

## Bible Questions and Answers, Part 7

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1301-E

Now I would suggest that if you don't have a good Bible commentary in your home that you get a copy of something like *Wycliffe's One Volume Bible Commentary* so that you have a resource book that you can go to and look up any given verse in the Bible and find an explanation for it. Very important. Now you ought to have such a tool in your own home so that you can look up verses, and they are really the key to answering theological questions. You'll notice that whenever a question is asked, I'll always go to various passages to answer it, and so that's where you get your answers, and you can do a lot of it on your own.

There are many questions that you have asked that have been asked before, and I'm not supposed to give a commercial but I would remind you that we have a tape album entitled *Questions and Answers*, and there are many of them covered in that album. And if you'd like to have that, why you can get that at the tape table. But, here we go for tonight. I'll try to divide the questions between those that are theological and those that are asking for the interpretation of some verse, and hopefully we'll be able to answer the question that you're asking or at least one that you're interested in.

First question: John chapter 3, verse 5 is a common question. "Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'" Now what does it mean here when it talks about water, being born of the water and the spirit? Well some folks suggest that it's referenced to baptism, that in order to be saved you must not only be born of the Spirit but you must enter into water baptism. However, that's one thing that this verse does not mean; it's not a reference to water baptism. If you just look over in John 4, verse 2, you might be interesting in noting that it says, "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." Salvation is accomplished other than by baptism. Jesus was involved in leading many people to salvation. I would be convinced that the woman at the well was truly saved, and Jesus did not baptize her; at least there's no record of that. Jesus led the thief on the cross to himself and said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," and he never entered into baptism. There is no reason to believe that there is water here in John 3:5. And another thought is that Nicodemus, to whom Jesus was speaking, wouldn't have the remotest concept of Christian baptism, because Christian baptism never even occurred until the day of Pentecost. And that was after Jesus had died, and that's a long time in the future, and been risen from the dead. So that Christian baptism is something way in the future. Nicodemus who was a teacher of Israel, a ruler of the Jews, would have had absolutely no concept. And when he said to Nicodemus, "You must be born of the water and the Spirit," Nicodemus without any further clarification wouldn't have thought, "Oh, I've got to be baptized like the Christians are." There weren't any Christians yet; they weren't called Christians 'til Antioch, and baptism wasn't even instituted as the rite for the identification for the Christian at the point of salvation 'til after Jesus had died.

Well other people say, "The water doesn't mean baptism, but the water means physical birth." What Jesus is saying to him is, "You must be born physically," and we use the term the water breaks and the baby is encased in water and that what he's saying here is you must be born of water and Spirit

in order to enter into the kingdom of God. But that's a ridiculous statement to make to an old man like Nicodemus, to tell him he must be born. He knows that. If he wasn't born, he wouldn't be trying to get into the kingdom of God anyway. And besides, I hate to destroy some folks thought about this, but the Greeks didn't call it water anyway. It isn't really water; we just call it that in English, but let's not assign our medical colloquialisms to the Greeks. They didn't determine that. And Nicodemus wasn't certainly thinking about that. You say, "Well what water is it?" Well it's clearly the water the Nicodemus would understand, and for that you go back to Ezekiel chapter 36. If Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel and an authority on the Old Testament, he would have only thought of one passage, one familiar, famous, well-known passage, and that would have been the key to interpreting what Jesus said, and that's why Jesus never went any further with his statement then to say water and Spirit and leave it there, because Nicodemus would have understood.

In Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 24, we have the promise of God to the nation of Israel to be fulfilled when the Messiah comes. "I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, bring you into your own land." Now watch. "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols while I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you." Now notice, he says, "I will wash you with water and cleanse you of sin and place my Spirit in you." That's the water Nicodemus would've understood; it is the water of cleansing that occurs at salvation. If you want to put it in Paul's term, it is the washing of the water by the Word that occurs when you're saved. It isn't baptism. It isn't physical birth. It is simply the concept of cleansing that occurs at the point of regeneration in salvation. You must have that promised cleansing and the implanting of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God; that's what he's saying.

So don't confuse baptism or the water that we associate with physical birth with the concept that Nicodemus would've understood. And that's a good point to remember. Whenever you are studying a Bible passage, remember that what is said will have its primary interpretation located at the point in time in which it was said to the people to whom it was said. And it's important that you reconstruct that situation so that you'll understand. Nicodemus clearly understood. "Oh, what you're saying is there must be a purification of the inside and there must be the planting of God's Spirit within my heart to make me fit for his kingdom." That's exactly right. Okay, another question? We're going to take some short ones. Last time we did this we got into long ones, so we'll try to take short ones.

Were the seven days of creation literal 24-hour days? Now this is a common question because we are involved in struggling along the way here with the world trying to tell us that we came from monkeys and so forth. And always they tell us that the world has to be so many millions of billions of years old and the geological age, I don't know if you've ever seen a geological age chart, but this is the way it kind of goes. About 20 billion years ago was the origin of the elements, the stars, and the galaxies. Now that's conjecture because nobody was around obviously to observe that. About five billion years ago, the earth and the solar system. About three billion years ago, the evolution of replicating chemicals or life. About one billion years ago the evolution of multicellular life. About 600 million years ago the evolution of complex marine invertebrates. About 350 million years ago the evolution of marine vertebrates and land plants. About 250 million years ago the evolution of amphibians and insects. About 200 million years ago the evolution of reptiles and flowering plants. 100 million years ago the evolution of mammals and birds. 50 million years ago the branching of evolutionary ancestors of apes and men. And three million years ago the evolution of modern man. Now that is a very, very late dating, but that's kind of the way it is, sometime 20 billion years ago

something happened and poof, the whole thing started.

Now that is totally absolutely out of whack with the Scripture. It really couldn't be much clearer than it is. If you look with me at Genesis chapter 1, you will find that the earth was created in seven days. Are they 24-hour days? Let's find out. The first day is indicated in verse 3: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light, and God saw the light that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light day and the darkness he called night, and the evening and the morning were the first day." Now whatever that first day was it had an evening and a morning. It seems to me that the only thing with one evening and one morning is a 24-hour day, and God makes that clear all the way down the line. In verse 8: "And the evening and the morning were the second day." In verse 13: "And the evening and the morning were the third day." In verse 19: "And the evening and the morning were the fourth day." In verse 23: "And the evening and the morning were the fifth day."

Now God is talking here about evening and morning, and evening and morning makes a 24-hour day. There is no reason to feel that we have to try to harmonize this evolutionary monstrosity with the Scripture. The Bible claims the earth was created in seven days, actually in six days, and the seventh day God rested. That's all we really need to know. But I just would draw your attention to Exodus 20:11, which is God's own commentary on the creation, and this is what he says. Verse 9: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all they work." Does that mean six literal days, or does that mean six years or six decades or six million billion trillion geological ages? Oh no, it means six days. You work for six days, you get a day off. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. Don't do any work, or your son or your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your cattle, your stranger and so forth. Why? For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. You see the parallel there demands a six-day creation to equate it with a six-day working and one-day-off Sabbath. It's clear.

The Hebrew word *yamim* for days always in the plural form means a literal day, never an indefinite period, always a literal day. But the reason that evolutionists need 20 billion years is that they can't figure out how come things got the way they are, because they don't want to believe in God. And they can't say God created man. They don't want to give God that right, so they have to get man to evolve, and that takes a long time. Incidentally, the ordinals, the ordinals you know are first, second, third. The ordinals, the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth day, are used in connection with a given day. The word day is used at least 1,480 times in the Old Testament, and always with an ordinal the meaning is a 24-hour day, never anything else. So do we believe the world was created in 24-hour days, six of them. And you know I'd rather believe the Bible than try to figure out some other ridiculous thing to explain it. It's simple to me, and I believe that man's probably somewhere around 10,000 years old. Isn't that something? So is the earth, 'cause man was only made six days later.

Now I want to answer another question that is interesting. It comes out of Isaiah chapter 11 verse 2. Isaiah 11 verse 2. Somebody asked what are the sevenfold spirits of God? If you'll look at Isaiah 11:2, you'll find that. Now you have to go to Revelation of course for the initial indication relative to the sevenfold spirit, but then when you – and that's probably where the confusion comes from; it talks about the sevenfold Holy Spirit, the sevenfold Spirit in the book of Revelation. As you go into Isaiah 11, you find it clearly defined there. "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him." And here are seven different ways to describe the Holy Spirit, that's all. The Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of all or

the Spirit of reverence, or the Spirit of worship. The sevenfold Spirit doesn't mean there are seven different spirits. And when in Revelation 1:4, it says, "The seven spirits," it doesn't mean there are seven different holy spirits. It means there is one Holy Spirit with a sevenfold manifested ministry, and that's what it's saying. And you don't need to believe that there are seven different holy spirits. There's one but there is a sevenfold manifestation of his ministry according to all of these things: Wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and reverence or worship.

Now a question that has come up frequently I suppose recently in my own ministry as people have asked me, especially relative to the recent emphasis in our own area on the evangelism ministry of Campus Crusade I founded and some of the other things we've been involved in watching. Discuss what should be our responsibility relative to evangelism. In fact, this question is a little bit longer. It says, "What is the priority of evangelism in the Christian life? How does it fit in with the priority of fellowship, Bible study, and prayer? It can be very confusing if a person tries to run around doing everything, and they often are sort of intimidated into evangelizing, jumping into the world to preach the gospel, and not meditating on the Word in preparation?" Well that's a difficult question to answer because it's so unique to everybody's life, and I'll give you a rather-general answer.

I kind of look at evangelism, and I always have looked at this way and my study of Scripture has never done anything but confirm it, but true evangelism is the overflow of a lifestyle. The purest, truest most beneficial, dramatically-effective evangelism there is is not the superficial run-around-zap-everybody-on-a-shallow-basis evangelism. Now there are some conservation and some harvesting to be done at that kind of evangelism, because some people are ready and all you have to do is just give them the Word and they're plucked. But on the other hand, the New Testament style of evangelism was a corporate group of believers living in a community with such Godly lives that the attraction was their lifestyle, their living pattern, their joy, their happiness, their peace, all the fruit of the Spirit that drew the surrounding people to find out what it was that they had. For example, in the Book of Acts, when a church is born, you have a pattern set. The church met together. As far as we know it, this is what they met for: Prayer, fellowship, the Apostles' Doctrine, and the breaking of bread. It doesn't say they had a Tuesday night evangelism class, or it doesn't say they went out on the street and had street meetings. But what it does say is that they loved each other. They had all things in common. They prayed together. They fellowshiped. They studied the Apostles' Doctrine. They went into the temple daily, and out of the overflow of their life came the gospel and the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved.

And I think sometimes we can be forcing ourselves to run around and talk a gospel that we haven't really yet known what it is to live, and that's the real guts of evangelism. I think God wants me to live the life in my community around the people who are right around my world to win them to Christ. Not that he doesn't want me to go out door to door or to go out and reach people or to talk to the guy I meet on the airplane or whatever. He does, but that's just the edge of evangelism. The priority is to be right with God. And I've said this again and again, you take care of the depth of your ministry. You take care of the depth of your life before God, and he will multiply the breadth of it. You be a holy vessel, and you'll be amazed at what God will do with you. But you run around trying to do everything and don't take care of the righteousness aspect of it, and I'm not sure you're much use to God at all. He'll be working in spite of you.

Okay, a little less theological question. What about dating, is it normal or abnormal? For some guys at Grace, it's definitely abnormal. You know we have this running problem of guys at Grace that won't date, and many lovely young ladies very frustrated. I see some red ears you know. Obviously,

we're not at Martha's Lonely Hearts' Club, and people don't come here just to find a mate, although in the process they do, and in case you wonder whether anybody does date around here, it seems to be that they do because we marry somewhere between two and four couples a week. So somebody is dating, and something is – I don't think they're blind weddings frankly. I think there has been some planning. And so you know it's not as if it isn't working out, but I know there is a certain frustration that we've talked about in regard to this, so let me give a simple answer if I can.

I think that there is one reason why perhaps our young people in the college department and career and maybe high school too, I don't know, but perhaps the one reason why they are not as involved in that is the fact that we have a high ideal of marriage, number one. And I think that we've tried to teach that; we've tried to convey that. And we have disciplined people who have had their marriage break up and where we felt there was sin, publicly. And I think and I hope and I pray that our young people have a very high ideal of marriage and they see a tremendously-important reality in the commitment of one person to a person of the opposite sex. And I think maybe the fruit of all of this has been that they see that thing as such a high and lofty thing that it's very difficult to treat it as a social occasion. That's one reason I think.

Secondly, I think we also reject the world's flippant self-styled approach to easy-come-easy-go relationships between the sexes. And I think that we're more oriented toward ministry and more oriented toward the spiritual dimension than we are toward the socializing aspect of it. I spoke at a church in this area one time. I spoke to their singles, college and career and all, and they weren't even interested in what I was saying. And that's hard on me, because you know I mean I'm used to speaking where people are interested, and I went in there they were bored to death. They were all sitting there you know and just looking at their watches because there was a party going on afterwards, and they just wanted to get to the party, see. That's why they were there. It wasn't a church that was concerned with Bible study. The week before me the speaker was Steve Allan, so I realized that I was out of my element. And I said, "Open your Bibles," and there wasn't a sound you know. There wasn't a Bible in the place you know, so there I was doing my little exposition all alone. So I don't think that we are in the situation of seeing ourselves as a social entity but rather as a group of people in ministry. And I would say also that perhaps because we've carried this thing a little too far, we tend when finally somebody does date, we tend to say, "Ah-hah, there's something going on," see you know. He likes her and we've got them married before they've even you know finished their miniature golf you know, so. I mean two lines of bowling doesn't constitute engagement.

So I think there are some reasons, but I would just add that I think that dating is acceptable in our society. It's not biblical. In the Bible generation, of course the father and the mother arranged everything, and of course that's the way it ought to be. But we're trying to work with it. I think that dating can be beneficial because it develops an understanding and a sensitivity to the opposite sex and helps you to develop a sense of social etiquette, a sense of communication with those of the other sex. God has always designed that a man and a woman would complement each other in terms of filling out needs and so forth. And I think a young man can be a great assistance to a young lady in many ways of complementing her life and broadening his own experience. I think it's good to teach yourself how to give and how to build up somebody else and how to minister to somebody else. Certainly, to be with a person of the opposite sex is to prepare yourself in some sex for the giving that is marriage; to learn how to do that is very important.

So I think it's good. I think there ought to be a stimulation in that area to minister to each other, to learn how to gracefully deal with a person of the opposite sex, to learn how to be sensitive and

gentle, and to learn how to be responsive and to learn how to give a little to somebody else. It's easy if all you ever do is spend your time with your own friends to develop a very isolated lifestyle that may wind up making you a difficult person to be married to in the long run. And after all, if you're going to be married, you're going to spend your life to giving yourself to someone of the opposite sex; a little practice wouldn't hurt. I would also caution that it would be wise if you would make sure you choose your dating very carefully, very carefully. Make sure you find the biblical pattern and follow it. The Bible says a lot about who you pick. When you're picking your partner, there are several things you ought to remember. Number one, pick a person on the basis of their reputation. Proverbs 22:1 says: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." Associate with someone with a very good reputation. Secondly, someone whose appearance is what it ought to be. Looks reveal character. The Bible talks about a proud look. The Bible talks about a wanton look. Isaiah 3:9 says: "The show of their appearance does witness against them." So reputation and appearance.

Speech. Out of the abundance of the heart, what? The mouth speaks. Clothes. First Timothy talks about modesty; clothes will reveal a vain heart. Companions. One really great way to tell somebody's character is to find out who they run around with, who are their friends. And all of these things ought to come into your choice as you choose someone to be with and to socialize with and to minister with. I would also encourage you to date in a group setting and to avoid a situation where you might be tempted to compromise your purity and your Christian testimony. So I'm for dating; I mean that's what I did. And I dated my wife, and look how it all turned out you know. Fantastic. I thank God for that process, because in our life it worked right into the will of God, and it can still work that way, as it has in many, many of yours.

Well, another question. One right out of Isaiah. As long as you're there, look at 48:16, Isaiah 48:16. This is a very important verse, and the question is this: Does Isaiah 48:16 relate to the Trinity? Does Isaiah 48:16 relate to the Trinity? And that is a very good question and a very excellent observation, because indeed it does. Isaiah 48:16 says: "Come near unto me, hear this. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, there am I and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." Now the first thing we want to do is find out who it is speaking, and that's important. So to find out who is speaking, we go back to verse 12: "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called, I am he. I am the first. I also am the last." Who is the Alpha and the Omega of Revelation? Who is it? It's Jesus Christ. So we know who the speaker is; it's Jesus Christ, the Creator. Verse 13: "Mine hand also has laid the foundation of the earth. My right hand has spread out the heavens. When I call unto them, they stand up together." So we know it is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking. Now we come to verse 16: "Come near to me and hear this, says the Lord. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, there am I." And he's again speaking of his eternity. And now he says, "The Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me." There you have the whole Trinity: The Lord God, Yahweh, and the Holy Spirit.

Yes, this verse definitely does teach the Trinity, as do many, many other verses. And I think it's very important for us today to be aware of the fact that we need to uphold the doctrine of the Trinity. I am amazed at how much the unity movement has moved into Christianity. It's really shocking. For example, the largest Pentecostal organization in the world is called The United Pentecostal Church, and they deny the Trinity; they do not believe in the Trinity, the United Pentecostal Church. We'll be saying more about that in our coming series, because that's one of the theological issues that we must face in that movement. Now, beloved, to deny the existence of the Trinity is a very serious cardinal error in theology. You are either denying the existence of God the Father, denying the unique existence of the Son, or you're denying the unique existence of the Holy Spirit. And to deny

any of those, in my mind, is the ultimate in heresy, so it's a serious matter. You ought to be very well apprised.

Other passages you might note are Matthew 3 where you have Jesus being baptized, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the Father's voice saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." All of them there, all of them present at the same time at the same scene. There are people who want to say, "Well, we don't believe in the Trinity. Once he was the Father. Then he became the Son, and now he is the Spirit." Well how do you explain all three of them at the baptism at the same time? In Romans 8:9, they're all there. In 1 Corinthians 12, they're all there. In 2 Corinthians 13, they're all there. Ephesians 4 they're all there. So we believe in the Trinity. That's a very important doctrine.

Okay, another question. Should a person be excommunicated from the church for not paying his tithes? It's too bad that someone would ask that question because it reflects such a tragic passing on of information that someone would even think that. Let me answer that as briefly as I can, because it's not an easy question to answer in terms of all the ramifications. Should a person be excommunicated from a church for not paying his tithes? No, in the sense that you mean it. Yes, in another sense. And here's what I mean. In the first place, tithing is not the issue in the church, right? We've been through that again and again. We went through that whole study. Listen, if you haven't listened to the tapes on biblical giving, get them and listen to them. Don't be confused about that. More people get under the burden of guilt because they don't know what they're doing relative to giving, and it is unnecessary. The Bible has stated very clearly what God's pattern is. There are two kinds of giving throughout all of God's history, from before Moses, through Moses, the New Testament, the Church Age right to today.

Two kinds of giving: Required giving and freewill giving. Required giving was always taxation. The Jewish tithe in the Old Testament ten percent to the Levites, ten percent for the ceremonies, ten percent every third year for the welfare system. They paid 23 percent every year to the theocracy, the national government of Israel. And in addition to that, they had to give the corners of the field. They had to pay the third of a shekel temple tax. These things were in addition to that. You could say that an average Jew would pay somewhere between 20 and 25 percent annually in his income, but that went to the government. And in Malachi it says: "Bring your tithes into the treasury," is the Hebrew word. And he's saying pay your taxes. Giving in the Old Testament was always freewill. It was always whatever you want to give. It was always the freedom that you had to give in whatever way you felt God had laid it upon your heart.

That's why in 3:9 of Proverbs it says: "Honor the Lord with your substance, with the firstfruits of your increase, and your barns will be full." In other words, whatever your heart purposes, whatever it desires. And we remember how we saw that when the temple was being built, God said, "Let everybody bring their offerings and let him do it willingly out of his heart, whatever he wants. You tell them to give whatever he wants, willingly." And they came and they gave and they gave and they gave, and finally they made an announcement, "Please do not give any more; we have too much." And you have the same thing in the New Testament. In the New Testament, required giving is pay your taxes, isn't it? Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's. Romans chapter 13, the government is there and if it exacts custom in tribute, pay it; Jesus did, the apostles did. And giving in the New Testament is not tithing. It's "As a man purposes in his heart, so let him give not grudgingly, not of necessity," but what? God loves a cheerful giver. And he says you can sow sparingly and reap sparingly and sow bountifully and reap bountifully.

So the two kinds of giving, all required giving was towards taxation, and all freewill giving was giving to God. So in that sense, we're not tithing in the church. We can't say, "If you don't pay the church so much, you're going to be excommunicated," because there isn't a so much that you're supposed to give; that's between you and God. As every man purposes in his heart, so let him what? Give. 2 Corinthians: "As every man purposes in his heart, so let him give." That's the only standard.

Now, on the other hand, if you take the question in its technical meaning: Should a person be excommunicated from a church for not paying his tithes? If you use it in the sense of taxes, if there's somebody in the church who is not paying his taxes, he is defrauding his government. He is actually committing an offense against the government as well as violating Romans chapter 13. Then I think the church could take course to deal with him as a sinning member. Do you see what I mean? It would be no different than any other criminal act. If he was hiding it and we knew about it and he was cheating on his taxes and we found out about it, then we would be responsible to go through the Matthew 18 process to go to him and exhort him. If he didn't hear, to take two to three, and if he didn't hear, to tell it to the church, and if he didn't change and pay the taxes that the government requires and the Godly pattern of life that God asks of him, then we would have the right to discipline.

But in the sense that the question is meant, you can't be excommunicated for not paying your tithes, because what you give to the Lord is just between you and him and nobody else, and nobody here knows whether you do or not, because there isn't any amount. And that's the way it ought to be. That's the way God designed it, you give freely from your heart whatever you wish. And as I said, be sure you get that straightened out. Get those tapes if you've gotten it, and get an understanding of that.

Here's a very provocative question. I have a friend who worships Christ and accepts him as the Son of God, but the minister of the church he attends has never taught him about the deity of Christ, and he does not believe Christ is God. Is my friend a Christian? Well, what's the answer? No. What Christ does he worship? What Christ does he love? What Christ is he calling the Son of God? If it is not God in human flesh, then it is some other Christ, right? And then you're right into Galatians chapter 1, and what happens there? "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ into another gospel." What you've got is another gospel; you've got another Christ. Listen, you could say to a Mormon, "Do you worship Christ?" Yes. "Do you love Christ?" Yes. "Do you believe Christ is the Son of God?" Yes. You could say to a Jehovah's Witness, "Do you worship Christ?" Yes. "Do you love Christ?" Yes. "Do you believe Christ is the Son of God?" Yes. And you could say to both of them, "But you're not saved because you don't see Christ as the living God in human flesh." It isn't just to believe in Christ; it is to believe in the Christ that is God in human flesh. That's the basic bottom-line reality of the Christian faith.

That's why you just can't go around saying, "Would you like to receive Christ? Do you believe in Christ?" Because you're going to get all kinds of yeses from people who don't know who Christ is. Remember that in your evangelism, would you? Remember that in your evangelism, you must tell people who he is. The proclamation of Christ – Acts 20. When Paul spoke about Christ, he says, "And I testified." And he uses the word *diamarturō*, I gave a thorough testimony about who Christ is. You don't want somebody coming and accepting a Christ that is undefined, do you? No. Be sure that the person worships the Christ who is the Christ.

Listen, there have been many Christs. There are many Christs, and there are going to be many



Christs. Read Matthew chapter 24 where Jesus says, "In the latter times, many Christs, false Christs, false prophets, false Messiahs are going to come along." You better be sure that the one you worship is the true Christ of God, God in human flesh. It's sad to think about, but this is the category of people who in Matthew 7 say, "Lord, Lord, have we not done all of this?" And he says, "In your name." And he says, "Depart from me," what? "I never knew you." "Some other Christ you've been serving, not me."

Okay, another verse. What does Proverbs 24:3-4 mean? Well it's really not difficult to see what it means. Throughout this section of Proverbs, you have the writer extoling the virtues of divine wisdom as over against human wisdom. Human wisdom is a disaster; it leads you nowhere. Divine wisdom is a blessing that brings prosperity, and here he relates it to the home. Proverbs 24:3: "Through wisdom is an hour builded." And he's not talking about the wisdom of a carpenter and a mason; he's talking about the wisdom of those in the house who are building the household. "And by understanding it is established, and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." The word wisdom and the word knowledge and the word understanding all refer to the same thing; they all refer to the Revelation of God.

If you study Psalm 119, you will find that the term wisdom, understanding, knowledge, statutes, law, all of those different terms are references to the very same thing, which is the Revelation of God. And he's simply saying it is through obedience to God's truth that a home is rightly established, and it is through obedience to God's knowledge that its rooms will be filled with the true riches, really precious pleasant riches. Not just fancy furniture and fancy décor, but the true riches. You really want to build a household? Much more important than building a house. You really want to make a home? Then fill it with the truth of God; that's what he's saying. It's a serious word. In chapter 23, verse 4 is a contrast there: "Labor not to be rich, and cease from your own wisdom." Don't work for the world's riches based on your own ideas; work for the true pleasant, precious riches that are based on God's Revelation and God's truth. Very important difference, and that's the meaning that he's after.

One other Scripture that I want to share we you. Matthew chapter 5, verse 39. In Matthew 5:39, the question arises, "Are the commandments given here applicable in this age or only for the kingdom age?" Now there is a kind of, I don't want to get into this long theological discussion, but there is a school of thought that says that the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7 has no relationship to today; it has only relationship to the future kingdom on earth when Christ returns. Now I believe it does have relationship to that. I believe that it does relate to the kingdom of the future, no question about it, and we'll get into that when we study Matthew after 1 Corinthians. But I don't feel that we can say that these principles have no meaning for today, because it's very clear that they do. Let me show you why I say that. It's clear from just looking at the principles that they are applicable today. Let's read from 39 to 42, well 38: "You have heard that it has been said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you that you resist not evil. Whosoever shall smite these on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him too. Give to him that asks thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."

Now that's pretty specific stuff. Some want to make the Sermon on the Mount kingdom stuff because they want to get rid of that kind of stuff. They don't want to have to face the fact that if a guy hits you on the right side, you give him the other side to hit. They don't like the idea that if somebody takes you to court to sue you for your coat, you offer him your other cloak. And the fact that if somebody asks you to do a big favor you do twice as much. They don't really want to grapple with that, and so

it's easier to kind of postpone it into the next kingdom. But it really doesn't do that; it's really not fair to do that. This was a law – and I want you to see this – this was a law designed for the civil courts to discourage private revenge. You can go back in Exodus, and by that I mean the Law in Exodus, an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, a life for a life and so forth. That was a law not given to individuals. It didn't say, "If your neighbor knocks your tooth out, go knock his tooth out." Or if your neighbor kills your sheep, go kill his sheep. It was the very opposite. It was a law given to force things into a civil court to eliminate private revenge. Those were civil court orders, the very opposite of personal revenge.

He's saying in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24, Deuteronomy 19 where those statements are made, he is saying, "Do not avenge, let the civil courts rule." And the rules for the court are an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. In other words, if a man has been wronged, then the person who wronged him needs to pay. If he has killed his sheep, then he should give him a sheep to make up for it. And it's not a literal thing where you lose an eye, you poke out the eye of the adversary; it's not that at all. It's simply saying that there should be courts that make just restitution for a person wronged. But, the Pharisees had appeal to this law and twisted it right out of its context and were using it for personal revenge, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life. They were going right out and just working their own havoc. And Jesus is here condemning the Pharisees for that. He is saying, "You heard it said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' and man you twisted it and you ran with it. And you're going around seeking personal revenge. I say to you those things may belong in a civil court." That's the Old Testament pattern. "But I say to you the only proper personal attitude for you to have it that if you're hit on one side, you don't seek revenge; you give him the other. And if he makes you go one mile, you go two. And if he wants your coat, give him your cloak." And again, Jesus is dealing with the attitude of the Pharisees, and he's saying instead of having a revenging attitude, your attitude ought to be an attitude of absolute sacrifice and love. We have no right to hate the person who tries to deprive us. We only have the responsibility to love him.

Paul put it this way in Romans 12, didn't he? "Render not evil for evil but good for evil." Pay back evil with good. It's just 1 Corinthians 15, so to say that it doesn't apply today is foolish. What he's saying to us is when somebody wrongs you, don't take revenge; give them even more. Have such a spirit of love and magnanimity that revenge is the furthest thing from your mind. You can only think like 1 Corinthians 13, if you needed one coat maybe you need two; take this. Help the thief pack his bag as he leaves your house. See if there's anything he might need that he didn't get, rather than seek revenge. You see it's an attitude, isn't it, that Jesus is dealing with. It's a spirit. It's an attitude of heart.

Please explain James 2:20. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." What does this mean, "Faith without works is dead." Does this mean that to be saved we have to do works? Well let's find out. Back up, verse 14; we got to get the context. "What doth it profit, my brethren, thou a man say he have faith and have not works, can faith save him?" Now what are you saying, James? That's why Martin Luther said that the Book of James was a right strawy epistle. He didn't like it because it kind of fouled up his doctrine of justification by faith. But that's only because he didn't study it in deep detail to see what was really being said. What does the Bible teach about salvation? Abraham was justified by works, Romans 4, is that what it says? Abraham was justified by what? Faith. Abraham was not justified by works. Romans chapter 3 says, "No man is justified by works. By the deeds of the law shall," – what – "no flesh be justified." None. There's no way that we can be justified – and Romans 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." Salvation is by faith, not by works.

In Galatians chapter 3 tells us the same thing, that you cannot be justified by works. You cannot be saved by what you do in terms of deeds. He says, "They that are of faith," Galatians 3:9, "are blessed with faithful Abraham." It's all a matter of faith. The man that is justified, he says in verse 10, "But no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. The just shall live by faith." Now the Bible teaches you're saved by faith. You say, "Well then what in the world is James saying?" Can faith save him? James is looking at it from the standpoint of evaluation. He is looking at a man who says, "I have faith." And he's saying, "All right, if you have true saving faith, then I ought to see some evidence of it," right? By their fruits you shall, what? Know them. He's simply saying, "If your faith is genuine, then it's going to manifest itself." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things become," what? New. There's going to be a manifestation.

And so he says, "What kind of faith have you got, my friend? I don't see any evidence." For example, he says: "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food and one of you who claim to have saving faith says, 'Depart in peace, be warm and filled,'" Just what he needs, condolence. "Hope you feel better, hope you find some food." But you don't give him the things needful to the body, what kind of faith is that? If you're really saved, it's going to be a working kind of salvation that will bear fruit, that's all he's saying. So in 17: "And so faith if it doesn't have works is dead because it's alone, so it's a dead faith, not a living faith." If a man may say, "Thou hast faith and I have works, show me your faith without your works, and I'll show you my faith by my works." And he contracts two kind of faith. One kind of faith is the faith that doesn't have any works and it's dead faith. The other faith is the faith that produces something, and it's living faith. One saves and one doesn't. That's what he's saying. Oh, but he says, "I believe, I believe." Yeah, he says, "The devils believe and they tremble." Not enough to believe unless that believing results in an active commitment to Christ that results in a changed life that bears fruit. That's his whole point.

Will God bless a believer who willfully marries an unbeliever? Now that's a very, very important question. And the answer basically is twofold, or really it's two opposites: Yes and no. God will bless a believer, because God grants to a believer forgiveness of sin and continual forgiveness. He grants to a believer, heaven. He grants to a believer the presence of the Holy Spirit, and "We are blessed with all blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." So there is a sense in which just being a believer has brought us into contact with the very great blessing of God. But I want you to look with me at a book we studied recently, Jude verse 21, and here we go into what I was saying a minute ago that you can't answer any theological question without interpreting a verse.

But in Jude verse 21 where Jude is speaking very directly to Christians, he tells them how to experience blessing. Back into verse 20: "But you, beloved, building up yourselves on your most-holy faith, praying in the Spirit." Now watch: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Now that little phrase is the little phrase that I want to pull out. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." You'll remember when we studied Jude 21 that we noted that what Jude is saying there is that God's love showers down blessing. And it's up to us to keep ourselves in the place of blessing. It's as if God draws a great big circle on his world and says, "You get in that circle and that's where the blessings come. That's where it rains blessing." You step out of that circle, God hasn't changed his blessings; you've stepped out of the place of receiving them. Or one other illustration we used is the Christian has a bucket. If you hold your bucket upside right, you receive blessings. If you turn it upside down, all the blessings bounce off. God hasn't changed. It all depends on what you're doing with your spiritual bucket.

And so, in any given situation in a Christian's life, you can ask the question will the Christian receive blessing? In a very general sense, yes. But in the sense of specifics, the only time a Christian receives specific blessing from God is when that Christian is within the circle of blessing, and may I define the circle of blessing. The circle of blessing is surrounded with a line that is one great big O, and it stands for obedience. And as soon as a Christian steps outside the obedience circle, he forfeits blessing. God never blesses sin, and God never continues to bless in terms of day-to-day outpouring of special blessing a Christian who willfully acts in sin. Now the question is phrased in such a way that the person who asked it when they said, "Will God bless a believer who willfully marries an unbeliever." The person is aware of the fact that God has forbidden this, and that's correct.

To show you a couple illustrations of that, notice 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 39, and you will see a phrase at the end of it. It says, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives." In this particular chapter, Paul is discussing why it's better to be single if you have the gift of singleness. God's given you the gift of singleness, you might as well enjoy it. I wrote an article on being single; it's in this month's *Moody Monthly*, so this is the last point in my article. But it says the one good reason to stay single is that once you get married it's for life. The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; this is God's pattern. "But if the husband is dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will." And then comes this qualifier that God wants made very clear about marriage, "Only in the Lord." Marriage is to be only in the Lord.

And if you were to go to 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship with righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, and what concord has Christ with Satan." That's what that word's referring to. "What part has he that believes with one who doesn't believe? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, I'll dwell in them and walk in them. I'll be their God and they will be my people." So there is no fellowship between a believer and an unbeliever. That is an unequal yoke. God forbids that a believer marry an unbeliever. If you go ahead and do that willfully, purposefully, pointedly, you will step outside the circle of obedience.

A pastor friend of mine called me on the phone Friday and he said, "I have a situation in my church that's just breaking my heart, and I just want to share it with you and have you pray with me about it." "I married two couples," he said, "in my church. And somewhere along the line since I had married them, they had swapped wives. And they are now living with each other's wife. And they have now come back and said they know it's wrong, and they've repented of the sin, but they don't love their wife. They love the new one they've swapped for, and they want to get a divorce and be remarried and retain their position of leadership in the church. And their justification is the fact that they are repentant and they have confessed it." And of course the answer is they have also forfeited the blessing of God, and leadership is a blessing, because they have stepped outside the circle of obedience. So any time a believer steps out of the circle of obedience, he forfeits the right to God's blessing. A gracious and loving and merciful God will still be kind enough to grant some blessing, but at the same time you can be sure you'll receive his chastening hand, because as soon as you step over that line, you run smack into the chastening of God.

How do you stay humble and still use all the power that God has given you through the Holy Spirit? The person is wrestling the fact that if God really releases his power in you, fantastic things are going to happen, and it's going to be hard to stay humble. Well, let me say this: How do you stay humble and still use all the power that God has given you? If you don't stay humble, you'll never use any of

the power that God has given you, because God can only work through those who are humble. Only when we are humble can the power be used. We have to be emptied of ourselves before we can be filled with his power. Paul said to the Philippians, "If you're going to be useful to God, then you're going to have to humble yourselves." This similarly is indicated in Ephesians chapter 5, I think it's verse 18: "Be not drunk with wine in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." And then verse 21 says: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Not only a humility before God but a humility before people makes you a potential to be filled with the Spirit. You have to be emptied of yourself. And so we would say that before anybody would ever see the power of God working in his life, he would have to be emptied of himself. And when you start to talk about humility, that's a difficult thing to define. But when you think you're finally humble, you can be sure you're not. And when you think you're proud and you wrestle with your pride and you weep over your pride, you're closer to being humble than you ever will be any other way.

Another question, and perhaps this one is asked by a new Christian. While Jesus was teaching, did he ever call on his powers of deity? Well the answer to that is yes. Jesus called on his powers of deity repeatedly to collaborate his teaching. He would teach and of course there would be the response of certain people, "Well why should we believe this guy?" So in John chapter 14 and verse 10, he says: "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? Do you have trouble believing that I am God? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwells in me he doeth the works. Believe me," or that is believe my word literally, "that I am in the Father and the Father in me." In other words, "Believe my words about being God here, or else believe me for the very works' sake."

John 14:11: "Believe me for the very works' sake." At the end of the gospel of John the 20th chapter, the 30th verse, "And many other signs," – and what is a sign for? What does a sign do? It points to something, doesn't it? A sign, it tells you you're going somewhere; it points to something. "Many signs pointing to something did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these signs are written that you might believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you might have life through his name." Jesus did many signs pointing to his deity, many miracles, and the Gospel of John records many of them. The Gospel of Matthew just loaded with them, as well as Mark and Luke, but Matthew particularly. In Matthew 15:29, for example, "Jesus departed from there and came near to the Sea of Galilee and went up into a mountain and sat down, and great multitudes came." And of course, this is a teaching setting, Jesus in a mountain in Galilee, and the masses of humanity come. And they came: The lame, the blind, the dumb, the maimed and many others, and put them down at Jesus' feet and he healed them. "And so much that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be well, the lame to walk and the blind to see, and they glorified the God of Israel." And that's actually what Jesus wanted them to do. He corroborated his constant teaching, his constant claims with many, many acts of deity.

Here's an interesting question regarding a hymn. We sing *The Church's One Foundation* a lot, and somebody asks what is the mystic sweet communion that we share with those whose rest is one? That's a good question. It's kind of like here I raise my Ebenezer, and everybody looks around says, "Your what?" What is the mystic sweet communion that we share with those whose rest is one? All right, think about it. What is communion? What is communion? Fellowship right? *Koinōnia*. What is sweet communion? Good fellowship, nice fellowship, happy fellowship, blessed fellowship. What is a mystic element of communion? Well, it's not just physical; it's beyond that. It's a spiritual kind of thing. So now we know we know we're talking about some kind of nice spiritual fellowship, and we share it with those whose rest is won. What is rest? What is it to win rest? Well it means to enter

heaven. Those whose rest is one are those who have died and the Lord, as Revelation says, “and rest from all their,” what? Their labor. And what the songwriter is saying is that as the church of Jesus Christ, we not only share communion with the living church, the church militant, but we share communion with the church triumphant. I have never seen the apostle Paul, but I share a mystic sweet communion with him, and Peter and Jesus and Moses and David and a whole lot of others and some special little favorites that I have in the New Testament. That’s all it’s talking about.

Look at Hebrews 12. Now I’m going to get into interpreting hymns every time we do this. It’s a fair question. Hebrews 12:22, now here talking about the church really in terms of a definition. “But you are come to Mount Zion unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem to an innumerable company of angels,” – now here comes the church – “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are written in heaven and to God the judge of all and to spirits of just men made perfect.” In other words, when you became a Christian, you didn’t come to Sinai where there was thunder and smoke and death. You came to Zion where there was the church of the firstborn. Those who know the first, the *prōtotokos*, Christ, and who are written in heaven and some of whom are already made perfect. In other words, you joined a church that is not only visible but what? Invisible. Not only militant but triumphant. That’s the whole point. The mystical fellowship we share with the glorified saints. Is it true that you already love some people who are in heaven that you’ve never met? You know I feel that way about certain writers. I feel that way about people that I read whose life touches my life, and even though they’re dead, I sense a love and a fellowship with them in Christ.

Okay, another question, and this is one that probably comes up a lot in your school: Is the belief in Adam and Eve being the only first ones created a major doctrine of the Bible? Well we could talk about this for a long time, about Adam and Eve, but the question has a little sub-note. It says, “I know of someone who believes God created mankind, not just one Adam. Does this distort the truth?” In other words, that when it says God created Adam, the Hebrew Adam meaning man, it means that God created a race rather than an individual, so that what we really had in the garden was a whole race of people. Well if you take that view, then immediately you’ve got a problem, because which of those Adams got Eve, or did all of them get Eve? And if you’ve got all Adams and all Eves then how many trees are there and who’s eating of what? Now you got lots of problems, and did they all eat at the same instant? You see what you have to do as soon as you’ve removed Adam and Eve from being single individuals, you’ve got to explain away and allegorize the whole rest of the Genesis account, because nothing makes sense.

Now let me draw your attention backwards to Genesis and show you a couple of things about this, why we can’t do this. In Genesis chapter 2 – you know it’s no problem for me, because I just take what the Bible says; I don’t need to extrapolate and interpret and go any further. If it says he made Adam and Eve, then that’s one man and one woman; I don’t have a problem with that. I don’t need to explode that to accommodate some genealogical, sociological or whatever perspective. But in Genesis 2:18: “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone.’” Now the first thing we learn about man, whoever this one was, that he was what? Alone. Now it seems to me that if you’ve got somebody who’s alone, you’ve just got one somebody, or he wouldn’t be alone, right? “I will make an helpmeet,” or a help fit for him, a helper. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, every fowl of the air. Now there’s plurality, right? Every beast and every fowl. “And he brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to the cattle and the fowl of the air and for every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”

Now you see what you've got is a plurality of animals and a plurality of fowl, and contrast you got one man who's all alone; now that's the whole point of the passage. God is trying to say that man shouldn't be alone, and he makes a clear contrast between the beasts who had theirs and the fowl who had theirs and man who has no one. And the Lord God gave him a divine anesthetic, a deep sleep, he slept. And he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh, did a little surgery there, "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.' Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked." Now both in any language means how many? Very good, class. The man and his wife, they were naked, and they were not ashamed. I don't know what would've happened if there was a whole lot of them there naked; there may have been a different response.

Now back in Genesis 1 you have an indication paralleling Genesis 2. In verse 20: "Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth. And God created great sea monsters and every living creature that moves in the water." And all I want to point out to you here is that God is creating in multiples, lots of fish and lots of birds and lots of animals. Verse 24 he says get all kinds of cattle and creeping things and beasts, and he goes on and on. And then he gets down to man and he just makes one, and it's singular all the while. Why if God was making a plurality of men did he not speak in the same plural terms that he'd been speaking in in reference to animals just in the verses prior. No. So we conclude then that there is but one Adam and but one Eve who become the mother and father of us all. Now this interpretation is supported in the New Testament. For example, the whole argument of the apostle Paul in Romans 5 is predicated on a single Adam, on a one Adam.

If you want to eliminate the fact that there's one Adam, then you have just wiped out Paul's whole argument in Romans 5, because Paul is trying to show in Romans chapter 5 – see Paul is saying, "Christ has died and provided salvation for every man," right? That's the first part of 5, 5:1 and 10. Christ has died and provided salvation for every man, and the Jewish mind is saying, "Now wait a minute. How can one man's deed affect everybody? How can Jesus Christ do one thing, one man doing one thing and it affects everybody?" And Paul says, "Let me show you how," in verse 12. Here's a good illustration. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed on all men, for all have sinned." By how many men did sin enter the world? How many? One man, one man.

Now Paul's argument here is this: You shouldn't be hung up on the fact that salvation came through one man. Did you forget that sin also came through one man? See his parallel. If by one man sin entered the world, then by one man can come eternal life. Now his entire argument is predicated on the fact that Adam was only one man. So if you're going to fiddle around with Adam and make him a group of people, then you've just destroyed Paul's whole argument, and then you've got problems in the New Testament.

And I would draw you to one further indication of Matthew chapter 19, verses 4 and 5. In Matthew 4 and 5 we have the testimony of Jesus to the veracity of the record of Adam and Eve, and Jesus agreed with it the way it was recorded. Just listen. And he's talking about divorce here, and the Pharisees are giving him a little trouble. And he says, "Did you not read that he who made them at the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and

mother and shall cleave to his wife and they,” – how many – “two shall be one flesh.” Jesus here is giving credence to the Genesis record. Jesus did not treat it as an allegory; he treated it as an absolute. And so on the basis of Genesis account, on the basis of the testimony of Jesus, on the basis of the argument of the apostle Paul in the book of Romans chapter 5, there is only one conclusion, and that is that Adam was one man, and out of his loins was taken one woman, Eve, and they were those who were the forerunners of the whole human race. Okay?

While you’re in Matthew, I’ll go a little question relative to interpretation. Look at Matthew 25, and the question is a general question: How do you interpret the parable of Matthew 25:14-30? And this is a parable that has caused some interpretive problems, but let me just go through it hastily and without getting a lot of detail just tell you what it’s about. “The *kingdom of heaven* is like a man travelling into a far country who called his own servants.” You’ll notice the kingdom of heaven is in italics there, which means it was added to clarify that he’s talking about the kingdom. “The kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is like a man who takes a long trip and calls his servants and delivers them his goods.” In other words, he’s going to entrust his estate to the servants. “To one he gave five talents, maybe \$160.00 or so, maybe 200 with inflation. To another he gave two talents, to another one, to every man according to his ability, and he went away. And he that had received the five talents traded with the same, made five more, and likewise he who had received two he gained two more. And he that received one went and dug in the earth and hid his lord’s money. After a long time, the man came back and started to take account.” The man with five came in verse 20 and brought other five and said, “Lord, you gave me five talents. I have gained beside five more.” And his Lord said, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I’ll make you rule over many things. Enter the joy of your Lord. He also that had received two talents came. ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents. Behold, I’ve gained two other talents besides.’ His lord said, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant, you’ve been faithful over a few things. I’ll make you rule over many. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord.’”

Now what you have here is simple, the master is Christ. The servants are subjects in his kingdom, and I think in his broad kingdom, his universal kingdom. They’re just human beings. And their talents are capacities for glorifying God. And God has said to them, “You have capacity to glorify me.” The capacity may vary. And the first two servants took their capacity to glorify their Lord, and they did it. And when he came back, he said, “I will make you ruler over many.” What he’s really doing to them is saying the kingdom is like this: If you will take advantage of opportunity that God gives you to glorify him, you will be a part of his kingdom. And when he says enter the joy of thy Lord, he is saying you have been saved. That is the point of salvation. They’re not Christians until then. They’re human beings who are given the opportunity to invest their life in glorifying God. When they do it, they become a part of his kingdom and they receive his eternal joy.

It's like the Catechism says: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and” what? “Enjoy him forever.” You glorify me, I’ll give you joy. But there’s a third man here, and he symbolizes the unbelieving people of the world. And he said, “Lord,” verse 24, “I know you’re a hard man reaping where you haven’t sown and gathering where you,” and he gives a lot of this dialogue about his mistrust of God. “And I was afraid and I hid it in the earth.” In other words, he did nothing with the opportunity to glorify God, to glorify and honor his Lord. “You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I sowed not and gathered where I have not spread. You should therefore put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with interest. Take therefore the talent from him and give it to him who has ten. For every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away that with he hath and cast the



unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” That’s obviously hell. The question came: Does this mean the man lost his salvation? No, he never gained it. The Lord never said to him you shall rule over many in my kingdom, and he never said you’ll enter into the joy of the Lord, because the man never used the opportunity for glorifying God that God gave him.

Now that’s the simple explanation of the parable. And believe me, folks, the best way to interpret a parable is as simple as possible. The further tangled into the parable you get, the more problems you’re going to have. You know there are sermons on what the five talents were. Well one was this and – there’s no sense in that. Just take the general thrust of the story in most cases, and don’t try to make something out of every little tiny thing. The general thrust we’ve tried to cover in just the statement we’ve made.

Why are the tribes of Joseph and Manasseh both mentioned in Revelation 7? This is kind of fun. Turn to Revelation 7. This is just one of those curiosity questions that’s kind of fun and you can go to a party and say, “Why are the tribes of Joseph and Manasseh,” and no one will know but you and it’s a wonderful feeling. So Revelation chapter 7, because frankly no one bothers to ask this question anyway. You’ll have to bring it up. Why are the tribes of Joseph and Manasseh both mentioned in Revelation 7? Doesn’t the tribe of Joseph include Manasseh. Now how many tribes were there in Israel? 12. Joseph was one of the son. Joseph had two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh. Why is it that you have both mentioned here, Joseph and Manasseh? Well look at Revelation 7. You have Manasseh at the end of verse 6 and Joseph in the middle of verse 8. Now I don’t want to get too involved. If you don’t know what’s going on, just don’t worry; just pray for a minute or two.

Joseph is never really considered a tribe. Joseph was split into two: Ephraim and Manasseh, and Ephraim and Manasseh were considered to be tribes. Manasseh is here, and Ephraim’s place is taken by Joseph. And the question is why does Joseph appear and not Ephraim, and the answer is that it is likely as a punishment for Ephraim’s idolotry. And you will remember that it was Ephraim who was responsible for leading in the split of Israel into the two kingdoms. And it is perhaps because of that that Ephraim’s name is withheld from that special place of usefulness in preparation for the kingdom. The ten tribes who see seated, remember the ten northern tribes who you see seated, took their name from Ephraim who led in that secession. And Jeroboam I was their king, and he was born of the tribe of Ephraim. So it may be that because of that terrible thing that occurred in the Israel, that Ephraim’s tribe is left out of that final glorious ministry that occurs in the salvation of Israel in the tribulation.

It also is interesting to note that the reason you can split Joseph into two is because Dan is omitted. You say well why is Dan omitted? Because of gross idolatry. In Deuteronomy 29, golden calves were set up in tribe – you know all the tribes had a territory, you know that. Ephraim and Manasseh shared basically the same territory, but all the others had a territory. But Dan is left out, and in fact here Dan is replaced by Levi, the priestly tribe. So Ephraim and Manasseh had the same land but are often spoken of as two separate tribes because they were the sons of Joseph. Levi replaces Dan, and Levi the priestly tribe had how much land? No land. But Levi is brought in in Dan’s place. Joseph is brought in Ephraim’s place because of sin. But you know what’s really kind of exciting, this is just a footnote to all of that. Ezekiel 37 I think it is, and 19, gives you a picture of the wonderful grace of God, even to Ephraim who was responsible for such a terrible crime. In Ezekiel 37:19: “Say to them, thus says the Lord God, ‘I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and put them with him.’” God says someday – Ezekiel 37 is talking about the

kingdom, the future. I'm going to take that Ephraim gang and all the tribes that revolted with him and put them with Joseph. I love this, even with the stick of Judah I'm going to rejoin. Remember the northern kingdom was all the ten tribes and the southern kingdom was called what? Judah, Judah and Benjamin, the north, all the others. But Judah was the south and Israel was the north. I'm going to bring those ten; I'm going to join them back with the stick of Judah and make them one stick and they shall be one in what? My hand. God says with all of Ephraim's problems, someday in the kingdom I'm going to bring Ephraim back.

Now you know why that has to happen? And Dan too. You know why that has to happen? Because God is a covenant-keeping God. He never breaks his promise. Oh by the way, Dan is mentioned in 48:2, I don't want to leave you just guessing. This is the division of the kingdom, and it tells in verse 2 that Dan is going to have a lovely spot right in the kingdom during the Millennial age. Dan arrives back; Ephraim arrives back. Why? Because God is a covenant-keeping God. Now listen, people, this is just one reason why I believe in the restoration of Israel in the future. God goes to great pains in Revelation to leave Ephraim and Dan out, and goes in great pains to make sure in Ezekiel he gets Ephraim and Dan back in, because God never breaks his Word. And the people today that teach there is no future for Israel are going to have to live with the problem that they're forcing God to break his Word, and he doesn't do that.

Romans 9:21-23, let's look at that. Romans 9:21-23. And the question here is: The Bible speaks of vessels of mercy and vessels of destruction, which God specifically made for his purpose. Does that mean people like Judas were made by God for destruction? That's a very provocative question, and of course you get ultimately into the whole area of God's sovereignty. But let me show you something most interesting about Romans 9:21. Paul is saying here that God is sovereign. Paul is clearly saying that; there's no other message here. Verse 18: "He has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens." And the argument comes well it doesn't seem fair. And verse 21 Paul says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor." A potter can make a vessel any way he wants. He's the potter and the vessel is simply clay. But I want you to notice what happens in verse 22. "What if God willing to show his wrath and make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory." Now I don't want to get too deep, and I just want to get you one or two thoughts.

Notice, there are vessels of wrath at the end of verse 22 fitted to destruction. Verse 23: "Vessels of mercy which he had prepared to glory." Now in the Greek you have two serious distinctions here in the Greek tense, and you must recognize it. I should say in the Greek voice, which is similar to English. Do you realize the difference between active and passive? In active, the subject does the acting, and in passive, the subject receives the action. Now notice verse 22 is a passive. "Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." God is not the subject; the verb is passive. Verse 23: "Vessels of mercy which he had prepared to glory." God there is the subject and the verb is active. Listen, God says, "I prepare vessels for glory, but vessels are prepared for destruction." And what is happening there in the Greek tense is God is taking one step away from the responsibility of preparing a person from his creative act for hell. God doesn't take that responsibility. He says, "There are vessels that have been prepared for destruction." And if you study the Bible very carefully, you'll see that everywhere in Scripture the responsibility for such preparation lies right in the very heart of the man who goes to hell. Is that right?

Jesus said, "You will not come to me that you might have life." At the end of the Book of Revelation, he says, "Come. Let him that is athirst come." And so God says, "I fit for glory, but vessels are fitted for destruction." Judas was not created by God to occupy hell. Another reason I know that is that hell was never even made for human beings; it was made for the devil and his angels. Judas went there because Judas chose to betray Christ, chose to reject the truth, chose to pay a sad, sad price. Well, let's close with that.

You know we've seen some things tonight, maybe in somewhat of a random manner, but seems like the Lord always has a way of kind of wrapping things around a theme or so. It seems to me that what we've seen tonight is that God has drawn some standards for life. God says, "There is going to be a hell. There is going to be a heaven. There are going to be some people that I'm going to prepare for my heaven, and there are going to be some people who are going to be prepared for hell. And the choice is theirs." There are going to be some servants, and they're going to take the capacity to glorify me and they're going to do it, and I'm going to say, "Go into my kingdom and into my joy." And there are going to be some people who are going to have that same opportunity and that same capacity, and they're not going to do it and I'm going to say, "Cast that unprofitable servant into outer darkness." And that's the decision that every person makes. And someday when Jesus comes back, the people that are his are going into his kingdom, and the people that have turned their back are going to be destroyed in his judgment.

And then another thing we kind of saw tonight that I think is really important is the fact that for those of us who are in his kingdom already, for those of us who are in his family who have been prepared for glory, there are some standards for blessing, right? There's a great big circle, a big O, stands for obedience. And if we're in it, we're going to get rained on with blessing, and if we're outside of it, we're going to run right into his chastening. These are the lessons really summing up the whole gospel, right? Let's pray.

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