. Jesus is approached at night by a man named Nicodemus. If you'll notice verse 1 it says he was a ruler of the Jews and he was a Pharisee. He was therefore an expert in the Old Testament. He was not only an expert as a Pharisee but he was so expert they had made him a ruler, it probably meant he was a part of the Sanhedrin which was the 70 most knowledgeable men in Israel. So he knew the law. He knew the Old Testament.

He came to Jesus at night probably because he couldn't near Him in the daytime because of the crowd, and because he wasn't too sure he wanted to be exposed himself to the other Pharisees. So he came at night. And he says...Look, we know you come from God as a teacher, nobody can do the signs you do unless God is with him, and I've got to ask you a question.

Well before the guy could even ask the question Jesus answered it because Jesus could read the question before he spoke it because He could read his mind. And his question was...how do you get

into the kingdom? And so Jesus said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he can't see the kingdom of God."

Now what must have been the question in his mind to something like this? Now I've...I've kept the law, I am a Pharisee which means I'm devoted to legalism, law keeping, obedience. I'm a ruler of the Jews which means I live by the highest standard. And his question might have been...what more do I need to do to get in the kingdom?

He obviously had a vacuum in his heart, didn't feel he had arrived at the kingdom, didn't have the peace of God in his heart. He didn't have that confidence that he was really the child of God, that he had been redeemed, that his eternity was secure. So his question was probably like...now what more do I need to do? What one more step? I've done all these good works, I've kept all these laws. Now what else do I need to do? And Jesus reads his mind and says, "I'll tell you what you need to do, you need to junk it all, go all the way back and start all over again and be born again. All you've done up to this time doesn't count, go be born again, start all over." Which was a real jolt.

What He was saying was you're accumulation of good works means absolutely nothing. You know, Jesus didn't come to add one little touch to your good life. He says you have to go back and start all over again from the very beginning.

And Nicodemus says...Wait a minute, verse 4, "How can a man be born when he's old?" He...he understands the analogy. He's not talking about physical birth, he says how am I going to do that? How in the world can I go and start all over again? I mean, how am I going to go way back and begin again.

And Jesus answers, and here's verse 5, I want you to look at it, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he can't enter the kingdom of God." It's not what you do, it's not your good works, you must be born of the water and the Spirit. And the immediate question is what is He talking about? Is He talking about baptism? What is He talking about?

Well let's find a context. Nicodemus was a Jew. He was a ruler of the Jews. He knew the Old Testament so Jesus was talking to him on Old Testament terms. And what Jesus has in mind in verse 5 takes Nicodemus back in to the Old Testament. And where it takes him, and let's go together, take your Bible and turn cause this is a great, great and important matter, back to the prophet Ezekiel, back to the prophet Ezekiel. And it was in the prophet Ezekiel that God originally laid down the conditions of the New Covenant in Ezekiel.

Now let me just read this, you can just listen, Charles, if you want. Listen carefully. In Ezekiel's prophecy verse 25 of chapter 36, Ezekiel 36:25, did you find it?



CHARLES: Yes.

JOHN: Okay. "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. Moreover I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes."

Now stop right there. What God said through Ezekiel is this, in the future there will be a New Covenant. It will be a covenant of water, I'll sprinkle clean water upon you. What water? The water of cleansing. And what is the agency of cleansing? We have been washed by the water of the Word.

CHARLES: The Word and accepting Jesus...

JOHN: All right, so the water there is the washing of the Word that washes the heart. And the Spirit is the Holy Spirit that He plants within. So what He was saying to Nicodemus was...Look, Nicodemus, you don't need to just add a few things to your life. You need your whole life washed and you need the Spirit of God in you. That's what He's saying.

CHARLES: Okay.

JOHN: It has nothing to do with water baptism or with any other of the ordinances or the sacraments.

CHARLES: Well I mean, what I was trying to relate this to...bring about was that if you have accepted this 3 and 5, you really...is it necessary to go through like the holy sacraments which I have done?

JOHN: Let me tell you something. There are only two ordinances that the New Testament gives. One, baptism. Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized." Very clear.

CHARLES: Isn't that being born of the water? I always understood it as being baptized by water, accepting the Word of Jesus and then...

JOHN: No, it means...to actually publicly step into the water and make your faith known, because on the day of Pentecost three thousand people were baptized in water. So that was exactly what they were doing. Jesus Himself went to John the Baptist and let him baptize Him in the Jordan River. And you remember the eunuch who met Philip? And after he came to Christ he said, "What prevents me from being baptized?" And Philip took him down into the water and baptized him. It is an outward symbol of an inward response. It's the way you publicly confess Christ. There's nothing in that water that's going to save you. There's nothing in that water that's going to wash your sin away. But it does give you the public opportunity to declare your obedience.

The second ordinance that the Lord gave us was communion, the Lord's table. Jesus said, "Do this till I come." And the early church did it every day and every Lord's day and it's the cup and the bread by which we remember the death of Christ.

So the only two ordinances the New Testament gives to us, one when you've come to Christ be baptized in water to declare your faith publicly. Number two, take the Lord's table. Those two symbols are the symbols that the Lord has left us. Okay? Apart from that the rest aren't necessary. They're fabrications of the church. Does that help?

CHARLES: Well I was just trying to relate it to the Bible. Thank you.

JOHN: Does that help?

CHARLES: Yes.

JOHN: Good.

QUESTIONER: My question is realizing that every church has its problems and realizing the importance of unity in the church, could you give some guidelines on when you should...you should really work to preserve the unity in a church as a member and when the problems get too great you should...you ought to leave it. And secondly, like how...how you can leave a church if it gets into that situation in the most godly manner?

JOHN: Misty, so many people ask me that question and I really...I really know what's on your heart and that is a very difficult question to answer because it really depends upon how the Spirit of God leads you. You can struggle for the unity of the church for a long time and sometimes you'll see the fruit of that and sometimes for some people they never do. Some people stay it seems too long, some people might leave too soon. But again that's so dependent on the Spirit of God's leading.

I would say there are several things to keep in mind. One, if the leadership of the church, the pastor, and the spiritual leaders of the church are part of the solution, stay. If they're part of the problem, then you have to really prayerfully consider whether you need to stay. Because a people cannot rise higher than their leadership. And if the leadership is the problem, it's very difficult to overcome that. That's why when people say to me, "I'm not happy in my church," the first thing I tell them to do is go to the pastor and share your heart with him. Try to get him to see the concerns you have. Because if he doesn't understand the issues and seek to resolve those issues, you're going to have an uphill battle all the way because he's going to be totally defensive and you're going to be fighting really a very, very difficult war.

If the spiritual leadership of the church, if the godly person, those in leadership are seeking to be part of the solution and you really feel they're on target, then maybe you can stay and be a part of the solution. But if they're not, if the fight is against them, then you have to evaluate whether or not maybe in time they'll leave and there will be new leadership and you want to stay and ride that out or if you feel that maybe that's not what's going to happen and the Spirit begins to move your heart, you need to move.

Another factor. If the issues are doctrinal, if the issues are a misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or misrepresentation of the Word of God, then you have to be very serious about whether you stay because we as Christians are responsible to be under the sound teaching of the Word of God. And if you're in a place where you are not getting the sound meat of the Word of God and it is available to you somewhere else, then you need to be where that available Word is being provided for you.

MISTY: Are you talking about a mis-teaching, or omission of certain teachings?

JOHN: Either...either. Either teaching error or omitting truth because we're responsible for the truth and our life is lived in light of the truth. I function in response to what I know to be true. So...but again, it's a matter of your own prayer and your own discernment in allowing the Spirit of God to direct you in His own time. And if your heart is open He'll really do that. He'll give you a release, you'll have a sense of release and you can just walk out.

I would say many, many of the people sitting in this church tonight have been through that very experience. How many of you went through that experience and came to Grace Church? Put your hands up. Do you feel like you're among friends? Thanks, Misty. God bless you.

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