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

Bible Questions and Answers, Part 53
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 70-25

Well this is one of those evenings that is to be a surprise to me. I am not yet sure what I will say since I don't know what the questions are. And I know that we could have you turn in questions in advance and then it becomes a sorting issue and all of that and we may never get to the questions that are really on your mind. And so it's just better to maybe have a little bit of a conversation. This is about as informal a time as we can get. We want you to feel like you can ask what's on your heart. Try to be to the point so we can cover as many questions as possible in the next say 50 minutes or so. And hopefully we'll be able to say things that are helpful to all of us as we look together to the things of the Lord and to the Word of God.

Father, I want to ask You as we begin this tonight to just give us direction and guidance that we might say those things that will bring honor to You and be helpful to all of us. We thank You that Your Word is the truth and it speaks to every issue of life. Every matter that is of urgency and importance to us is covered in Your precious truth. Help us to understand and to apply the truth that we hear tonight. We commit it to You in Christ's name. Amen.

Now before you ask any questions, I'm going to pose a question and answer it myself because I assume it's going to be asked. Everybody keeps asking me about the DaVinci Code and so I thought rather than wade through a lot of questions to get to the issue, we will jump right into it. I have been asked a number of times what is my perspective on the DaVinci Code.

First of all, let me say I haven't read the book and don't intend to and I haven't seen the movie and don't intend to either. So my understanding of the DaVinci Code is by reading rather extensively all that has been said about it, both positive and negative and neutral to understand what is contained in this story. It is, of course, fictional, as we know, but it mixes in some ancient lies, some old deceptions, some old Satanic counterfeits so as to have the illusion of being religious and even being spiritual and perhaps even giving the right spin on Jesus and the Bible.

It is really no different than any other deception, it's just another way to deceive people. To call it fiction but to mingle it with revisionist history and satanic lies about Jesus and the Bible and the gospel just makes the mish-mash all the more deceptive. And this is the right generation, this is the right time in history to offer people a mixture of history and fantasy...a mixture of truth and lie. It's the perfect time to do that because we live in a post-modern world in which people have come to the conviction that everybody has his own truth anyway and what your truth is somebody else's truth

might not be, and since religion as now an inner experience that each individual has, you can have your own experience with your own Jesus in your own way in your own religion and this is the perfect scenario for this kind of thing.

But just to give you the brief summary of what this particular assortment of deceptions that has converged in this DaVinci Code book and movie is all about, the bottom line is that the basic story is that Christianity is a fraud. Christianity as we know it today, biblical Christianity or even historic Christianity, whether you're talking about Protestant biblical Christianity or Roman Catholic Christianity is a fraud...the whole thing is a fraud. Jesus was a man, nothing more than a man and I will just hurry to say that all occult material, all Gnostic material, second and third century and right on to today, all liberal approaches, all false approaches to the gospel and the Bible always assault the nature of Christ. That's the cardinal and foundational reality of Christianity is that Jesus is the one true and eternal God incarnate in human flesh. So Jesus is a man, Jesus founds an occult religion that worships the sacred feminine. It's all about goddess worship which is the perversion and the twisting that goes all the way back to the Tower of Babel and mystery Babylon religions, the religions that found their way into Egypt and Persia and the Roman world and the Greek world, the worship of the sacred feminine.

And so the story line is that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and Jesus intended to pass the religious leadership on to His wife, Mary Magdalene, after His death and then to their seed, a baby that she was supposedly carrying at the cross, already pregnant and that child later born was named Sarah, but the male apostles wouldn't let this happen so they commandeered the church. Mary had to flee. She went to Gaul and there she gave birth to this child, or took the child that had already been born, I'm not sure which, and she comes to Gaul and out of this child come a line of Merovingian kings who have a dynasty for a period of time, around the fifth or sixth century. And all of these people who bore the blood of Jesus are the holy grails of history that people have been searching for which, of course, is a bogus idea to begin with. By 325 the men now have commandeered the church, a great strong male leader arises named Constantine. In 325 he invents the deity of Christ, he creates the Bible. He creates the Bible out of selecting only the four gospels and ignores all the rest of the gospels. He accepts the bad ones and lets the good ones go. He creates not only the Bible, but he invents sexual morality to suppress the true religion which offers sexual freedom, even androgyny. You would usually find sex in some perverted way at the core of all false religion.

The true religion, however, the true religion, the worship of the sacred feminine goes underground. It's hidden in secret codes and places. It shows up among some of the elite, like DaVinci who paints it into his paintings in very obscure and secretive ways, and so forth. Finally it's unearthed in this novel approach by Dan Brown. The reason people buy the book is it's very well written, I guess, and very interesting to read. But its bottom line is an attack on Christianity and an elevation of the

feminist goddess worship that was characteristic of ancient cultures and particularly elevated by Gnosticism.

To understand Gnosticism you have to simply understand second and third century developed...a religion developed that had its roots in the New Testament, it's addressed by the Apostle Paul. It had a number of elements that are addressed by the Apostle Paul, Docetism which is a denial that Christ had a body. It was the idea that he was a phantom, that he never really died on the cross. The one who died on the cross was Simon of Cyrene because Jesus was never a man, he was always just a floating spirit. Gnosticism said, for example, in those early centuries the God of orthodox Christianity and the God of the Old Testament, the Creator of heaven and earth is blind and an evil fool who created evil matter. He is the God who foolishly said, "I am God and there is no other besides Me," not knowing that above and beyond Him was the great spirit who created Him. The Gnostic goddess in Gnostic literature casts Yahweh into hell.

So it's not some mild assault. It is an assault on everything that is sacred in Christianity. The earliest Gnostic, probably Marcion, M-a-r-c-i-o-n about the year 150 begins this elevated knowledge and sacred technologies by which you attain to communion with the deities. And Marcion rejects the God of the Bible and comes up with this kind of bizarre stuff. Recently you heard about the gospel of Judas, the gospel of Judas which National Geographic has made much of. The gospel of Judas, just so you know, says, for example, that God the Creator is an evil demon, that the reprobates of the Old Testament, Cain, Esau, Korah and Sodomites are the good guys and the bad guys are Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets. And Judas becomes a good guy because they want to overturn everything. That's what Satan wants to do to twist and change and overturn everything.

In the gospel of Thomas which is another one of these strange books, and there are lots of ancient writings against the Bible, lots of false writings that came from demon sources. Even the Apostle Paul acknowledged there would be false teachers all over everywhere. Paul even acknowledges that the believers had received a false letter very early on in the very time of the New Testament writing, misrepresenting truth. But the gospel of Thomas is one, for example, that says, and I quote, "When you make the male and female one and the same so that the male not be male nor the female, female, then you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven." There is this sexual androgyny mingled into this. It is a bizarre and twisted kind of thinking. It develops what's called spiritual technologies, mysticism, mantras, meditation, some transcendental experiences that can be induced a number of ways so that you can ascend to the worship of the true Spirit. And Gnostics believe that the serpent of Genesis spoke the truth and the God of Genesis was a blind fool and an evil liar. One group of Gnostics called themselves the Nacenes from the Hebrew *nachash*which means serpents. They were bold enough to say they worshiped the serpents. So Satan worship goes way back and this is all nothing more than one form or another of Satan worship.

So, you don't need to answer every issue in this kind of thing. It's just another in a long line of assaults on the Lord Jesus, on the character of God. It opens the world to the Gnostic literature so it's a pretty formidable thing. I don't know what it is, sixty million people have bought the book, twenty-seven or thirty million in America. And now I guess a lot of people will see the film. And in a culture where people are told that they can develop their own spirituality along the lines of their own preferences religiously. This is a perfect kind of thing because the one thing it doesn't ask is anything of the believer. It doesn't ask anything morally, doesn't ask anything spiritually, doesn't ask for any devotion, doesn't ask for any self-denial, doesn't ask for any recognition of sin, of unrighteousness, of unholiness. It doesn't call for humility. It doesn't call for repentance. Doesn't say you have to believe in anything particular, it's perfect religion for a post-modern proud self-esteeming world of people who think they can ascend to the levels of true spirituality by their own intuition and their own feelings. It is, of course, a damning lie. When interviewing...watching some interviews of people, they were saying, "Have you changed your view of Jesus by seeing the film?" And they said, "Yes, I've chanted my view of Jesus by seeing the film." Now that shows you the mindlessness of the culture in which we live. Without regard for whatever is said is true, that's not a point that seems to matter to a lot of people since Jesus is...is a plastic figure that can be twisted and shaped like the old Gumbys that your kids used to play with. You can make Him into anything you want Him to be.

So this is just another in a long line of evidences that the culture is corrupt because it imbibes this stuff without any discrimination. Another indication that the people who run the media in this country are bent on promoting what is blasphemous. And you have to understand that. That is exactly what they are intending to do, not always knowingly, but nonetheless it's still what they do because they are under the full control of the prince of the power of the air who uses them for his own purposes. And this is one of those purposes clearly as if there's not enough corruption in this culture, they have resurrected corruption the church deemed heresy centuries ago, and resurrected it at a perfect time in Satan's understanding of how people think. This is a perfect time to resurrect spirituality on a personal individual basis, elevated knowledge, spiritual technologies that everybody can do on their own, come to their own conclusions. So...so much for the Da Vinci Code.

All right? All right. We have some microphones and I even resisted saying that much because I don't want to make more out of this than we should. Simply this, folks. There are a zillion lies, right? I mean, they're everywhere. So what's really important is that you know the truth. If you know the truth then you can spot the lies. Okay?

Now we have some of our brightest pastors out there to assist you with your questions. And we'll just let you maybe line up a couple of three deep behind these microphones and we'll start over here at the left. Give me your name first.

CHOICE? My name is Choice. God bless you, Pastor John.

JOHN: Thank you.

CHOICE: Thank you and I love you for your teachings and what you offer everyone here at the church. My question is heaven a physical place? I've heard different theories on it and I just want to know what the Bible speaks about it being a physical place.

JOHN: Sure. The first thing is, I want to give you a gift. Go to the bookstore and I wrote a book on heaven. And just tell them you want it and to put it on Bill Shannon's account. No...I'm just kidding. Just tell them it's a gift from John and they'll put it on my account. You can take it with you and it will give you a complete outline on that.

Let me say this. When Jesus rose from the dead He arose in a physical literal body, a body that they could see and touch. He said to Thomas, "Reach hither your finger and touch My side." This is a physical body. He was in the room with them, He spoke to them, He ate with them, He walked with them, He talked with them. And when we are raised in eternal glory, we will have, Philippians 3:20 and 21, a body like unto His body. So there is physicality in our eternal bodies, which means there must be a physical environment in some sense. So heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is not an ethereal place where we float around in some kind of consciousness, feeling only good feelings and good emotions. It is an actual place. It is a recreated new heaven and new earth, a recreated universe. It has at its center a capital city which is described in Revelation as the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It is described in detail. It is essentially a cubed city fifteen hundred miles cubed which makes it a massive place. It has streets that are made out of transparent gold. It has twelve gates, each gate being a single pearl. Its foundations are all jewels that refract the light of the glory of God like one of those mirror balls in the middle of a dance floor or skating rink, shedding light in every direction, refracting the beauty of God's glory all over the endless universe. So it is a real place. There is a river of life there. Trees planted along the river for the joy of the saints. There will be ministry. There will be activity. There will be a room in the Father's house. All of those are indications of its physicality.

Now not in the sense that we know it because it's not subject to the curse. And it is not subject to any change, such as the Eden in this world while not at that particularly time cursed was subject to the curse, and of course received the curse and we're still under it. Heaven has no curse ever and so that final and eternal state will be a state of glory both for the redeemed spirit and the glorified body. Okay? Thank you.

Yes ma'am.

QUESTION: Good evening, Pastor MacArthur. I just want to thank you for your faithful teaching of the truth.

JOHN: You're welcome.

QUESTION: I have a two-part question.

JOHN: What's your name?

SHASHEM(?)

JOHN: Oh yeah, I couldn't see you. Shashem, sure.

SHASHEM: My maternal grandfather was a rabbi and even though I didn't follow the religion does that automatically make me a Jew? And so, what does it mean to be the chosen post Christ verses pre-Christ?

JOHN: First of all, whether or not you had a relative who was a rabbi has nothing to do with your being Jewish. Being Jewish is because you are born into the race of Jewish people. So if you are a child of a Jewish mother and a Jewish father, is that correct? Gentile father, Gentile mother?

SHASHEM: Gentile father, Jewish mother.

JOHN: I'd claim Judaism. Not as a religion, but I'd claim Jewishness on that basis. That was kind of the story with Timothy, wasn't it? Timothy had a Gentile parent and a Jewish mother and a Jewish grandmother who taught him the Scriptures from the time he was young. You can make an argument that the Jews would consider that if you had a Jewish mother you certainly could be considered to be Jewish. But yeah, I mean, I think that's a reasonable assumption that you definitely fall in to the privilege of possessing Jewish blood that flows down through the ages from the Patriarchs. So that's an honorable thing. I've always said it's wonderful to be Scottish and throw a little German and English in there but I wouldn't mind being a little bit Jewish. But didn't have that opportunity or privilege. But that's okay, I'm in Christ and I inherit His righteousness and all the benefits of His Jewishness are passed to me in that way.

So, yeah. In the end of the day, however, it doesn't matter what your race is. It only matters what your relationship to God is. And as Paul says, not all Jews are Jews in the true sense. Not all Israel is Israel. That's the sad reality that many people who have inherited the blood of the Patriarchs, if you will, who are a part of the Jewish race are not a part of the Kingdom of God, and so their Jewishness counts for nothing. On the other hand, as we know, those of us who are Gentiles, sheep of another fold, if you will, to borrow the language of the gospel of John chapter 10, or to borrow the language of Romans chapter 11, we are the branch grafted in to the stock of blessing. So what matters is that you're in Christ. But doubly blessed you are if you also are in Abraham and in Christ. Okay?

SHASHEM: Chosen means...

JOHN: To be chosen...

SHASHEM: I mean...

JOHN: There's two senses. One, the nation was chosen to be the race through whom God would bring the Scripture and the Messiah. Okay? That does not mean that when God chose the nation Israel He chose them all for eternal salvation. It simply means He chose the nation to be theocratic, to be a nation over which He would rule and through which He would mediate the Scripture and through which the Messiah would come. Okay? But not all of the chosen nation were individually chosen to salvation. And that's what the Apostle Paul is saying in Romans 9, 10 and 11. Esau have I loved...or Jacob have I loved, Esau have I...what?...have I hated. And this is by God's choice. And not all Israel is Israel. A Jew is a Jew who is one inwardly, not outwardly, Romans 2. In fact there's an indictment by Paul in Romans 2 about those who are only Jewish outwardly and that was of no value whatsoever before God. So there is a sense historically in a very real sense in which God chose Israel...Israel, Mine elect...as a nation to be the vehicle through which He conveyed the revelation of His glory, the Scriptures, and through which He brought the Messiah and to which He first proclaimed the gospel. That's different than being chosen unto salvation. There were some in the nation chosen to salvation, there are some, of course, outside the nation and now many in the Gentile world who have been elect unto eternal salvation. Okay? Thank you.

EDITH: Hi, John, I'm Edith. I have a question about 2 Thessalonians 2:10 through 12. I recently heard an interpretation of this passage that says that only the people who didn't hear the gospel and rejected before the Rapture have a chance to be saved after the Rapture. Do you think this passage teaches that if you heard it and rejected it before the Rapture you don't have a second chance after the Rapture, only the ones who didn't hear it and reject it have a chance?

JOHN: No, I don't think there's anything in the Scripture that says that. Just to clarify what we're talking about here, in the future the Bible is clear that the Lord Jesus is going to take the church out, John 14, 1 Corinthians 15, and 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. There's a snatching of the church, this is the Rapture where believers leave. The question then is after the believers have been raptured and all hell breaks loose on earth, as God releases judgment on the world during the period of time called the Tribulation.

And by the Way, coming up when I get back from our summertime and all that, in the fall I'm going to do two series. I'm going to do one on the authority of Scripture because I want you to understand how we know the Bible is true. So we're going to do a basic foundational study on the authority of

Scripture. And then we're going to go into a study of eschatology and study the last days and what is the real sequence of events. It's been reduced to a minor issue today by many, many very good theologians who think it doesn't matter how the story ends, I think it matters a lot how the story ends. Others think it's not clear how the story ends. I think it's crystal clear how it ends. And we need to understand that. We understand it because it's revealed so clearly in Scripture. So we'll get to that.

But the idea is, the church is snatched away, that's the next event in God's future plans. It could happen at any moment and it will happen suddenly in the twinkling of an eye where the Lord just snatches the church. Nothing has to happen prophetically before that event...nothing. It can happen at any time. The church has always lived in imminency, the expectation of that Rapture of the church. After that, the church is taken away. There are left on the earth unbelievers. The question is, what happens to them? The answer is, it's laid out very clearly in the Scriptures. The gospel will be preached. It will be preached in numerous ways, even miraculously it will be preached by an angel flying in heaven...sort of like, you know, the Outback blimp, or whatever it is, with a message going along the side. There will be an angel preaching the everlasting gospel from heaven. There will be a 144 thousand Jews, twelve thousand from every tribe and only God knows what tribe Jews are in today because all their records were lost in the destruction of Jerusalem. And those 144 thousand will be witnesses across the face of the earth. There will be two predominant witnesses, Revelation chapter 11, two witnesses, powerful witnesses, the whole world will...will see them, according to Revelation 11 and they will be killed for their testimony. But the world will see them killed which can only happen in a television age. The world will see them being killed. The world will also see them rise from the dead. It will have a massive impact. Jerusalem...the people of Jerusalem will be converted in the beginning of God's salvation of Israel will begin. And out of that Tribulation time will come people who weren't Christians when the Rapture came, there will come people from every tongue and tribe and nation race of the world who will be purchased by the blood of the Lamb during that period. It says they will come out of the time of Tribulation. Nothing says that that salvation is restricted to people who never heard the gospel before. There's nothing to restrict that. In fact, it would be very unlikely that people...all the people who are being saved at that time since it's a massive amount of people, all Israel will be saved. The nation of Israel, two thirds of the rebels will be purged out and the remaining third will be saved....that's millions of people. And there will be a massive salvation among the Gentiles around the world as well. And there's no indication that this can only happen to those people who did not hear the gospel. It's pretty simple to understand. You have your lifetime. You have your lifetime now to respond to the gospel. You'll have your lifetime then to respond to the gospel, even if there's a Rapture, that doesn't change the fact that you still have your opportunity and the gospel will be preached. Okay? Good question.

RON: My name is Ron.

JOHN: Yeah, can you just keep those microphones up if you can.

RON: My question is, a couple of weeks ago at work I was sharing the gospel with a non-believer and, you know, how he needs to repent of his sins, embrace Jesus Christ. He said I hope He accepts me. I said Jesus stands at the door and knocks. So we were talking about Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5 and then there's a Roman Catholic, another co-worker comes, butts in and says, "You have the wrong way." And I turned to him and I said, "I don't listen to you, I don't listen to man, I listen to God." And I turned away from him immediately and I told the non-believer, "See how Satan works in people's hearts." So is that the right way to confront, cause I....

JOHN: Well it was certainly the correct analysis of the situation. It was a correct analysis. One of the things that I fear is because I'm so direct in the pulpit, you all end up being equally direct in every conversation that you ever have with everybody.

Now, look. I can get away with things here that you might want to soften a little bit in a conversation. I can preach on "Get thee behind Me, Satan," but maybe you don't want to say that to your co-worker when you're having a conversation. So...I would say you made an apt analysis but you might have said to him, "You know, I appreciate your concern about that and as soon as I'm finished talking with this friend I'd love to sit down with you and talk about that. Instead of cutting him off and eliminating an opportunity, you need to deal with him in such a way as to give yourself a future opportunity with him, okay? I appreciate your boldness. And I take the responsibility for it. Okay.

RON: Well I've had past opportunities with him and he's Roman Catholic and he's staunch.

JOHN: Well still...

RON: Mary is the way and he won't listen to what I say anything about the gospel.

JOHN: Well, all you can do is do what you can do. And I think the thing with all these people is, especially Roman Catholic people is to say, "Are you certain if you were to die now you would go to heaven?" And just plant that thought because the answer is no....no...no...no. The Bible promises you certainty and you can take them to those places where that promise is crystal clear. That's...that's the way you approach these people who live with this constant fear and uncertainty. And even though they're afraid, you see he operates out of fear, he's afraid to abandon Catholicism because Catholicism has made him afraid. His only hope is through Mary, his only hope is through the church. The church is a surrogate Christ. Catholics are not connected to Christ, they're connected to the church. The church is a surrogate Christ. You connect to the church and through sacred technologies, just like Gnosticism, through mechanical means of the Mass and eating and drinking what they are told is the body and blood of Jesus and through praying to Mary and praying to

the saints and going through all of these kinds of things saying your beads, etc., etc. These are the mechanisms, these are the sacred mechanisms that keep you connected to the Church. But the message the Church keeps giving you is this is no guarantee of heaven. And so you...you have to keep driving that home with these people that that is not what the Bible says. The Bible says you can know, you can know, these things are written that you may know that you have eternal life. The thesis of 1 John, take them to 1 John and just walk through that reality because it...it is a trap and it is a trap constructed on fear. They're afraid to disconnect because they've been told their only hope is through the connection to the Church. And if they abandon the Church, they have no hope. But even if they hold to the Church they have no assurance. So it is...that is really the Achilles heel in their system and that's...that's the point of attack, I think, that can be most effective, okay?

RON: Thank you.

BRUCE: Am I on? Okay. My name is Bruce Dixon.

JOHN: Hi, Bruce.

BRUCE: Hi. The Bible teaches me that only those who are called can be saved. But it also says in Revelation 22:17, "Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." In your commentary on that verse, you state that this is an unlimited offer of grace and salvation to all who desire to have their thirsty souls quenched. My question is, does free will exist and if so, what role does it play in salvation?

JOHN: Let me answer it this way. The offer is always unlimited, otherwise why would be told to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? The offer is always unlimited or men couldn't be condemned for rejecting it. And Jesus says you will die in your sins because you believe not on Me. Where I go you'll never go, you'll die in your sins because you believe not on Me. Everyone who ends up in hell, this is what we were saying today, you don't go to hell in the end because of your sin, you don't go to hell only because of your selfishness, although everybody in hell was sinful and selfish, but so is everybody in heaven. It all comes down to what you did with the message of salvation, what you did with the gospel. And all condemnation is the condemnation of rejection. Jesus says you will not come to Me that you might have life. How often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood but you would not.

Is there free will? I don't ever use the expression free will. Is there human will? Yes. Is that will free? No. It is within the bounds of its own sinfulness free to make sinful choices. But it cannot choose righteousness on its own. It is free...it's like a criminal. If you're in prison, you've been sentenced and sent to jail and you're now incarcerated in a prison. Is there freedom? There is freedom within the walls. There is freedom to go here and go there. There's freedom to think this.

There's freedom to act this way and act that way, to cultivate relationships this way and that way. There is freedom but it's all freedom in the prison. There's no freedom to go out to leave. The unregenerate person is free within the confines of fallenness, free within the confines of reprobation, free within the confines of depravity to select his categories of sin, to select the nature of his behavior as a sinner. But he is not free on his own to do anything other than that which is consistent with his fallenness. You understand that? So it's a contained freedom.

The only thing that breaks that freedom is the intruding sovereign eternal power of God. And God does that when He wills for whom He wills, not apart from their faith and repentance, but by means of their faith and repentance which He Himself generates. So it is wholly an act of God when all of a sudden the bars of the prison are open and the sinner is turned loose into the glories of a new righteous freedom. He is now experiencing a freedom in a world of beauty and a world of wonder and a world of righteousness, and for the first time is free to do and able to do what is right. So we also have a freedom, it is freedom in the world of what is right. And that's what we're motivated to do, even though there are times when we fail to do that and fall back into sin.

Now that then asks the question, how can God hold sinners responsible for their condition when it can't be altered except by Him? Right? That's the big question. And the answer to that question is He does and it's right because whatever He does is what is right. God doesn't do right by an external standard. Certainly not ours. Whatever God does is right because God is the standard of what is right. And you say, "Well it doesn't sound fair." No, we're all sinners and it's fair for us to all be condemned. The part that's not fair is that we would be saved. If you want fair, we all go to hell. Right? If we get what we deserve, we all go to hell. The fact that God chooses some to salvation is not about being fair, it's about demonstrating His grace.

God has every right to put His full glory on display. If there were no sin, and there were no sinners, there would be no grace displayed. If there were no grace displayed, then God would not have the opportunity to manifest the glory of His nature as a gracious merciful compassionate, kind, forgiving, loving Savior both to men and to angels. So God allows for sin in order that He might destroy it and in the process display His grace. On the other hand, God is a God of wrath and judgment and justice and holiness and He displays His wrath as well in the condemnation of sinners.

Now how this harmonizes, this question is always asked, and I answer it typically in as simple a way as I can to help people understand this. Look, we're talking about the eternal God of the universe, okay? And I know we desperately want to reduce Him to a manageable size. We want to figure Him out but we're really unable to do that. Okay? This is the inscrutable mind of God, unattainable, imperceptible beyond our comprehension. How is it that God can condemn people to sinners...as sinners to hell because they do not believe the gospel when they have within them no capability to do anything other than reject it? And how at the same time He can hold them responsible for their

rejection when He alone is the one who saves them? I...I don't know how God resolves that, I just know that's exactly what Scripture teaches. Scripture teaches that the only people who are saved are the ones that God has chosen, that He regenerates, that He awakens, that He gives sight to, that He grants faith and repentance to at the hearing of the gospel. God has to do it all. And yet the sinner is responsible. And so the Bible pleads with the sinner. It proclaims the gospel to the ends of the earth to the sinner and holds the sinner accountable.

Now just to give you an illustration. This is not an unusual difficulty...an apparent paradox, not a real one, it's only apparent to us, it's no paradox to God because a paradox is a contradiction. It's not contradictory to God, it's just to us with our pea brains that we can't grasp it. But let me help you with this a little bit. Here's a simple way that I would explain that. Take the book of Romans, for example, who wrote Romans?

BRUCE: Paul

JOHN: Pardon? Is that your complete answer.

BRUCE: I have no idea.

JOHN: Paul

BRUCE: Paul.

JOHN: Is that a full answer?

BRUCE: No.

JOHN: Okay, try that again.

BRUCE: Inspired by God.

JOHN: So who wrote it? Paul?

BRUCE: God.

JOHN: Which one are you going to take?

BRUCE: God...final answer.

JOHN: You see the problem? It's Paul, it's Paul's words, Paul's experiences, Paul's heart, Paul's mind, Paul's will fully engaged, fully active saying exactly what he wanted to say in his heart, and yet every single word is inspired by God. How can it be all Paul and all God and not be dictation?

Another question. Have you ever heard of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints which is what the Bible teaches that those who are saved who persevere to the end, if you persevere to the end you will be saved. And yet the Bible also teaches that we are secure in Christ and nothing can ever remove us from Christ, no one can take us out of the hand of the Lord. So is it God keeping us or is it us persevering?

Here's another question. Who lives your Christian life? This is pretty basic stuff.

BRUCE: Did you want me to answer that?

JOHN: Yeah, who lives your Christian life?

BRUCE: I do but only with the help of God, only with the help of Christ.

JOHN: So who does the good stuff?

BRUCE: I got this guy back here telling me everything to say. What's the question?

JOHN: But you can't answer that question. If I say who lives your Christian life, you're trapped because you know that you're responsible to live it, every command in the Bible assumes that. Every discipline in the Bible, we disciplined a gentleman this morning in the church, is he responsible for his sin? Or is God?

BRUCE: He is.

JOHN: He's responsible.

BRUCE: I got that right.

JOHN: Because we're all responsible. I...I, says David, have sinned against You, I take full responsibility for my sin because I disobey, that's my sin. And yet when you come down to it, I...I can't take credit for obedience. Though you have the same conundrum, Paul put it this way, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I." So he didn't understand it either. Because again it is that amazing conflict between understanding on a human level and the vast mind of God. So we obey, we live our Christian lives, we're responsible for our obedience and our disobedience and yet it's all of God. We persevere and yet it's all of Him to keep us. We believe and we repent and yet it's

all His work. And you can't create something that resolves that without doing damage to those great truths. So you leave them alone, rest in them. This is one of the great evidences that God wrote this book because it was written by a committee of men, they would have resolved all that. Okay? Good question.

BRUCE: Thank you.

JED: I, Pastor John, my name is Jed. I've been wondering when Christ was crucified on the cross, we understand from the gospels it says, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And even in the hymn we sing it says the Father turns His face away. So how does that...you know, how does that work? From your understanding, how does that work?

JOHN: Well, I have absolutely no idea. And that's another one of those same things. How can God forsake God when Jesus is fully God and fully bears the divine nature as does the Father and the Spirit, how can God who is one and indivisible and undivided be separated from Himself? I have no idea, but I know this, I know it doesn't mean that there was a breach in the divine nature. It doesn't mean there was a rending of that divine nature. So whatever that separation was, it didn't change the nature of Christ. It didn't change the essence of who He was. There was in that horrendous sin-bearing when the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus a true...a true alienation. And the question is often asked...if Jesus actually took the full punishment for all sinners who would believe through all history, and He did, how could He have taken all that punishment in one day in a matter of hours? Which if those sinners all went to hell, they could never fulfill an eternity together? In other words, if the judgment on the sinner is everlasting, how could Christ bear that judgment in full for millions of sinners? And the answer is, He could bear an infinite judgment because He was an infinite person. We can't even fathom the infinity of those hours upon an infinite person. And so He did not cease to be God, but in a real and true sense He experienced a time in which for the purpose of sin bearing the wrath of God was actually placed enforced upon Him. It wasn't that He became a sinner, it was that He received a judgment. And the judgment was not just physical, there was some breach in communion, not nature, not essence, but communion for fellowship. Okay? Good question.

JEFF: Hello, my name is Jeff Brown.

JOHN: Hi, Jeff.

JEFF: Hi. My question is about the chronologies, Matthew, Mark and Luke, verses John regarding after the resurrection. It appears to be a contradiction, but I'm just trying to figure out this chronology. Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Thinks the body is stolen but on the way back to the disciples sees Jesus and then Peter and John are there and they come to the tomb, I guess. John...in John she goes and tells Peter and John and the disciples without seeing Jesus at all. They come back, run past her and then she follows. After they see the empty tomb, then Mary

sees Jesus, thinks he's a gardener. I can't figure out this chronology, how to work it out and was wondering...if you've encountered the same problem.

JOHN: Sure. The best help I can give you is to get the commentary I wrote on Matthew, volume 4, chapter 28, verse 1 to 15, the last of Matthew where I work through all that chronology. That;'s part of what happens.

Also, in the study Bible there is a what's called a harmony of the gospels. And in a harmony of the gospels, all of that is laid out. I'm looking at my...I have a NAS here that just came out, the New American Standard, and the harmony of the gospels here moves down through the betrayal, the crucifixion, the burial, the resurrection and it lists all the corresponding passages. And if you just track with those corresponding passages, and read the commentary, even the footnotes in the study Bible, you should be able to resolve those things. There is no real conflict, in fact it's really an amazingly consistent record when it's all blended together. But that's the best thing to do so that you get a good look at it. Just about any commentary on the resurrection is going to do that, any commentary that's any good is going to pull all those pieces together. That's something I really enjoyed doing and since I haven't yet written the one on Luke and haven't yet preached on Mark and haven't gotten to the second volume of John, if I remember right, I worked through that at the end of Matthew. Okay?

JEFF: Okay. Thank you.

JOHN: We're going to have to hurry cause we're running out of time. So quick, and I'll try to give a short answer. I'm not known for that...but.

SCOTT: Yeah, my name is Scott. Praise, God, for you, John. My question is it's in regard to Christian Living, in particular about faith. As God's people in regards to our daily living, how are we in regards to exercising our faith, how are we to apply these Scriptures, I'm going to run off a few Scriptures to you...Matthew 8:13, "As you have believed, so let it be done for you." Matthew 9:29, "According to your faith let it be to you." John 11:40, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" And lastly, Mark 9:23, "All things are possible to him who believes."

JOHN: Sure. Very simple. Everything within the purpose of God, within the will of God, everything that God desires to give...another way to say it is whatever you ask in My name, consistent with who I am and what I will shall be done. Faith is exercised when we ask and when our asking is consistent with the will of God we will receive. That is a general promise, that is...that is not necessarily specific to...for example, if I pray for the salvation of this person, that person is going to be saved. Or if I pray for this person, that person is going to be healed....not unless it is within the will of God to save and the will of God to heal. So all of those are conditioned by the repeated statements that this is all in

accordance with My will.

But remember now, in the gospel accounts in those early years, what Jesus is trying to do is overcome a continually indicated issue and it's indicated in a little phrase that Jesus said to His disciples, "O you of...what?..little faith." They...they were so minimal in their faith that He was always saying those kinds of things that would encourage them to move to a greater and greater confidence, a greater and greater trust and a greater and greater faith and that it should show up even in the petitions they brought before Him. This is part of spiritual development and spiritual growth but it's always within the framework of that which brings honor to God. That's why when Jesus taught us how to pray He said pray like this, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your will be done, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now let's get to the requests. It always starts out with Your will, Your Kingdom, Your glory, and then we talk about here. Okay? So it's always in that framework. So that's a general..a general promise of the Lord that when we ask, He will give us, obviously what is consistent with what is best for us because that's the only thing the Lord will do, okay?

ZACHARY: Hello, my name is Zachary.

JOHN: Hi, Zachary.

ZACHARY: I have two little questions.

JOHN: Okay.

ZACHARY: How old were you when you became a pastor and did you also want to be a pastor when you were little?

JOHN: Wow, those are good questions. You know, I think, Zachary, when I was pretty little, I think I thought I'd be a pastor, that was because my father was a pastor, and my grandfather was a pastor, and all of their friends were pastors and so I was surrounded by pastors. I guess I just thought when you grew up you became a pastor because there were so many pastors in my life. My parents never pushed me to be a pastor, but I do...I guess I was mimicking my dad, you know, I sometimes would stand on the back steps and preach to my sister. I remember I said to my...I came to the end of the house, this is my father telling me, I don't remember this, but he said I came in the house and I said, "Well," my sister Jeanette, "She's going to hell for sure." I must have been about six or something and he said, "Why are you saying that?" And he said, "Because...I said, Because I preached to her and when I give the invitation, she will not raise her hand." So I don't know whether...I don't know what that meant but I certainly started early to think about being a preacher. Even when I was in high school I had, you know, I thought...I never really thought of a different kind of career. You know, even in high school I never had any idea of going this way and the Lord had to redirect me. The only thing

I thought about sometimes was athletics because I was pretty good at that. And I got a lot of affirmation. But it was time to go to college, I turned away from all of that and went to study the Bible, so I just think it was always in my heart. Then I had an accident after my freshman year that almost killed me, I ended up in bed for three months, thrown out of a car. And that's when the Lord really sealed that in my heart. So I was eighteen years old when I said, "Okay, Lord, if You want me to be a preacher, that's what I want to be."

ZACHARY: Can I ask you my other question now?

JOHN: Uh-huh.

ZACHARY: Did Satan know the Scripture or like did he learn it by himself or did God have to tell him?

JOHN: No, He wrote it down for everybody...even Satan. He knows it very, very well. First of all, he's very, very old and he's known it for a long time and he lived with God before he fell, not long, probably, but he lived with God before he fell and so he knew truths about God before they were ever written down in Scripture. But he can read the Bible and very cleverly twist it and pervert it. And that's why it's so important to have pastors and people who can teach the truth so that others aren't deceived by Satan. Okay? Good questions, Zachary. (Applause)

JOHN ADAMS: How you doing, Pastor MacArthur, my name is John Adams.

JOHN: Hi, John. Good to have you here.

ADAMS: It's good to be here, man.

JOHN: I've got to tell you about John. I met him a few weeks ago...

ADAMS: Oh, here we go...here we go.

JOHN: John said to me, he's driving down Roscoe looking for another church, he's driving down Roscoe trying to find another church.

ADAMS: No, I didn't know...okay?

JOHN: And he drove by the sign and he saw John MacArthur, that's a familiar name. And so he called your brother on the cell phone...

ADAMS: No, I called my brother when I got home. My brother is he's an associate pastor at my father's church and he's a gospel hip-hop performer. So I called him and I don't need to take the

story over...

JOHN: No...no, go, go.

ADAMS: So I called my brother cause my brother and my father both told me, they were like...Look, if you get a chance, you should go to see Pastor MacArthur. I said okay, so I called him after I saw the church and I go...Grace Community Church, is that the church...is that Pastor MacArthur's church? And my brother who I said is a gospel hip-hop performer...he goes, "Oh, yes...yes." And I go...well I said, "Well I think I'm going to go next Sunday." He said, "You didn't stop?" He goes....he said, "Man, if it was me, I would have pulled over on the side of the road, walked in and be like J.Mac, I'm in the building, baby...I'm in the building. Souls reporting for duty, baby, I'm in the building." So...

JOHN: J.Mac, I'm in the building. That's...I'll take it. I hope my tapes are bigger with the hip-hop people than theirs are with me...so. So anyway...we're glad you're here, John. Go ahead, ask your question.

ADAMS: I'm glad to be here, Pastor MacArthur. My question is as it pertains to tithing and giving. I would like you to shed some insight on tithing and giving as it pertains to those who live in the Old Testament and then as it pertains to New Testament and pertains to us today.

JOHN: Good question, John, let me give you a quick answer and I think we might have time for maybe two more. Sorry for those of you who have been in line, you guys can discuss your question, pick the one that is most urgent there, guys. Anyway, let me answer this question, okay. Here we go real quick, John. Tithe is a word that means tenth, ten percent. In the Old Testament, let's just start with the Mosaic Law, in the Old Testament there were three tithes every year...okay? Tenth which was basically the tithe that went to fund the Levites and the priests. In other words, the theocratic kingdom was basically...the officers of the government were priests and Levites. They...they ran the religious structure so they were paid and subsidized by the tithes of the people, it was ten percent...ten percent of everything they possessed, not just money but ten percent of whatever they had, crops and so forth...animals and things like that. There was a second ten percent. The second ten percent went to fund the national festivals, just another way to fund the theocracy. That's twenty percent. Every third year they paid a third ten percent which was a poor tax. So that broke down to 23 and a third percent a year. Then there was a temple tax, then they couldn't harvest the corners of the field and the poor could come in and pick up the corners of the field and if a bundle fell off the truck they couldn't pick that up, that was for the poor. So we estimate then that in the theocratic kingdom a Jew would probably give to the government twenty-five percent a year. That was basic taxation, okay? That was basic taxation. It was never just a single ten percent.

Now, that was what was required giving. And in Malachi 3 God says if you don't give Me that, you've robbed me. Since it's a theocratic kingdom, God is the King, you rob the government, you rob God.

Okay. So 25 percent. That's not what you hear today when people talk about tithing, but that was Old Testament taxation.

Now in addition to that, there's free-will giving. And I wrote a little book on this called *Giving God's Way.* Free will giving, you give whatever you want, whenever you want. You have statements like, "Bring the firstfruits of your crops to the Lord." It doesn't tell you how much, just whatever you want. So they had to give 25 percent to fund the theocratic kingdom and beyond that, they gave whatever they wanted as free-will giving. And the Old Testament says if you give the firstfruits, your bonds will be full. God will bless your free-will giving. Come into the New Testament, Jesus puts it this way, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, pay your taxes, and render to God what is God's." What is Caesar's is whatever Caesar says, what is God's is whatever is in your heart to give. And Jesus puts it this way, "Give and it shall be given unto you, pressed down, shaken together and running over." The New Testament says whatever you purpose in your heart, do that....do it on the first day of the week when you come together. Sow sparingly, reap sparingly. You know, the question about free-will giving is how much do you want a return on, how much do you want back from God? You give a little, you'd get a little invested with God, you get a little back. The principles never change, pay your taxes, render to Caesar what is Caesar's. Paul says the government's ordained of God, pay your taxes, tax to whom tax is due, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom is due, Romans chapter 13, and give God whatever you want. And that is biblical giving.

ADAMS: So the argument that tithing is an Old Testament law thing and Jesus' coming fulfilled the law and tithing is no longer applicable today has nothing to do with...

JOHN: Tithing was a way of funding the national government. Jesus carries it into the New Testament by saying Give Caesar what Caesar asks. Paul adds, pay your taxes. So the equivalent now to the Old Testament tithe system is taxation. Okay? Free-will giving has always been the same.

ADAMS: Thank you very much, Pastor MacArthur...J. Mac, baby.

JOHN: Thanks, John. All right.

QUESTION: Hi, Pastor. My question is how should we treat people that are preaching a half-true gospel and not how should...or should we come against them boldly like in Jude?

JOHN: Yeah, I think it depends. If you're talking about a false teacher who has an audience, you come...yeah, I think you address that boldly. The Bible only knows one way to deal with deception and lie and that's by confrontation. You don't strike a truce with that. If you're talking about the victims of that false teaching, you have to approach them differently. You have to snatch them like brans from the burning. You have to be careful lest you get your own garment spotted. But we are in

a rescue operation and we're in danger because we're trying to rescue people out of these evil systems. And when you get close enough to rescue people out of an evil system, you're going to wind up in a dialogue with them about that system and you have to be sure your faith is strong and your understanding of Scripture is strong so that you don't get confused by them. In other words, you don't want somebody who's been a Christian three weeks inviting two Jehovah's Witnesses in the house to tell them the truth because they're liable to come out of there so confused by these very wily people. But the point is, if you're dealing with a false teacher, confrontation, exposure, I mean even pronouncing judgment indirectly, you are a false teacher. And I've done that throughout my life even on occasion to a person who came here. You are a false teacher, you need to know you're a false teacher, you're under divine condemnation. You need to stop and you need to come to the knowledge of the truth. Those kinds of things. You don't have to start a fight, but I think being direct is certainly the right thing. But when you're talking about the people who are victims, then you have to understand that they are saying what they're saying because they've been deceived. It's one thing to be a deceiver, it's something else to be deceived. Now all deceivers are self-deceived to one degree or another, but once they become a propagator, then the exposure....I mean, look at the New Testament, Paul exposes them by name who are teaching falsely...who are ruining the faith of people...Hymenaeus, Alexander, others...okay?

QUESTION: Can I add one thing onto that?

JOHN: Right.

QUESTION: The Scripture where Paul says they're like preaching, he's in jail and they're preaching the gospel...oh well, I don't remember...

JOHN: Philippians 1?

QUESTION: Yeah, I don't remember, is that in reference to that same thing, like he doesn't care if they're preaching a gospel out of dissension?

JOHN: Right, they were preaching the gospel but they were preaching it in a way they were reflected they were jealous of Paul. And Paul's in jail, Philippians 1, Paul's in jail and what these other gospel preachers were saying was they were jealous of Paul, okay jealousy is a reality even among preachers, they were jealous of Paul and so they were wanting to get the limelight and Paul was everybody's spiritual hero obviously. So they were moving into the limelight and they were saying things like...well he's in jail because God put him there, he's done, he's got some sin in his life, he's been unfaithful to the Lord, maybe we don't know why but God's put him on the shelf, his day is over, we're the new guys.

So they were using Paul's imprisonment as a way to elevate themselves and Paul said, "Look, some preach Christ out of envy and strife, contention. But Christ is preached and in that I will rejoice." I mean, that is a magnanimous attitude of a very mature selfless believer when you don't care if you're being maligned if the gospel is being preached. It doesn't make it right, but Paul is saying I rejoice that Christ is preached. They were preaching the true Christ and the true gospel. But they were doing it in a way sadly that was malicious and demeaning to Paul, belittling to him in the process. He could handle that, he could handle any personal abuse as long as Christ was exalted. Okay?

DAVE: Hello, Pastor MacArthur, my name is Dave.

JOHN: Hi, Dave.

DAVE: My question is in regards to Satan's role in light of a universe that's ruled by a sovereign God and in particular the actions that are attributed to him, such as sowing...being responsible for sowing tares among the wheat in Matthew 13, having the power over death in Hebrews 2, blinding minds in 2 Corinthians 4. How do I reconcile those types of actions in light of God ruling all those things?

JOHN: Well it's pretty simple. Satan is the servant of God. He is the Lord's devil. He's God's devil and he does only what he does within the boundaries that God sets and God has given him those boundaries. And within the framework of what God allows Satan to do is to rule this world to some degree. God overrules him at all times. To have the power of death which he can only wield within the allowances that God will give him. So he is the devil, God's servant, doing only that which God permits him to do within the boundaries of God's sovereign allotment to him for the purpose of achieving God's own ends. Okay?

That's it. Wow. Well we didn't get too many questions answered, but I hope they were helpful and sorry about those of you who had questions and didn't have them answered. But it's a wonderful thing to just kind of like be together in this format and for me to just hear your heart and the things your asking, so encouraging to me because these are questions that I know that are on the hearts of many. No question that was asked tonight was isolated to the person who asked it. That was what...and usually is so refreshing about this kind of opportunity, so thank you so much for participating and this is the joy of having the Word of God in your hands...you can get the answers. And I would just say, I think...isn't it on next Sunday that we're going to have the new Study Bible in the NAS? They're available in hardback and a lot of questions you asked I've got somewhere in these twenty some thousand footnotes. And I'm not saying that because I want to sell Bibles, I just want to help you. And next Sunday night, is it...or morning and night, we're going to have a special opportunity for you to get the new NAS which is the Bible I've always preached from, Study Bible, and I think they'll be out on the patio, or something, we'll have a lot of them in leather as well as the hardbacks already available. I know many of you want a leather one. And if you haven't used one, you'll find it's going to be very helpful because my whole objective is as I read through the Bible and

study and preach, I'm always trying to answer every question that I think will come up. In fact, I probably overdo that but I try to be very observant. What are the questions that arise out of this? What are the issues that arise out of this? That's what prolongs the study. It's answering the questions because...the thing I don't want is to preach a message and answer a few questions and have you go and say...Well what about this, but what about this, but what about this?

I'd rather have you leave and say, Well there's nothing else to say about that. In a sense, I want to cover the ground. I keep asking...well what about this, well if I say this what does it mean to this? And how does it raise this question? And so I tried through the years to do all of that and most of that, at least in a brief and concise you find in the Study Bible.

Well, join me in a word of prayer.

Father, thanks for a great evening, precious friends. What a joy to have the congregation that You've given us here at Grace Church, how we appreciate their love and their affirmation and their encouragement and their faithfulness, their generosity, their service, their joy, their fellowship. What a blessing. We thank You for the single people, so many that You've brought to our church and the richness that they add to our congregation, also the families, the young people with children. Thank You for the testimonies tonight. Thank You for what You're doing through this great congregation as they scatter into the areas of their influence to live to your glory and your honor. And may you be honored in all that we've done today, our own hearts have been refreshed. And may we go forth to serve You with joy, in Christ's name...and everyone said....Amen!

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