

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 41

Selected Scriptures

70-13

All right, tonight we're going to have some time to interact a little bit in question and answer, as you well know. And I hope you have come prepared to ask some questions that will be significant and helpful. We have some of our men stationed at each microphone to talk with you. I don't know who is going to be where...let's see, there's Stan Carter over there. Good, Stan, did you have a question or are you just....? And Lance Quinn in the middle and Dr. Dick Mayhue is going over to the other side. And they're just there to help you kind of form up your question in case it's not clear and so that you can kind of hurry and ask the question, we want to cover as many questions as we possibly can. So if you just want to step up to the microphone and kind of get in line, we'll get started. Whew...boy, good....ha...you're after me. You've been waiting, storing it up, huh? Okay. That's great.

Scripture talks about dialoguing, you know, it says the Apostle Paul reasoned with them out of the Scripture. The word it uses is *dialogo*, to dialogue. That's a very important part of ministry. So we hope that this will be a good time for you to touch the issues that are on your heart. Okay?

Now the first thing we have to do, gentlemen, in each of these lines is if there are any ladies in the line we have to move them to the front. Isn't that right? Isn't that right? All right, ladies, move up to the front. That's very good...that's very good. Chivalry may be dead in our culture but it's not dead at Grace Community Church. We still understand those kinds of things. We're not going to have those ladies stand there for a long time. All right. Are you ready, Stan? All right, let's go over there then. Give me your name first.

ROXANNE: My name is Roxanne Bartoush(?) and the question I have is Matthew 5:42, "Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you." Does that mean we give to everybody that asks of us?

JOHN: I think that's a general principle, yes. Give to him who asks of you. The assumption is that he's not trying to take advantage of you. The assumption is that the need is real, that the need is genuine. What you're really asking is if I see a beggar do I give money to a beggar...that's not the point. There's a general principle and that is the principle that when someone has need, legitimate genuine need, and they come to you and ask for that need to be met and you have the resource to do that, then you should do that.

Let me just say this. One of the principles that I operate on as I travel around the world is never to give any money to a beggar...none. Because when you do that you make begging successful. And when begging is successful it becomes a career. When we were in India, for example, little children come up and literally hang on your clothes, hang on your arm with these great big dark eyes and they plead with you for money. And, of course, you realize that around the corner is the guy who owns all these little kids who has them doing this and collects 75 percent of everything that they

collect. And it's an absolutely massive enterprise. You find that in most third world countries of our time. So you have to be very judicious and very careful that you don't grow a beggar, that you don't feed that kind of thing. But where there is a situation you know to be a genuine need and you have the opportunity to meet that need, you're to do that.

ROXANNE: I see, okay, thank you.

JOHN: Okay? Thank you for asking. Right here.

?????? First I'd just like to ask a couple of quick yes or no questions...

JOHN: Good.

????? Before I get to my main question, if that's all right.

JOHN: You're going to warm me up, okay.

????? First of all, there's nothing in us that would obligate God to save us, is there?

JOHN: No.

????? We're all sinners saved by grace.

JOHN: That's correct.

????? And once saved there's nothing we can do to lose our salvation.

JOHN: That is correct, but let me say it another way. There is neither anything you could do to lose it nor anything you would do to lose it.

????? Okay. All right, then I need to ask you a question about a quote you made a couple of months ago in the second part of the biblical view on abortion. I'd just like to read what you said that night and then ask you to reconcile it with your answers to the first two questions.

JOHN: Okay.

????? All right. You said, "It is my conviction that God redeems murdered infants, that His grace reaches out and takes those little ones to be with Himself. The Bible is very clear that people perish in hell because they refuse to believe that hell is for those who rejected God and who rejected Christ. Something an unborn infant could never do. And so God not having a just basis either internally or externally by virtue of the attitude or the action of an unborn child would have no basis on which to sentence them to hell except for the depravity they inherited in Adam which is never a cause for damnation apart from its evidence and behavior or attitude. God must then embrace them into His own Kingdom." I had a problem with this, a couple of problems with it.

JOHN: Boy, I thought that was a great statement, did I say that? Go ahead...what's the problem?

????? The problem I had with it was that if an unborn child is saved until he becomes unsaved by a sinful attitude or action, then what does that do to the doctrine of eternal security? And also the other problem I had is that...

JOHN: Let's take the first problem. The unborn child is not saved until he...he's not saved until he...what was that you said, if he's not saved until...

????? Well in your quote you said that God not having any just basis either internally or externally by virtue of the attitude of the action of an unborn child would have no basis on which to sentence them to hell except for the depravity they inherited in Adam.

JOHN: Right, now that doesn't mean they're saved. An unborn child...an unborn infant, a child, a baby before the age of accountability is not saved otherwise they would lose their salvation when they reached the age of accountability, that's your question, right? Then you don't have eternal security because if all infants and all babies are saved before the age of accountability, when they get to the age of accountability they lose their salvation and they have to get saved over again. No. They're not saved. God redeems them when they die. There's a difference. They're in a situation where they are...they're sort of in the middle ground. They're not saved, or in the technical sense they're lost, of course, but not in the sense of having rejected God in unbelief or unbelief of Christ. They are not saved which can only occur through faith in Christ. So there they are, they're not saved and they're not...how can I say it, I don't want to say they're not unsaved...but they're not confirmed in unbelief. They're neither. If they live they maintain the same situation of being unsaved, if they die I believe God saves them. So the salvation doesn't come into play unless they die and at that point.

????? Well if that were the case then parents could guarantee the salvation of their children by killing them before they were born, couldn't they?

JOHN: That's true.

????? That's true?

JOHN: That's true.

????? Well doesn't it say in Psalm 51 verse 5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin my mother conceived me?"

JOHN: Yes, there's no question about the fallenness of man, but people...Jesus said people are damned because they believe not on Me. Unbelief is always the damning action. In other words, no one is damned apart...no one is damned singularly and only because of their fallenness, they are damned because they choose to reject God. Read Romans 1, "That which may be known of God is in them." But instead of accepting what was known of God and believing it, they turned away from that. They created gods of their own flesh, you know what Romans 1 says, and therefore the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness.

Now these are very difficult questions. You know, you're dealing with a very difficult issue. All I can say is this, no one is ever saved unless they believe in Jesus Christ personally. Whatever may be said about election and sovereignty and predestination and choice by God, no one is ever saved unless they believe. Conversely, no one is ever damned except through the rejection of the truth of God which is in them and around them and made manifest to them, so that a child can neither be saved because the child or the infant or unborn cannot comprehend saving truth, nor can that child be in the confirm sense doomed to judgment because the child cannot willfully reject God either. So in that state God has to exercise His own wisdom and mercy, and I believe in mercy He would redeem that one because there is no basis in terms of unbelief and rejection by which to condemn them. That's what I was trying to say in that statement.

????? Okay.

JOHN: Okay?

????? Yes.

JOHN: That's good, I appreciate that. All right, next...

????? Okay, we know that sin entered the world through man. I assume the word man is used in a generic way since all enter the world in sin. So if Mary by her own admission needed a Savior, making her a sinner, and since Jesus was part of her flesh as well as that of the Holy Spirit, I accept by faith that Jesus was sinless, but don't understand how Jesus would not be tainted by sin since He was born from her body.

JOHN: Well that's a good question. And you don't understand it and neither do I, neither does anybody else. So you're in good company. But it's the fact, it's an absolute fact. And now you're...you people are getting in deep here...you understand now, you're asking me to unscrew the unscrutable because basically the question you're asking is how is the sin nature passed...how is it passed. Is it passed through the blood stream? Is it passed through DNA? Is it passed through, you know, the genetic code? Is it passed through the chromosomes? I mean, that's a very difficult question to ask, certainly the capability of the human body to grow old is passed through the chromosomes, the DNA genetics. And Jesus' body grew old. The ability of a body to be injured and wounded, even die, Jesus experienced all of that. So there was some of the essence, and understand this, there was some of the essence of what it means to live in a truly human form to say there was some of the components of real humanity which has the capacity to feel pain and suffer and hunger and thirst and die, Jesus had that and that came through the very real flesh of His own mother. But somehow God filtered out in that process any influence of sin whatsoever. How He did that, He knows, I don't know. I don't know.

But your question is a good one because it does assume that one sinful parent should be enough to make a sinner out of you. And in any other circumstance we would say that is true. I mean, one sinful mother, we could certainly understand, could beget a sinful child if one could beget singularly, and one can't, but hypothetically. But in the case of Mary, though she was a sinner, God somehow filtered out the sin that normally would be passed to the child, He did that miraculously. It shouldn't surprise us that He did that miraculously since it's even miraculous that He conceived within her that child by planting the seed, not by having a man. So the whole thing is miraculous. How He did it, I

don't know. But Jesus came out fully human bearing all that is full humanness and yet without sin. God just filtered that part out...screened that out somehow supernaturally. Okay?

Okay, we have a lady right in the middle.

????? Dr. MacArthur, we have read quite a few commentaries about this and I had a dear pastor tell me that the Bible casts a lot of light on the commentaries, but I still have a question I need to ask you.

JOHN: (Laughter) Okay.

????? Who or what is Babylon the Great as listed in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation?

JOHN: Well I'm not there yet but I will be in a few...years. (Laughter) I think Babylon the Great represents a world-wide religious system in chapter 17, a restoration of the original anti-God paganism that was associated with the Tower of Babel in Genesis and thus it bears the same name. But I think it's a world-wide religious system and it appears to me, if you read carefully through chapter 17, it centers itself in a city with seven hills which isn't too hard to figure out, Rome. It seems to me, too, that it's bigger in Rome because it's drunk with the blood of all the martyrs which means it takes all false religion that has massacred the true church throughout all the centuries, amasses all of that in one final great massive religious false system. The Antichrist, along with the false prophet, allow this system to exist for a while and then consume that false religious system when the Antichrist establishes himself as the only one to be worshiped. And that sets up the final Babylon which is more of a secular world economic situation that you see in chapter 18. But I see it as a conglomerate system of false religion world wide that is centered in the city of Rome and has as its ticial(?) or head very likely the pope whom some believe would even be the kind of person that could serve as Antichrist or the false prophets. So I see it as a world religious system sort of centered in Rome. Okay?

????? Thank you.

JOHN: Thank you. And we have another lady over here to ask a question.

????? I was just wondering, the Bible teaches that as a Christian when we die we receive different degrees of rewards in heaven. And I'd like to know if you could expound on those different degrees, but also if there are different degrees of suffering in hell.

JOHN: I think yes to both of those questions. There will be varying degrees of reward in heaven. That shouldn't surprise us. There are varying degrees of giftedness even here on earth. To get a good glimpse of what heaven might be like, look at the church. From the moment of your redemption the Lord put His Holy Spirit within you and according to 1 Corinthians 12 He gave you certain spiritual gifts, right? He gave gifts to all of His church. They differ. What are gifts? They are varying capacities for ministry, varying capacities for service to God in His church. And I think the same thing will be true eternally. I think in eternity we will all be given according to our abilities and according to our faithfulness varying capacities for glorifying, serving and worshiping God. So I think it's going to be based upon two things...one would be the sovereignty of God who would choose to give as He wills as in 1 Corinthians 12, as He gives spiritual gifts in this life to the church in whatever way He

chooses to do that, that's a sovereign thing. And secondly, I think there is another component and that has to do with faithfulness here. I believe our eternal reward will be in some way determined by the level of faithfulness we have had here.

Now the reason we...there are a number of reasons why we assume this. One of them was it's conversation Jesus had with the mother of James and John who said, "My boys want to sit on Your right and left hand when You come into the Kingdom," and He said, "It's not for Me to give that, it's for My Father to give that." And there He said there are going to be some people elevated. Somebody is going to be on My right, somebody is going to be on My left and some others are going to be going down the line here, it's not for Me to decide that, it's the Father. But then He went on to say the criteria by which that is going to be decided is faithfulness unto death. So I think the greatest reward in the future is rewarded for the most faithful people and that probably plays itself out in those who were faithful unto death, the martyrs, those who gave their life. You could give your life in living as well as give your life in dying, couldn't you? You know what I mean by that, you could make the self-sacrifice to the maximum extent even while you're alive where you sacrifice everything else and be what Paul called a living sacrifice. So I think there is definitely going to be in heaven varying levels of service just as there are with the angles. There are archangels and there are cherubim and seraphim and principalities and powers and rulers and all of those varying levels of angelic hierarchy. I think in eternity we're all going to be sorted out within that eternal worshiping community and given varying capacities and varying responsibilities which are determined by the sovereignty of God and our faithfulness here. That's why John says look to yourselves that you lose not the things you have wrought but that you receive a full reward. It is possible that you could be faithful and the Lord be ready and prepared to give you a full reward but by some sin in your life toward the end of your life you could begin to forfeit and those things would be taken back off the list, added to the wood, hay and stubble kind of thing and your reward would be less.

What is it? Is it going to be some people with bigger crowns? No. We're not going to be going around saying, "Ha, I got a big one, you got a little one," it's not going to be that. Whatever we get I believe in the picture of the twenty-four elders, we take our crowns and cast them at the feet of the Lord, but I don't believe they're going to be anything that's visible, I think it's going to be a capacity for serving God fully and completely. And I don't think you'll have any sense of loss or any sense of missing anything because each individual's capacity will be reached to its maximum. But I think what we want to do is have the greatest capacity for worshiping God as His sovereignty would give us and as our faithfulness would warrant.

Now in terms of the other, there will be degrees of suffering. Hebrews 10 says, "How much greater suffering will come to the one who has trodden underfoot the blood of the covenant and counted it an unholy thing done despite to the Spirit of grace." To put it simply, it means this...the more people know about the gospel and reject, the greater degree of suffering they will experience when they trample underfoot the blood of the covenant. That is to say the pagan who never heard anything about the gospel of Jesus Christ will not suffer to the degree that the apostate would who heard it all, understood it all and blatantly rejected it all. Okay?

????? Okay.

PHIL: Hi, my name is Phil Bock(?), we were members here until about five years ago when we moved to Utah. In an adult Sunday school class in our church back there we were going through the book of Galatians and in chapter 5 which I was teaching a couple of weeks ago we came to

Galatians 5:2 and 5:4 which talk about the consequences of accepting circumcision or coming under the Jewish law or doing anything legalistic. Paul writes in verse 2 that Christ is of no benefit to you that were severed from Christ, verse 4, fallen from grace. Got in to quite a discussion with a fellow in the class about whether this meant you could lose your salvation which was the position he took, in fact he got so upset that he got up and left. I just wanted to ask how you would respond...

JOHN: We hope he wasn't angry enough to have lost his salvation. (Laughter)

PHIL: I tend to think he doesn't have it to begin with. Anyway, how would you have dealt with that situation? What would you suggest to me?

JOHN: First of all, again you're back to context and I think what he's saying here, Galatians 5, he's writing to believers and yet he knows that in the wings are the Judaizers, those people who went around saying, "We're Christians but we believe before you can enter into Christ you have to keep the Mosaic Law and go through the physical rite of circumcision." And so this is adding law to grace and Paul's viewpoint as always, if you add law to grace you nullify grace. I mean, that's clear in Romans 3 and Romans 4. As soon as you add any law to grace you've nullified grace. As soon as you say "Yes, salvation is by grace if you do this and if you do that..." and there's some kind of temporal action that you can do like keep Mosaic ceremonies and get yourself circumcised, and that's part of salvation, you have now nullified grace. And so what he is saying is if you are receiving circumcision believing that this is contributing to your salvation, then Christ is of no benefit to you.

In other words, you have now forfeited a salvation purely and only by grace and you've clouded the issue by your works. You are now saying yes it is grace plus my works and that negates the only means of salvation which is grace. And verse 4, you are really severed from Christ if you're seeking to be justified by law, you have now fallen from the grace principle. He doesn't mean you are saved and now you've been lost, you have fallen away from the only means of salvation which is the principle of grace. Circumcision was a very important symbol, but it was not a means of salvation. But those Judaizers were trying to make it a means of salvation.

Does that cover it?

PHIL: I was wondering if you thought those verses had any relevance to believers once they're saved, and if so what that was.

JOHN: Well, if you say that then you're going to say a believer that Christ is of no benefit to a believer and in verse 4 that he has been severed from Christ. If I'm going to say this is going to be applied to a believer, now I'm going to have to say the believer somehow lost his salvation. But I don't want to pre-suppose that you can't lose your salvation and read it in to the text. What I want to say is Paul has been preaching through this entire book salvation by grace, I mean, he's back in chapter 3 he says, "Look, you began in the Spirit, you can't be perfected by your flesh." I mean, being justified by the Spirit through grace you're not going to be perfected by the law through works. And the principle of comparing grace to law goes through this whole book. And I think all he's saying here is, "Look, Christ set us free to be free, keep standing firm, don't let somebody come along and tell you your works are going to save you because if you get into that you're going to fall away from the grace principle which is the only thing that can truly save and you're going to be cut off from Christ." I think to go beyond that is to read anything into the text. Obviously it has some implications.

You could say, "Well for a Christian if I...if I try to live in the flesh I'll get cut off from the power of Christ," but I don't think that's what this is saying. Okay. Good question.

Yes, Vince.

VINCE: Yeah, John, I have some questions with regard to some scriptural references to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the eternal state.

JOHN: Well, the Holy Spirit is God. Do you mean you're wondering if He's going to be there?

VINCE: Well, I just wanted to know some references that I could look up. I have been...

JOHN: Yeah...now you're isolating Him out from the rest. I don't know if I could think of that off hand. Isolating the Holy Spirit out from the rest of the trinity to note that He is eternal. I mean, obviously He is as eternal as any other member of the trinity because He is God the third person, so His eternality is tied to His identity, His person. Try Hebrews 9:14, try Hebrews 9:14, that comes to mind and I think...yes, verse 13, "If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit..." Now there's a reference to the eternality of the Holy Spirit. And if you start there in Hebrews 9:13 you might want to check some other resources. You might find some other references to the eternality of the Holy Spirit. I don't know off hand ...I can't just grab any out of the air. But anyway, you might be able to find some other ones. I think about 1 Corinthians 15:28 because it's just such an important one. It says that ultimately when everything is resolved, all things are subjected to God, the Son Himself will be subjected to the one who is subjected, all things to Him that God may be all in all...all in all. And so there you have the eternal God, everything ultimately resolved in His eternality in the end. And Hebrews 9:14 I think is the only reference to the eternal Spirit.

VINCE: And what is His function? What is His ministry, if you will, in the eternal state?

JOHN: Well, He will uphold everything, just like He does now. I mean, that God is...when we get to eternity God's not going to stop doing what He does now. If it's going to be righteousness in eternity, He's going to have to sustain the righteousness. The Holy Spirit will continue to do whatever the Holy Spirit has always done. The only difference is going to be with reference to us, but, you know, we're not all there is. There's a whole angelic creation, there's an entire endless universe. There's a whole heaven of heavens. There's a new Jerusalem. There's the abode of God and all the enterprise that God is involved in and sustaining all that is. And whatever role the Holy Spirit has always played in that, He will always continue to play in that.

VINCE: Thank you. Happy new year.

JOHN: Thank you.

By the way, speaking of happy new year, one lady on the telephone, or on the telephone interview I did the other night said an interesting thing. She said, "It's somewhat bothersome," this was the lady named Blossom from England, "It's somewhat bothersome that Christians say Merry Christmas because in England the word Merry basically means to be inebriated. You know, when we talk about

Merry Ole England, well what that goes back to is sort of the drinking bouts." And, in fact, she said recently a friend of hers had invited her, I think it was her grocer, she called him the green grocer, her green grocer, the guy who sells fruits and vegetables, to come to church on Christmas and he said, "No, my dear, I cannot come to church because by then I'll be merry." And what he meant by that was to be inebriated. So, you know, from now on make it blessed Christmas or something, as you think about it, especially if you're hanging around people from England because they'll never understand what you're talking about. Okay.

????? Yes, just referring to your message this morning on Titus and the ability to teach. Is there a difference and what is the difference between the ability to teach and the spiritual gift of teaching that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, and then flowing from that is it possible to be in an elder position or a pastor position like yours without having the gift of teaching?

JOHN: Okay, let's start at the end. No. It's not possible to be in a pastor or teacher role without having the gift of teaching or preaching. And all preaching has to have the teaching content. That's that statement, you have kerugma, proclamation, without didache, teaching. So even a preacher is teaching while he's preaching. He's proclaiming content. It is possible, I suppose, to say a man has the gift of preaching, the emphasis in preaching, and is not strong in the classroom, he's not a strong teacher as such. But no one could be an elder with neither of those capabilities. Okay.

Then the question before that was...

????? What is the difference between the ability to teach and the gift of teaching?

JOHN: There is no difference in my mind. I'm always referring to the spiritual gift. Now here's another point I could have made this morning. A person can have the gift of teaching and not be an elder. There are many women in the church who have the gift of teaching. There may be many other men in the church who have the gift of teaching. Some of them are not elders because...one, they're not desiring that office. The Spirit of God has not called them to that, not prompted them to that. Secondly, they're not elders because maybe they're not one-woman men, maybe they haven't demonstrated that leadership in the family that sets them apart, maybe their character has not been above reproach and all those other qualifications aren't there. But it may just be that God hasn't elevated them to that particular office and they're very content to teach in the church. This church, for example, has many men and many women who have the gift of teaching but are not elders. So you can have the gift of teaching, which is a spiritual ability to teach, and not necessarily be an elder. You can't be an elder without either the gift of teaching or preaching. And the difference between the ability and the gift in the church, there isn't any difference. Outside the church there are people who have the ability to teach but it's not the spiritual gift. I believe inside the church when we're talking about teaching the Bible, teaching spiritual things, we're talking about a gift.

Now let me take it a step further. It is conceivable, and it is probably very common, that you have people in the church who have the ability to teach, school teachers, university professors, but they don't exercise the gift of teaching in the church. That's another completely different thing that is a spiritual enterprise. Does that help sort it out a little?

????? Ah yes, but when you talked this morning about the ability to teach being a skill, then how would that be developed if...or is it just a gift from God?

JOHN: Well even if it's a...yeah, I wasn't trying to talk about it as a developed mental thing, but I do believe it is developed. I hope I'm a better teacher and preacher now than I was when I started. I had the gift then but it's a matter of developing and refining and exercising and using and enhancing that gift. And that's all how the Spirit of God works. I mean, even Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. We're all in a progressive kind of growth and our ministry certainly should reflect that development. So we...I believe when you're saved the gifts are there, the Spirit of God probably gives them then as 1 Corinthians would indicate, He divides severally to every man as He will at the same time we receive the Spirit of God. And at that point the gift is there it begins to be enriched and strengthened as we exercise that gift. But it is a skill in the sense that it's something we do in a function that sets us apart from other people. In other words, being honest, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, being hospitable, the other things that are there, being devout, being self-controlled, those aren't skills, those are character qualities. Now when you're talking about teaching and preaching, you're talking about a skill. That skill in the church is a spiritual gift. Okay...good question.

????? Yes, I was wondering if you could answer this question for me. Could you define biblical dispensationalism and contrast that with if there's any contrast to be made with popular dispensationalism?

JOHN: Yes, biblical dispensationalism as compared to popular dispensationalism...popular dispensationalism isn't very popular any more. The old popular dispensationalism, and some of you know that the word dispensation simply refers to stewards, stewardships, and the idea was that God functioned through the history of redemption in different ways. For example, the old dispensations were innocence. In other words, there was a time before the Fall when man was innocent and God mediated His rule on earth to man in an innocent condition and treated him as innocent. Then came sin and then you had conscience. The dispensation of conscience meant God was working with man who now had a conscience that could tell right from wrong, that's why he made clothes, covered himself, hid in the garden. He had a guilty conscience.

Then in order to control man God brought in the next dispensation which I think was human government. And God ordained certain systems of government to control this sinful being, to wrap him up, tie him down, and part of that human government had to do with capital punishment which was really the first...the first criminal law that God instituted...if people take life, you better take their life as well and that will preserve the dignity of man and the respect for the image of God in created men. Then you have human government, human government was then followed by the dispensation of law which was followed by the dispensation of grace which is followed by the dispensation of the Kingdom, which is followed by the dispensation of the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth. All in all there were seven dispensations that somebody figured out and laid them all out that way.

That's fine. I mean, I can look at that, you can look at that, right, and you can see...well that's fine, I can see God working with Adam before the Fall, working with Adam after the Fall. God working with Moses before the cross, during the time of the law. God working after the cross through the new covenant in Christ. I can see God working uniquely in the Kingdom and then finally in the eternal state. We all can see that. It's what you do with those categories that becomes problematic. And some of the old fashioned dispensationalists made those categories too hard and fast. And they also assumed that maybe God saved people different ways in different times.

There were people who believed that there was no grace in the Old Testament and there's no law in the New Testament and they drew these hard and fast lines. That kind of dispensationalism has really been refined and there are only vestiges of it hanging on today. It's being very often redefined. It's not that it's wrong to see those ways in which God operated, it's just wrong to put too much into them to come up with different means of salvation and all kinds of different covenants by which God saves. It gets too complex and you can't support it scripturally. That's what made, for example, people say the book of Matthew has nothing to do with the church, the book of Matthew is irrelevant to us, it has the Sermon on the Mount, for example, is all about the Kingdom age, it's all about the millennium, it tells people how to live in the millennium, don't pay any attention to it now, it's not for us. That's a form of dispensationalism. In fact, when I wrote the book [The Gospel According to Jesus](#), some people, one very prominent Bible teacher came to me and said, "What do we care what the gospel according to Jesus was, we're not in that dispensation." That was the dispensation of the New Testament, we're in the dispensation of the church that started at Pentecost. They've got that dispensation. I should have added that one. We're in the dispensation of the church, Jesus lived in the prior dispensation, what He taught is only relevant to His dispensation and the Kingdom to come when He'll return and it isn't relevant to us. So we don't...your arguments about the gospel according to Jesus don't matter to us. The Sermon on the Mount tells us how to live in the Kingdom age of the future, or how to live in the past when Jesus was on earth, says nothing about the church.

That's the danger in dispensationalism, it begins to hack the Bible up and cut it into pieces. And then there's all kinds of forms of that known as hyper-dispensationalism, Bullingerism(?), the Campbellites(?) and all those people who just got carried away, they eliminated baptism. they eliminated the Lord's table because that stuff is in the past dispensation, not the present dispensation. You start chewing the Bible up and splitting it into little pieces.

Now what is a proper dispensational viewpoint? I'll put it to you very simply. The whole of my dispensationalism can be stated in one sentence. It is a distinction between the church and Israel period. That is it. That's really all you need. And in the new book called [Faith Works, the Gospel According to the Apostles](#), is a chapter on dispensationalism which will answer your question. And I think all we need to do is keep the church and Israel distinct. And secondly, if you just wanted a little corollary, see more continuity between the old covenant and the new covenant, there's more continuity there than the old dispensationalists who said there is discontinuity. At the end of the old covenant...whack, you have the end of law, you start the new, it's all grace...I see there's much more of a flow. There's grace in the Old, there's law in the New. In the Old they were saved by grace, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, did he not? And that's how he was redeemed. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Salvation was always by grace through faith even in the dispensation of law, the age of law. And today, we're under grace, we're not under law as a means of salvation but we're obligated to keep the law out of obedience to God. The overlap is very clear. So I see more continuity there. And I don't want to get too technical here, than the old dispensationalists but maintaining the clear distinction between Israel and the church which is a hermeneutical issue. If the Bible says that God is going to give a kingdom to Israel, I believe He means Israel, not the church. So we have to maintain that hermeneutical distinction.

Beyond that you really don't need to go. If you just distinguish between the church and Israel, you're going to be safe, that will carry you all the way from the past clear through eschatology and you won't lose your moorings. Okay. All right.

????? Pastor, it seems that every time I enter a discussion about the qualifications of a pastor, the conversation eventually ends up in what are the biblical guidelines for a church...should it be elder run, or should it be pastor run, and I always...I don't know how to answer that question. Does the Bible offer any guidelines as to who has the final say?

JOHN: The church is pastor run, or elder run, yes, very clearly. But pastors and elders are the same...they're the godly men, the plurality of godly leaders that feed and lead the flock. I mean, obviously they...when you say run the church, we have to make the decisions to lead the church. That's pastors and elders that make that decision. I know that plays out differently in different kinds of church organizations. There are those organizations who have a board of people made up of elders and those elders literally tell the pastors what to do. And then there are churches that have pastors and those pastors run the rest of the people in the church. It can be...oh, it can be Presbyterian form which tends to be a plurality of elders that lead the church, it could be Baptists which tends to be a group of pastors that lead the church. In some cases the pastors are under the deacons who lead the church. The simple way to understand church government is this, pastors and elders are all the same, godly men who preach and teach, feed and lead, they lead the church. It's that clear. Whatever you want to call them, whatever way you want to organize them, in many cases, for example, in a Baptist church they don't have elders, what they have is a staff of pastors and maybe in a large church they might have 15 pastors and a small church they might have three or four, and that is the eldership of that church. They have the oversight. Now they may defer to a group of deacons as in Acts chapter 6 to take care of the business of the church, but theirs is the spiritual oversight. It should never be that that's overturned. And where I think the Baptist churches and those that have that kind of deacon/pastor relationship get in to trouble is where the pastors who really are the elders who preach and teach the Word become servants to the deacons who really are a lower qualified group and shouldn't be leading the pastors.

????? I guess how the question comes up is when the issue turns to say a pastor who doesn't meet those qualifications shouldn't be, you know, THE pastor/teacher of a congregation, but yet he's the one who has control and says...

JOHN: Yes, but again at that particular point the consensus of the church should come in to play. And no church has...no church necessarily is obligated to sit under and accept the leadership of one who is in violation of God's standards. The congregation needs to rise up in that situation...if not the other leadership, the other elders, the other pastors. If it's a single pastor then I think the congregation needs to deal with that.

????? Thank you.

JOHN: Okay. We need to go quickly or you're not going to get your questions answered.

????? Yeah, I've been waiting about ten years for this question. (Laughter)

JOHN: Oh...boy, I better have the right answer.

????? My wife and I...by the way, we've been enjoying Revelation on Sunday nights, really great.

JOHN: Thank you.

????? This is in Zechariah. I want to know if this pertains to the millennial kingdom and if it does I have a question. Starting with verse 6...chapter 14 verse 16, "Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord almighty and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles." There are other verses here but I'll just skip over because it has to do with Feast of Tabernacles. In verse 19, "This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles." If this is the millennial kingdom, why are they...why would they be celebrating this feast, and what time is this is what I'm basically asking?

JOHN: In answer to your question, I believe it is the millennial kingdom. It clearly is the millennial kingdom, holy to the Lord is inscribed on the bells of the horses and the cooking pots and every cooking pot in Jerusalem, Judah will be holy to the Lord of hosts, and all of that. And why will they be celebrating this? Just commemorative, just looks back at redemptive history. The same reason that when the Lord said when I come back we'll...you'll do this communion with Me in My Kingdom, it's commemorative. I believe that there's...I believe there's even a temple, the millennial temple described in Ezekiel 40 to 48 and there's going to be worship going on during that and it will all look back at God's redemptive history, something we probably will commemorate in some way all throughout eternity. So it still has the function of a commemoration, of a celebration of all that God has done. And you know, if you read the Old Testament, that God loves to have His people recite the history and the chronicle of all His mighty deeds. And that's part of what praise is. And throughout all of the millennial kingdom and throughout all of eternity, we will be praising God. And how do you do that? There's only three ways to do that...one,...one is to praise Him for who He is, attributes; two, to praise Him for what He has done; three, to thank Him for both. That is the essence of praise. And if that's what we're going to do forever, then it is fitting that whatever commemorative means we have to do that be held.

In fact, I would daresay that all throughout eternity, and I'm going out on a limb here, but I would daresay that throughout all of eternity, we'll invent all kinds of commemorative events to look back and remember what God has done. We'll never forget our own salvation. We'll never forget the redemption of those we love. We'll never forget how He built His church and how He conquered Satan. And I think there will be all kinds of commemorations and special events throughout eternity as we celebrate the marvelous things that God has done.

????? Thank you, I've been studying the Jewish festivals so I was curious about that. Thank you.

JOHN: Good.

????? I just have a brief three-part question. (Laughter) It's concerning Revelations. The first part is every...almost every biblical scholar at this point in time believes that the Economic Community which is beginning next week is the second Roman Empire. And the Antichrist is supposed to arise out of that. Is there any hints to where he's going to come from and also will the Rapture before these events take place or will we see the Antichrist come to power?

JOHN: Well, from my viewpoint, the Rapture will happen before the disclosure of Antichrist. He really doesn't show himself until half way through the Tribulation. And I believe the church is raptured prior to that time, so it will be three and a half years ahead of that event at least...and maybe a little ahead

of that. Secondly, with regard to the European Economic Community, I hate to say, you know, people say well that's the ten toes of Daniel, the problem is there are 13 nations in the Common Market and the image...we assume that the image there, of course, representing that final form of a revived Roman Empire is the final form because Christ the stone cut out without hands comes and crushes that, so it is the final form of human government, a reconstituted Roman Empire which would mean nothing more than a revived Europe, the focus of all the world will be there. Whether...the fact that there are ten toes means there can only be ten nations, I mean, I wouldn't want to be real dogmatic on that. I wouldn't want to say, well if there are 13 now or 12 now it will go back to ten eventually, not necessarily. What you have there is till reconstituted old Roman Empire territory in a revived Europe. What really fascinates me is that this never really was a full-blown Roman revival until Eastern Europe fell because eastern Europe was also a part of that massive Roman Empire which extended all the way from England on the west clear to Balbek which is east of Beirut, way into the Arab world was once a part of that Empire.

So I believe what we are going to see is a revived Europe which is the ground from which the Antichrist will rise and I believe he will be a great leader, a great speaker, a charismatic type of personality. As to who he will be, we don't know. There's no way to know specifically.

????? But also since there's 13 now, isn't there supposed to be three leaders of ??? and one small...one rises up out of...

JOHN: Sure, and again that might happen.

????? The second part is if the Rapture happens before, I suppose we wouldn't have to worry about the mark of the beast as well.

JOHN: Right. That is correct.

????? Correct.

JOHN: And the reason we take a view that the Rapture will happen before is...well there's a lot of reasons but let me give you just one technical reason. In, I believe the 24 elders pictured in heaven when the Tribulation begins represent the church, so the church is in heaven represented in the 24 elders when the Tribulation begins with the breaking of the seven seals. Secondly, I believe that the breaking of the seven seals is the wrath of God and the Scripture promises that we will be kept from the wrath of God. So those are some of the reasons. And there are others with reference to the nature of the church, the nature of Israel and the purposes of God in the future.

????? And the third part is if the people are raptured up and after the Tribulation and the new Kingdom is set, there's supposed to be a new kingdom on earth, the new Jerusalem, supposedly there will be people who are not in the angelic form still on earth, the people who are raptured, are they going to be back on earth or are they going...

JOHN: Yes, we're coming back...we're coming back. The new Jerusalem descends out of heaven like a bride, and we're the bride that makes that a bride city. We come back, we come back in glorified bodies, people living on the earth in normal bodies, and we'll have an interchange with them very much like the Old Testament saints did with the angels.

???? Ah, that's....thank you.

CRAIG: Yes, my name is Craig. I'd like you to comment on the teaching that Jesus descended after His crucifixion in to hell, that He had to suffer down there. And...

JOHN: Yeah, that's Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagen stuff. And that's not true. They have been saying all kinds of bizarre stuff. I deal with that in my book called [Charismatic Chaos](#). That is more of the terrible gross error that has come out of Kenneth Hagen, Kenneth Copeland, that whole group of people, the Word Faith Movement, that Jesus somehow had to go to hell to atone for sin. First of all, it says that when He was on the cross hanging there He said, "It is finished." He didn't say, "I am finished." He said, "It is finished." (Laughter) There's a big difference, right? So...and there's nothing in the Scripture that says He went down there and suffered. What it does say...what it does say, Peter tells us that Christ in His flesh was in a grave, His Spirit went and preached to the spirits in prison. And I believe that is a reference to the demons that are in the pit, Tartarus, the place of bound demons. And I believe while His body was in the grave He was alive, His Spirit was alive, and He descended into that place and while hell was having a party, celebrating His death, He showed up to tell them that He was alive and had conquered and He proclaimed His triumph to them. Colossians 2 says the same thing, He made principalities and powers subject to Himself. There they were celebrating His death and He showed up to mess up their party and tell them that He was alive and it was a triumphant arrival, not one in which He had to suffer in hell to atone for sin. That is a blasphemous teaching that miscomprehends and misrepresents the atonement on the cross. Okay?

????? Thank you.

JOHN: Good question.

JACK: My name is Jack and I was recently startled by a couple of friends who I thought were believers when they started talking about the people who existed on the earth before Adam and Eve. I had never been confronted with that before. Would you give us Scriptures that confirm...or straighten that out. Excuse me if I sit while I listen.

JOHN: That's all right. I just was looking in my Bible and just before Genesis 1 I have a blank page...don't you? (Applause) So mine doesn't say a word about those folks. That's a figment of somebody's imagination. Probably, just to grab one little thought, probably...possibly, people like that have been influenced with the fact that maybe there was some angelic occupation of the earth. That is the...have you ever heard of the gap theory? The gap theory was the idea that there was originally some kind of creation and then it became Tohu and Bohu without form and void and then God remade it. And in that pre- gap sort of creation there was some kind of angelic constituency on earth. That is impossible to prove from Scripture...is highly speculative at best. There's no reason to assume anything other than the fact that you have six days of creation, prior to that you have nothing...nothing, then six days of creation on the sixth day you have man and that's where the occupancy of the earth begins. There's no reason to assume anything other than that.

YOUNG CHILD: When we come back to the earth for 100, will we be able to heal people or will Jesus be able to heal people?

JOHN: When we come back to the earth, you mean for the 1,000 year millennium? Will we be able to heal people? Or will Jesus do it? Well, I think Jesus will do it for sure because when Jesus healed the first time He came, the first time He came He was giving them a taste of the Kingdom. Do you remember Him saying that? He said, "You have literally tasted the good things of the age to come." Hebrews 6 says that. Now did Jesus heal alone or did some of His disciples also heal?

????? Well a....

JOHN: Some of His disciples did, didn't they?

????? Yeah.

JOHN: So what do you think about that? Maybe the next time He comes some of His disciples are going to heal too. That would be pretty neat, wouldn't it? That's what I think, too. All right, that's a good question. So it's possible that we might be able to do some healing.

ALI: Hi, my name is Ali and I was recently listening to one of your question and answer tapes, I think it's from '87 and you were talking about...gave a little lesson on apologetics and you were talking about scientific and archaeological data could be used to back up the Bible. Can you give me a reference of some people or maybe yourself that have written some books about science and the Bible?

JOHN: Oh, there's plenty of things like that. I'll tell you a really really helpful book written by Henry Morris who is an outstanding creation scientist...he's got an excellent excellent...well several books, you can check them in the bookstore or in the library and I can't think of the latest one, I just gave mine to somebody just about a week ago to look at. But I just can't think of the name of it, it's a large paper back. Do you remember it, Lance?

LANCE: I think it's The Long War Against God.

JOHN: No, no, that's not it. That's his new one on evolution.

LANCE: The Biblical Basis for Modern Science.

JOHN: No, well that's a good one, too, but that's not the one I'm thinking of. It's his book on apologetics...why I believe, or something like that. Many Infallible Proofs, that's it. Many Infallible Proofs, really good, it will just...it will load you with more stuff than you can handle.

ALI: Okay, thank you.

JOHN: And it's done properly. I think we're going to have to end now. I feel badly, so you people...I'll tell you what, we'll take the first person in line, and then the people behind can get together and Lance can pick the best question, and the people behind this lady...people behind this lady, Lance...Dick, you pick the best question out of the remaining folks, and you do the same, Stan, and we'll try to do that that way. Okay, ma'am. We'll start with this...Sir, I can't see that far, sir.

????? I have a question from Matthew 8:12, it says the sons of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness where there's weeping and gnashing of teeth. And I came from an organization where they teach that they're born again Christians who because they don't live a holy godly Christian life can forfeit the Kingdom and wind up in this place of outer darkness. Do you believe in this and do you believe that all Christians will get into the Kingdom no matter how they live? What is your opinion?

JOHN: First of all,...first of all, I don't believe that kind of stuff that Christians are going to wind up cast out of the Kingdom weeping with gnashing of teeth. Jesus said...Jesus said, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and I have lost none of them," John 6, none of them are going to be lost, none of them. Paul said, "Being confident of this very thing that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Paul said, "What shall separate you from the love of God? Nothing, life, death, principalities, powers, nothing," Romans 8, shall separate you...nothing. And you're saved because you were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world that you might become like Jesus Christ. That is not going to be interrupted.

Now you can't lose your salvation. That's clear as it can be in Scripture. Second point, a Christian...a Christian by very nature and by very desire longs to live a holy life. That's not the perfection of his life but that's the direction of it. So a Christian is not...a true Christian isn't going to choose to live like that or he's not a true Christian, right? Because a true Christian loves God, hates sin, desires to obey, doesn't love God as fully as he should, doesn't hate sin as much as he should, doesn't obey as often as he should, but that's the desire of his heart or her heart. If you're truly saved you're going to pursue the right thing, you're going to pursue the things of God and you can't lose your salvation, okay?

????? JUst one more question...who are the sons of the kingdom there in Matthew 8:12, who is that talking about?

JOHN: Jews...Jews who had every right by birth in to the line of Israel to inherit the Kingdom promised to Israel but they were going to wind up cast out of the very Kingdom which was their inheritance which was their birth right because they rejected the Messiah, they rejected Jesus Christ.

????? Okay, thanks.

JOHN: You're welcome.

????? Concerning your November 29 message on the fear of the wrath to come, you referred back to Matthew 24 verse 36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son but the Father alone." It says "nor the Son," if the Son and God are in and of themselves the same being and they have perfect communion, why does the Son not know the day of the Lord?

JOHN: Do you understand...that's a good question...do you understand what we call the kenosis or the self-emptying of Christ, He became a man? He put self-imposed limitations on Himself and that was one of them. He put a lot of limitations on Himself. He limited Himself spatially to a human body. In one sense He gave up His omnipresence, right? He wasn't everywhere at the same time. He was in Jerusalem, He was in Galilee, He was up at Nazareth, He was in the desert, He gave up His omnipresence. He voluntarily gave up His omnipotence. He said if I wanted to I could call for a legion of angels but I yield that up. He restricted His omnipresence, He restricted His omnipotence, why

should we be surprised that He restrict His omniscience? He purposely and willingly and personally limited Himself not to know that. As God, fully God in His glorified state at this time, He knows, but while He was on earth He didn't know, that was a self-imposed limitation as he limited willingly the exercise of His divine attributes. Good question.

What happen, Lance, you couldn't filter it down? One question...okay.

????? Yeah, I have a question about the Christian rock movement. Is Christian rock music non-biblical, and if so is there any biblical proof?

JOHN: Is there any what?

????? Biblical proof.

JOHN: Biblical group?

????? Proof...

JOHN: Oh, proof. That's a good question and we've answered this question through the years. Let me say it this way. Is Christian rock music unbiblical? A lot of music is unbiblical, a lot of church music is unbiblical. There are some hymns that are unbiblical. There are some gospel songs that are terrible because they don't say the right thing. And when you say Christian rock, that's a big thing. I mean, that goes all the way from what some people would think is Christian rock that's nothing more than a ballad, but, you know, if you're over 70 that's rock, you know. And to a teen ager, that's, you know, old people's music, all the way to the heavy metal slam-bang, you know, kind of trash music that...well, I mean, you know what I mean, to what now is Christian rap...Christian rap. So, you know, it's a big...it's a big field. So what I would say is here some general criteria, okay?, to use with any music. One, are the words distinctively biblical? Are they distinctively biblical? Don't tell me you sang, "You light up my life, baby," and you were talking about Jesus. That's not distinctively biblical. You could be talking about your sweetheart, your girl friend, your mother, your daughter, Buddha, or anybody else. So that's not distinctively biblical language. Okay? We're not talking about that...I'm talking about are the words distinctively Christian, theological accurate, biblical.

Two, does the means, the vehicle which transports those words which would be tune, arrangement, style, fit those words. In other words, if I'm going to sing a song called "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," I had better be restricted to a certain genre of music or I will trivialize the profound. Understood? I can't sing, "Holy, holy, holy," to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy." You know what I mean? Or to some hip, snap-your-finger- rock beat because that trivializes the profound. So I want to find a vehicle musically that will move those lyrics on a level that they're worthy of. Now if I want to see, "I'm so happy in Jesus, and I'm really enjoying my Christian experience," I can turn the tempo up. If I want to sing about the fact that life is bitter and life is painful, I might choose some kind of a blues mood to do that. But there has to be some sense about that. And one of the things that I can't comprehend in rock music is to take profundity and trivialize it with the kind of music that is trivial or worse, I guess, to take profound lyrics and profound theology and put them to cheap musical style that is not lofty in terms of its musicianship, it's not lofty in terms of its ability to comprehend music as such.

Third, I don't ever want to use a style that will drag down the content. It's highly unlikely that I can put the gospel, for example, in a very contemporary musical genre and elevate the genre, you understand? The tendency is going to be to pull the gospel down to that level. It's...this is new, there was a song and I've used this illustration before, I'll use it again. There was a song that came out in the schmaltzy forties when everything was sleazy barroom kind of crooning, the pop music, the big time music was all the crooners. And songs were written for the church like that. One of them that was very popular and I remember it even as a kid, (crooning) "I'm in love, deeply in love with the lover of my soul." Yuk! That is...that is terrible because now what you've got is you've reduced loving God to some schmaltzy sort of sexy relationship that you put in a song sung in a barroom. So the church isn't new at doing that. So what I'm saying is you have to be very careful because musical style can communicate so much culture that all it does is take profound gospel truth and pull it down rather than the truth elevating the music...it usually works the other way.

And a fourth principle, and this is a simple one, Amos 5 says, "Stop your songs, your hearts aren't right," and I would simply say this, all I would ask of a musician is whatever musical style he chooses to use, I want to know that he's filled with the Spirit because if the Spirit of God is using him, his sensitivity to the Holy Spirit will come through in any musical style, he'll modify it enough so that it doesn't cheapen the profound. If his heart isn't right, God doesn't want to hear his songs. That's Amos chapter 5. Stop your songs, your hearts aren't right. Go back, get your heart right, then come sing your song to Me. And I really believe you leave it at that point. If the heart of the musician is right, it's amazing how many different kinds of forms and styles he can communicate the truth in. But those are the tests that I would use in that issue. Okay? Thank you.

????? Thanks a lot.

JOHN: Good question. (Applause) Well that's good, that's good. Please, my apologies to those of you dear ones who stood and didn't get your question in, we need to do this again, don't we? And we will do that again. Thank you even for your encouraging applause. I appreciate that kind of affirmation that this has been helpful to you.

Well we've gone way past our time so we need to stand and close in prayer and leave. All right, because by now the ladies in the nursery are wondering what happened.

Father, thanks for a wonderful evening around Your Word and Your truth. Thank You for these precious folks and thank You for just this time of fellowship. We just are so blessed because Your Word gives us light. May we walk in that light for Your Son's sake and everyone said...Amen.

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