

Question 1: What was the point of John the Baptist's baptism? Was it necessary? Why was Jesus baptized by John if He had no sins on His soul? Matthew 3:13-17

Answer 1: John the Baptist taught a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). It is important for us to know the role of John the Baptist. He came to "prepare the way" for Jesus Christ. In many ways, John was a buffer for the coming Kingdom of God. He was a prophet of God and therefore his baptism was indeed for forgiveness of sin. Jesus was obviously not baptized for forgiveness because He had no sin. The baptism of Jesus Christ was to set an example for all of us. This was a part of God's Plan (God was "well-pleased" with Jesus' baptism) and was done to set a pattern for us to follow.

Question 2: Will there be different degrees of rewards and punishments on the Day of Judgment?

Answer 2: The Bible seems to indicate that there will indeed be degrees of punishment in Hell. Indeed, God's justice would demand this fact. While it is true that sin is sin in the sense that all sin will send us to Hell, it is not just to hold murderers to the same standard as those that never heard of Jesus. Two verses immediately come to mind with this question. 2 Peter 2:22 tells us that it will be worse on those that have turned away than on those who have never known. In Luke 12:45-48, Jesus Himself indicates varying degrees of punishment for those condemned with the unbelievers. We do not know how this will work, and it is safe to say that the best seat in Hell is not a place you want to be. However, it does appear that God will take our lives and our individual actions into account on Judgment Day.

Question 3: Is it Scriptural for women to say "amen" during a sermon?

Answer 3: This question forces us to ask whether or not saying "amen" violates the restrictions placed on women in 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Saying "amen" shows that you agree with what has been said. In that sense, it neither usurps authority, nor teaches a man. The only part of this verse we have to deal with is "quietly receive instruction". My thought on this is that a woman saying "amen" is not sinning in an assembly. However, by the same token, saying "amen" is not worth causing your brother or sister to stumble (by setting an example that does lead to usurping authority) or be offended. For that reason, I think women should be extremely careful with their use of this "liberty". If it causes offense and is not necessary or beneficial, just leave it out.

Question 4: What did it look like when God parted the Red Sea? What could the Hebrews see?

Answer 4: Read Exodus 14:21-22. My answer to this question is we simply do not know. We know that the Israelites were walking between two large walls of water. We know that the Red Sea has life in it. But we don't know exactly what it would have looked like for the Israelites. It may have been like an aquarium. It may have been that this disturbance caused the sea to darken to the point of not seeing anything. It may be that they could see in the water, but that all the life moved away from the disturbance. We just don't know.

Question 5: When God walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve was He in human form or was He a spiritual being simply “flowing through” the garden?

Answer 5: Read Genesis 3:8. My answer to this question is we simply do not know. I believe that in this passage, we have an instance of what is called a “theophany”. It is a physical representation of God on the Earth witnessed in the Old Testament. In other words, I believe we have God in the flesh (Jesus) appearing throughout the Old Testament (Before the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the fiery furnace). I think this movement through the Garden is yet another example of this phenomenon.

Question 6: Was the flaming sword placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden a literal sword?

Answer 6: Read Genesis 3:24. Eden was a real place. It was obviously easily distinguished from the rest of the world because it was the home for Adam and Eve. After the fall of man, God placed a literal angel with a literal sword to guard the entrance to the Garden to ensure that mankind could never again gain access to it.

Question 7: What was the curse placed on Ham by Noah (Gen. 9:25).

Answer 7: The curse placed on Ham comes because of the sin committed by Ham against Noah. The curse is in fact placed on Canaan who was Ham’s son. However, by placing this type of curse on Canaan, Ham was indeed punished. Canaan would become the father of the Canaanites who inhabited the Promised Land before the arrival of the Israelites. Reading through these people’s history with Israel shows us their nature which was set almost exclusively on the flesh. As a matter of history, we know that these people were very rarely independent. Rather, through the history of the Canaanites they were usually “enslaved” to the world powers around them (Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, etc.) It is in this fact that we see the curse of Canaan taking its course on the Canaanites.

Question 8: How did the order of the books of the Bible come about?

Answer 8: The division of the books of the Old Testament is taken from the Jews. In the Old Testament, we have 5 basic divisions: Law, History, Poetry, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets. The Old Testament is arranged following this order. The New Testament follows a similar pattern. As early Christians began collecting the New Testament letters, they arranged them into categories: The Gospels, History, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and The Apocalyptic Letter. When the Bible was completed, this order stuck.

Question 9: Why did people of the Old Testament live so long?

Answer 9: In the Genesis account, we read of Methuselah who walked this earth for 969 years (Gen. 5:27), Adam who lived for 930 years (Gen. 5:5), and Noah who lived for 950 years (Gen. 9:29). These are two of many people who lived to extreme old ages in the Bible. When compared to the world today, these ages seem too big to be true. So how was it possible to live for almost a thousand years?

I have to say that all that I will tell you in this answer is purely theory. In truth, we have no clue how God operated to allow these people to live to these ages. However, we can speculate from what we know of this ancient world.

First, we must remember that the world was in a fresh, new state when these ages occurred. There was no such thing as polluted water sources or smog. The air was not filled with fumes to restrict our breathing. In short, the world was not messed up through human contamination as we see it today. It is interesting to notice that immediately following the flood, ages dropped drastically (almost in half) in the genealogies.

Second, we need to remember how healthy these people would have been. Their diet and exercise program would match up to any we see today. They spent time in manual labor, ate fresh grains and meats, walked everywhere they went, etc. While they did not have the medical technology we see today, they would be far advanced to most of us in this auditorium tonight in their physical health.

Third, we need to remember that God made humans perfect. Adam and Eve had perfect genes. They were not weakened by their environment or their gene pool. As time went on, diseases emerged in the gene pool and evolved. Inbreeding would have drastically increased the rate at which genetic handicaps would have spread. I think there are many small things that add up to the ancient ages of these people.

Question 10: What is the “Times of Restoration of all things” (Acts 3:19-21)?

Answer 10: This passage comes in the middle of a sermon given by Peter. This passage deals with the second coming of Christ. Peter urges people to repent and return to God so that Christ might return to find them faithful. If men do this, they will be a part of the “restoration of all things” which Christ is bringing. There are a couple of Biblical ways to interpret this passage, but I think this passage is alluding to the times before the fall of man. In eternity, God will restore the things we once had in the Garden of Eden. God will restore His presence to His people. He will restore eternal life to His people. He will restore a perfect home to His people (new Heavens and new earth). He will restore a place of innocence to His people. In short, He will restore to our unfallen state!

Question 11: In light of Hebrews 11:24-26, why did Moses consider the reproach of Christ?

Answer 11: This passage comes in the middle of the discussion of the great heroes of faith from the Old Testament. We are told that Moses rejected the luxurious life of Pharaoh’s house and chose the reproach of Christ instead. We see this play out in the Book of Exodus when Moses would rise up to defend his people from the slave-drivers of Pharaoh’s House. I think the idea of the reproach of Christ is a universal idea for all those who follow God. Doing the right thing often brings reproach upon God’s people. We usually separate the Jewish religion from the Christian religion completely. However, those that followed the Patriarchal laws of God and the Mosaic laws of God were always pointing the way to Jesus. In this way, they were able to bear the reproach of Christ before Christ even hung on the cross. Because all things of God point to Christ, those that do His Will are always in danger of falling under the reproach of Him.

Question 12: Why did Jesus curse the fig tree (Mark 11:13-14, 19-22)?

Answer 12: This is one of the more interesting miracles Jesus performed while on the earth. Many have attacked this miracle for being strange. In this miracle, Jesus uses His power for destruction which is quite unusual. In this miracle, Jesus destroys a tree rather than creating a fig to solve his problem of hunger. In this miracle, Jesus kills a fig tree because it had no fruit, even though it was not time for fruit. All this demands our attention as we study this miracle.

First, Jesus did not kill this fig tree because it had no fruit. Our own lack of knowledge concerning fig trees leaves us with this understanding. Jesus destroyed this fig tree because of its leaves. Fig trees are supposed to bear figs before they show leaves. This tree symbolically represents the Jews that were rejecting Him. These people showed leaves as if they should be able to bear much fruit for God. They spoke of their knowledge of the law and wore their special clothes. However, for all this show, they had no way to bear fruit for God because they were out of season. This was the season of Jesus Christ...they were still in the season of the Law of Moses.

Second, this fig tree was meant to be a teaching tool for Jesus' followers (vs. 14). This fig tree was a foreshadowing of the destruction of the Jews at the hands Rome. As His disciples watched the fig tree wither and die, so the Jews would watch their holy city with its holy temple laid to waste. Our world would be wise to remember that the same power that can be used for our good may also bring about our destruction! This was the point of Jesus cursing this tree.

Question 13: There is no way to remove all the blood from meat. What is the commandment to not eat blood dealing with (Genesis 9:3-4, Acts 15:28-29)?

Answer 13: The prohibition to eat raw meat in Genesis is probably given for a couple of reasons. First, it was for the health of God's people. Much like the dietary restrictions found in the Law of Moses, we can easily see the great dangers in eating raw meat. Second, this restriction helps man remember His place in the world. Although he has dominion over animals, he is only allowed this power by God who gives all things life. The blood of the hunt was seen as still belonging to God. Third, it may have been a foreshadowing of the gross immorality that came with Paganism. Pagans often drank the blood of animals sacrificed to their false gods. This may have been a way to keep God's People from initiating this sinful practice. Finally, there is a connection in not eating raw meat and being human. Animals make their kill and will begin eating their prey before it has even died. There is something human in taking time to cook and prepare meat for food.

We need to take special note of this command. It is repeated as the only dietary restriction placed on Christians after the founding of the church. In other words, it applies to us today. The idea here is to eat cooked meat, not the raw flesh of animals.

Question 14: Can we call anyone “Father”? Jesus told us to call no man father (Matthew 23:9-10).

Answer 14: It is interesting that this is the only question we usually consider when discussing this passage. In this passage we are told to call no one rabbi (teacher), father, or leader. Does this mean we need to rename our Bible class teachers? Does it mean we need to restrain from saying that someone is a good leader in the Lord’s church? I think the verses 11-12 give us the true Biblical meaning behind the words of Jesus here. The titles shown here represent the idea of elevating oneself as an authority for the Bible. Only God has the authority and superiority of men to demand their complete allegiance. The idea here strikes a death nail in the heart of the titles we see so often in the denominational world today. Being called brother or sister should suffice for all who submit to Jesus Christ. All other titles (Reverend, Most Holy Father, etc.) are meaningless because they have not the authority of God behind them!

***Rapid Fire Series of Questions Concerning Salvation:**

Question 15: How do you know what is and is not a sin?

Answer 15: Only God has the right to decide what is and is not a sin. How does God define sin (1 John 3:4)? “Sin is lawlessness”. When a person lives without taking God’s law (His Word) into account, he lives in sin. The word sin literally means to “miss the mark” (Thayer’s). The idea here is that God’s Word creates a target that we are aiming for. When we hit the target, we are not living in sin. When we miss the target, we are living in sin. In following this illustration, God’s grace is what allows us to pull our arrow out of the target and shoot again.

Question 16: When you think someone is living in sin, how do you approach them? What if you can’t find a verse dealing with that sin?

Answer 16: First, when you think someone is living in sin, you need to make sure. This means you will search the Word of God for further instruction. As for how to approach a person living in sin, the Bible gives us a two-step approach. Approach a person lost in sin with the truthful words of God out of love and concern for their soul (Ephesians 4:15). When you have done this, you have met God’s obligations for evangelism.

Question 17: What are some clear verses to show that baptism is essential for salvation?

Answer 17: 1 Peter 3:21 “Baptism now saves you”. Mark 16:16 “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved”.

Question 18: If someone decides to become a Christian and dies on the way to the church building to be baptized, will he be saved?

Answer 18: We need to start this answer by remembering that we are not the judge of the final home of a soul. Only God is able to judge the living and the dead. With that in mind, we need to allow Him to speak on this subject. According to the New Testament, baptism is a requirement of salvation. The person who dies without baptism is lost because their sins are not forgiven.

Now we have a special circumstance to consider. What if a person decides to be baptized but dies before completing the act? First, God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He does not change His rules of salvation to fit individual circumstances. Second, God is absolutely just. Some may consider it unfair if a person dies on their way to the baptistery. This is simply not true. How many opportunities did this person have to obey? Third, most times when this question is placed before a Christian, it is to show the unimportance of baptism. The New Testament is clear and repetitive concerning the importance of baptism in the life of a Christian. Whether or not God would save this person's soul has absolutely nothing to do with whether or not we must be baptized in order to be forgiven of our sins.

Question 19: What does the Bible say about someone who says negative comments instead of being positive? I called the man who put this in to get some clarification on this question. He is speaking of those that continually harp on the negative in ministries rather than finding positive aspects and seeking ways to improve them.

Answer 19: Read Ephesians 4:29. This is probably the clearest instructions concerning the building up of our brothers and sisters. With that said, there are numerous New Testament passages we could mention in connection with this idea. It is an important idea which God wanted to pass on to His people. The word "unwholesome" here comes from a Greek word meaning "rotten, unfit for use, corrupted by age". The word "edification" means "the act of building up". The idea carried here is that your words have the ability to rot a person's work or build it up. You can be gangrene or a great architect. God wants architects! Don't seek out the negative aspects of a new ministry work. Look for ways to support and make it better if possible. Being critical of a person's church work is going to be taken personally. When you see an improvement that can be made, keep your attitude correct so that you may make additions to floor plans rather than destroying the whole house! (Illustration of when Mr. Pruitt came and gave me a Bible passage that fit a sermon. He complimented the sermon first!) God wants us all working together to make His church better. This will NOT happen when we attack one another's ideas (Gal. 5:15).

Question 20: In Matthew 11:1-5, John the Baptist asks Jesus if He was the coming Messiah. However, in Matthew 3, John had already declared Jesus to be just that. Explain. Read Matthew 11:1-5.

Answer 20: I believe we have revealed here a moment of doubt in the life of John the Baptist. He certainly has His reasons for doubting Jesus in this moment in time. He has been falsely imprisoned and is probably anticipating the fact that he will die for his faith. He sits in prison and Jesus has made no move to free him. He also has to deal with the fact that he forcefully proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, but at this point Jesus was not publicly doing so. All this led John to a moment of doubting his convictions. Be careful not to be too critical of John. How many of us would doubt Jesus under these circumstances? There are actually two important lessons to learn from this account. First, in John's moment of doubt, he immediately turned to Jesus. We need to do the same today. Second, Jesus always has His reasons for His actions or inactions. Jesus could not come to John's rescue. Jesus was not here to remove a corrupt Roman Government. Jesus was here to go to the cross as an innocent man in order to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. The cross becomes worthless to us if Jesus dies as a rebellious criminal.

John's death would hurt Jesus immensely, but His hurt could not override His mission to fulfill the Will of God.

Question 21: When we insult people, do we also insult God since we are made in the image of God?

Answer 21: The simple answer to this question is "yes". Read James 3:9-11 and Matthew 25:35-40. We often do not take the reverse side of this passage in Matthew. When you do something good for neighbors, it is a gift to God. When you insult them, it is an insult to Him.

Question 22: How can Satan be in Heaven when it is impossible for evil to be in Heaven (Job 1:6)?

Answer 22: Let's dive into this interesting question. First, can someone point to me in this passage where the word "Heaven" is used? The answer is no. The word Heaven is not used here. So why do we assume the scene we see here takes place in Heaven? Two things lead us to this conclusion. First, the angels are presenting themselves before God. Obviously angels would do this in Heaven. Can anyone point to the word "angel" in their text? If you are using the NIV, you may be able to do so, but it should contain a footnote telling you that the Hebrew word here literally means "sons of God". Who are the sons of God? This word can indeed be used of angels, but more often than that it is used to describe God's people (Romans 8:14, Hebrews 12:7-8). What if we do not have a Heavenly scene at all in Job chapter one? What if we see a group of God's people coming together to present themselves before the "throne of God" in worship? (NOTE: We use the same imagery to describe our prayers!) I believe we have completely missed what is actually occurring in Job 1. I believe this describes a worship service to God where we see Satan in the midst of the assembly. We see God also there in the midst of the assembly. As Satan seeks to point out all that is wrong with God's people, God comes to our defense. Does this happen in our worship today? God is certainly present. Satan is certainly present. Satan is known as the accuser. God is certainly known as our defender. How much more meaning does this passage take on when we realize that this same event may be happening tonight as we gather here to worship God?

Question 23: Did Jesus or God create the world?

Answer 23: The answer to this question is yes. When we combine the Genesis account of creation with the description of Christ we find in John 1, we see that God is creating the world with someone else (Genesis 1:26-use of word "us" > John 1:1-3 > Jesus and the Father constitute the "us" in Genesis). To truly understand how this process took place would be to understand far more than the Bible tells us. It is a principle of faith that God created the earth and the things of the earth. As to how, we must leave that to God.

Question 24: Why does God hate Esau (Malachi 1:3)?

Answer 24: According to the Bible, hatred of men is simply not an attribute of God. We read that God so loved the world He sent His only Son to save us from our sin (John 3:16). For this reason, this passage may cause us to stumble. Let's examine what is actually being said here.

First, let us understand that Jacob and Esau in this passage are simply representatives of their descendants. In other words, Jacob represents the fact that Israel is God's chosen nation while Esau represents the nation of Edom which was never God's chosen nation. The reason Jacob was lifted up while Esau's descendants were not is very simple. Esau was a man of the world. Esau was willing to sell a spiritual blessing from his father for a bowl of soup (Genesis 25:29-33). Esau was a man who would follow the lusts of his flesh to bring shame upon his parents (Genesis 26:34). In all of this, Esau showed himself to be a servant of the flesh rather than a servant of God. His descendants followed his lead. When we read that God hated Esau and loved Jacob, let us understand that God hates when we choose to serve our own desires in this world, but loves when we deny ourselves to follow after Christ. This is the same understanding we should have when we read this passage quoted in Romans 9:13.

Question 25: Is there a difference between the soul and the spirit? Explain.

Question 25: Based on what we read in Hebrews 4:12, there is indeed a difference between the soul and the spirit just as there is a difference between joints and marrow. Also, two different Greek words were used when the New Testament writers were using these two phrases. So what is the difference? The soul represents that which is the immortal part of man. It was breathed into us in creation and referred to as the "breath of life". It is that which will live on after our flesh is decayed (1 Corinthians 15:53). The term spirit is a little tougher to define. It is used in multiple ways throughout the New Testament. It can mean the part of man which animates the body ("The body without the spirit is dead"). It can also be used in reference to angels or demons (Jesus had authority over "unclean spirits"). It can also be used in reference to a person's attitude and will (Read 1 Timothy 5:21). Context must be used to determine the use of the word spirit. This is especially true since the Holy Spirit of God is often simply referred to as the Spirit in the New Testament. When a difference is seen, a soul simply refers to the immortal part of man while the spirit refers to the choices made through our will. These can be either good or bad, depending on whom or what we choose to submit to.

Question 26: What is the difference between someone who spreads gossip and a busybody?

Answer 26: 1 Timothy 5:13 tells us that gossips and busybodies are connected and yet in some way different from each other. A busybody is described as someone who goes from place to place to investigate other people's affairs. A gossip is described as someone who engages in useless or senseless talk. In short, by including both busybodies and gossips, Paul includes two sides to the same conversation. A gossip is one who is spreading about the news of the town while a busybody is the one listening to the gossip. Both have a share in the sinful act and both should remove their respective sin from their lives. Without a busybody, gossiping is useless and vice versa.

Question 28: Is tobacco use sinful?

Answer 28: Tobacco use is commonplace in our country today. In truth, the Bible does not directly deal with tobacco use so we must use some logical application of Scripture in order to make our decision. First, I think we better make sure that we at least take the time to examine the use of tobacco products (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Next, we need to ask some simple questions in

order to decide whether or not a Christian should engage in this practice. First, can tobacco become a master in one's life? Today, millions of people are addicted to smoking to the point of needing special drugs to take the edge off if they try to quit (Matthew 6:24). Next, does it affect a Christian's influence to use these products? Many in today's world not only find this to be a bad habit, they find it to be a sinful one. If this were not true, we would not be having a discussion about it during this sermon (1 Corinthians 8:13). Finally, what is right with tobacco use? Many times, we demand to know what is wrong with certain acts which we partake in. I would remind us that Christians need to change their thoughts. What is right with specific actions is a much better question to ask (Philippians 4:8). With all this said, we return to the initial question. Is tobacco use sinful? I do not believe I can stand before you and say that it is. However, I feel very comfortable standing before you and saying it is very unwise for Christians to engage in the use of tobacco or any other item which has so many spiritual questions surrounding it.

Question 29: We hear about it a lot in popular culture, but is there any evidence in the Bible of deceased loved ones being able to see what happens on earth?

Answer 29: I don't know. Our information concerning the afterlife between death and judgment is very limited. In fact, I would argue there are only a couple of occasions when we can glean anything at all concerning it from the Bible. The most information we get comes from Luke 16 and the story of Lazarus and the rich man. **Read Luke 16:19-31.** Now that we have read this passage, are we able to answer the question given? I don't think we can. From this passage, we know that we will remember those we leave behind on earth. From this passage, we know that we will be able to communicate with others concerning those memories, which indicates that we will be able to get updates on our loved ones from other deceased loved ones. From this passage, we know that we will not be able to change anything on this earth even if we have the knowledge of it. Does anything indicate that we will have an open window into the land of the living after we take up residence in the land of the dead? I would have to say no. However, is there any evidence that we won't? I would have to give the same answer.

Question 30: What language did Jesus speak?

Answer 30: Because these two questions are so similar, I actually want us to begin this answer by discussing what language the Bible was written in. The Bible actually contains three languages. The vast majority of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Hebrew was the native language of the Israelites. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. This is also called common Greek. It was the universal language that Alexander the Great pushed upon all the people he conquered. This included the Jews in Palestine as well as every missionary point we read in Acts. Greek was the ancient equivalent to the modern day English language. No matter where you were in the world, people spoke this language. Two books of the Old Testament also contain portions of a language called Aramaic. Aramaic was very similar to Hebrew. After the Israelites were carried away into captivity by the Babylonians, they adopted Aramaic as their language. When they returned to Jerusalem, they did not return to Hebrew, but chose to keep Aramaic as their "official" language. When Jesus spoke, he most likely spoke Aramaic. However, it is very likely that He could also speak Greek if the need arose.

Question 31: I find it hard to believe that people who do not know and have never heard of Jesus will not have a chance to go to Heaven. What about places in the world where the Bible is not permitted? These people die without a chance to hear the Gospel once. How can a God be fair and not offer these people a chance at salvation?

Answer 31: Let's begin by asking if those that never hear of Jesus can be saved. Paul dealt with this question in **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10**. In this passage, Paul describes two groups of people that will pay the penalty of eternity separated from God. First are those that do not know God. The second are those that do not obey the Gospel. In this passage, Paul demonstrates the fact that those who die without hearing the Gospel (do not know God) will not make it to Heaven. This idea is also backed up in **Acts 4:12**. If there is no salvation without Christ, a person who does not know about Christ cannot receive that salvation. There is also the idea of the Great Commission to consider. If people who never hear the Gospel are able to achieve Heaven, we actually do people a great disservice by teaching them the Gospel in the first place. If God wanted all people to be saved and they could be saved without hearing the Gospel, Jesus should have instructed His Apostles to teach no one. This would ensure eternal salvation for most people. What makes this answer difficult for Christians to accept? The truth is that this is hard for us. This means that there are millions of people dying each year without a chance at Heaven simply because they are not born in a place where the Gospel is available to them...Or does it? I want us to consider two more passages tonight. First, let's read **Romans 1:18-20**. All people everywhere are left without excuse by the world we live in. Anyone who sees this world knows that something greater than them made it. Next, let's read **Matthew 7:7-8**. The world is evidence enough to convince people of a higher power. God is powerful enough to reach anywhere in the world. If a person seeks for the true God, he will find Him. God makes sure of that. When the Berlin Wall fell, American missionaries were allowed into the Communist Block for the first time in decades. After all this time, they found people still clinging to their Bibles and practicing their faith. God and His Word make it everywhere that there are people earnestly seeking. We should not end this discussion without taking notice of one more thing. God is able to take our environment into consideration on judgment without being unfair. For instance, a person raised in a Christian home would be ready to make a commitment to Christ by the age of say 13 or 14. However, a person raised in a Muslim family may not be ready to face accountability until he is old enough to question his own beliefs. God can handle this by knowing the hearts and desires of all mankind. Let us use the state of those lost in ignorance to motivate our own evangelism efforts.

Question 33: How do we respectfully get rid of an old Bible?

Answer 33: First, let us understand that the printed pages of the Bible are not holy. The Word of God is bigger than any page. Sometimes, the respectful thing to do to a Bible may be to throw it away. This should only be done when a Bible is worn beyond reasonable use (pages falling out, tears or holes in the text, missing pages). In other cases, I would suggest donating old Bibles. Take it to Goodwill and hope someone takes it home to use it. Stick it in a doctor's office. Find someone who needs a Bible and give it to them. This act can make an excellent evangelism contact. Find missionaries to see if they could send them to foreign fields. We need to make sure we respect our Bibles. We need to try to keep them in good condition. When we trade ours in, we need to pass our old ones on if at all possible.

Question 34: Explain how Proverbs 26:4-5 does not represent a contradiction.

Question 34: This is certainly an interesting passage. It seems that the contradiction is simply too great to overcome. After all, these passages literally say the exact opposite of each other. First, we need to remember that we are reading from Proverbs. The Proverbs represent a special class of writing. They were written as general rules or ideas, but were not meant to be taken as literal. This does not help us much with this passage, but it does need to be remembered as you study Proverbs. Now let's get the context of this passage. These verses appear in the middle of a very long discussion of the foolish men in the world and how a wise man should deal with them. I believe the Jews had the right idea concerning this passage. Basically, sometimes you need to answer a fool, and sometimes you don't. Circumstances dictate which option we should take. Arguing with a fool for arguments sake is a waste of time and makes us as foolish as they are. However, arguing with a fool who may be leading others into foolishness or may be trying to leave his own foolishness should be done. Everything depends on the motive of the fool asking the question. Part of being a wise man means knowing when to answer and when to remain silent.

Question 35: In Hebrews 13:17, what does "give an account" mean?

Answer 35: In short, this passage means that it is a heavy burden to be an elder in the Lord's Church. Those appointed to keep watch over our souls are our elders (**Acts 20:17, 28**). Because they receive this appointment, they receive a great responsibility. On judgment day, elders will answer for the souls of their sheep. This does not mean that an elder who loses a sheep goes to hell with that sheep. The point being made here is that the shepherds have a responsibility to do all that is in their power to maintain the spiritual health of the family of God. When a sheep gets sick and falls back into the world, elders must reach out and seek to save that lost soul. When they fail to do this, they must be ready to give an answer for that failure. All sins, even an elder's sin can be forgiven. Elders can learn from their mistakes and repent of their shortcomings like all people (**1 John 1:8-9**). When this happens, they have a defense to their failure. When this does not happen, they face the consequences of their mistakes.

Question 36: Why is Jesus called the Son of Man?

Answer 36: The title Son of Man was used by Jesus no less than forty times in the Gospels. It was one of His favorite titles to use. However, Jesus was not the first to use this title. Ezekiel is referred to as the son of man no less than ninety times in the book which carries his name. Like other titles, Son of Man carries a multiplicity of meanings. First, it shows a universal message to be delivered. Both Jesus and Ezekiel carried a message from God that could change the world. Ezekiel's message was universal to the Jews, but Christ's message was for the entire world. Next, this title shows the humanity of the messenger. Jesus was the Son of God. However, He was completely human in every sense of the word. By using this title, Jesus reminds us that we have a high priest who can identify with us. I believe this was also a way for Jesus to reveal Himself without truly revealing Himself. Before His time had come, Jesus could use this title which had an obvious messianic meaning (**Daniel 7:13-14**) without truly announcing His messianic nature. After all, Ezekiel was a son of man too. Each title used by Jesus is important to

us because it identifies a piece of who Jesus truly was. For that reason, we should spend time in studying these titles.

Question 37: Are there angels and demons on earth today? Do angels take human form today? Read Hebrews 13:2.

Answer 37: This passage is an interesting one. There are two possible ways to interpret this passage which fit with the information revealed in the Word of God. First, this could be a reference back to Abraham who entertained angels just before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. However, I think a better understanding of this passage is to remember that the word angel simply means messenger. It is used in the Bible of God's prophets as well as spiritual beings. This passage tells us to be hospitable because we may entertain angels unaware. During the time of the N.T. this would have occurred. A stranger would have visited a new city completely unknown by the locals. When someone extended a meal and a room, they would in turn receive the blessing of hearing the Word of God proclaimed to their household. When we offer hospitality to strangers, we simply do not know what kind of impact that may have. So are there angels on earth today? We don't know where the angels are today. We know that their role has been replaced by the Word of God. They no longer carry God's messages to the world. They no longer interact with man. Beyond this, we simply cannot be sure of their current state.

Demons are a different matter. Some believe demons were fallen angels who were allowed power during the Christian age. Others believe that these were the souls of wicked men who were allowed to return from Hades during the Christian age. Either option has no bearing whatsoever on the question at hand. Demons may or may not be on the earth today. If they are, they are completely powerless and are held at bay by God. Demon possession does not occur in today's world because its place in God's plan is no longer needed. Like New Testament miracles, one only needs to read the New Testament to see that Christ had power over the demons of the age.

Question 38: Who were the people Cain feared would kill him? Where did Cain's wife come from? Read Genesis 4:8-17.

Answer 38: Both of these questions are actually answered by one response. **Read Genesis 5:4-5.** Based on this passage, we know that Adam and Eve had other children. We have no idea how many children made up this family, but from this family came the entirety of the human race (**Genesis 3:20**). So, who were the people that might have killed Cain? It would have been the brothers of Abel who would have risen up to follow after Cain. These men would have sought out retribution for the blood of their brother if God did not intervene on Cain's behalf. Who did Cain find to marry in the land of Nod? The answer is no one. The land of Nod was not a location. It was simply a general direction of the wandering which Cain had to endure (**Genesis 4:12**). Cain's wife was most likely his sister or possibly a niece. She was also most likely with him as he left his home to begin serving his sentence. Remember that God's plan for populating the world would have taken into account the idea of close relatives being fruitful and multiplying.

Question 39: When did last names appear in the Bible?

Answer 39: I am not sure there is a great answer to be given to this question. In a sense, last names appear in the Bible as soon as the first genealogy appears in the Bible. Last names are nothing more than a connection to our family. For the Jews, genealogies were of utmost importance. Tracing one's ancestry was not just a hobby; it was a vital part of Jewish life. Your family connection meant everything in the Jewish world. Numerous Old Testament prophets begin their books by identifying themselves and their father. By the New Testament times, we see Jesus referring to Peter as Simon Barjonah (**Matthew 16:17**).

Question 40: Please define proper dress at worship services.

Answer 40: Read 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Proper dress in worship services is a difficult topic to consider. The reason for this is that we have to allow that society plays a role in what is considered appropriate attire. What is modest in 2012 would have been an arrestable offence in 1800. What was modest in the first century Roman world would have been considered immodest in the 1600's. With that in mind, let us take a look at the passage in question.

The word modestly literally means "with shamefulness" (Thayer's). In other words, you should dress with shamefulness at home so that you will not be ashamed in public. The word discreetly literally means "discreetly, with self-control". I believe the ultimate goal of worship attire should be that it does not draw attention to yourself. This can mean many different things. The example given here is that of dressing to show wealth. Other ways to violate this command may include: not covering up, wearing hats, overdressing, underdressing, etc. With all this said, we live in an interesting time. Our society is changing "dress attire". Our society is also seeking to deformalize worship attire. We are in a transition period (much like we had a few years ago with women wearing pants). What should we do? I think the number one rule we should follow is to think of each other. Young people need to put themselves in their older brother's and sister's shoes. Remember that with all the poverty that engrossed the lives of those setting beside us in the pews, they still had "Sunday clothes" because they saw it as important to honoring God. They also must understand that God does indeed set standards for worship attire and must dress with self-control to not try to prove points in what they wear. Older Christians must remember that God is not a respecter of the clothes we wear. They must see that the idea of what constitutes "Sunday clothes" is a constantly changing idea. If we remember to do this, we will put other people ahead of ourselves and we will find a happy medium.

Question 42: In Acts 2:4, the Holy Spirit descends on the Apostles. In Acts 4:31, the Holy Spirit comes upon them again. Please explain.

Answer 42: The descending of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 was a special event. It was the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus Christ made in John 16. In this moment, the Apostles received three things. First, they received the ability to speak in tongues (displayed in the "tongues of fire"). Second, they were guided into all truth. Finally, they gained the ability to pass these powers on to others (Acts 8). The key to understanding what happens in Acts 4 (and in other places as well) is to note that the Spirit never left once it arrived.

Throughout Acts, the Apostles (including Paul) were said to be filled with the Spirit at various times. I think the idea of all this is to simply remind us that the Spirit was continuing to work through the Apostles. The Spirit never left the Apostles. Each time they spoke in the name of Christ, they were under the influence of the knowledge given to them by the Holy Spirit. Every miracle they performed was through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, these men were consistently “filled with the Spirit”. I believe it is specifically mentioned here because of the courage they were going to require to stand up to those that were threatening them.

Question 43: Does Genesis 1:28-30 tell us that there were no carnivores in the initial creation?

Answer 43: This is a good curiosity question. Under the patriarchal system, the commandments of God are simply not spelled out for us. For this reason, any dietary restrictions placed on those that lived during this dispensation are not necessarily known. With that in mind, we need to read **Genesis 9:2-5**. It does indeed appear that man was not eating meat until after Noah and his family exited the ark. At this moment, God grants Noah the right to eat animals. This could have been done for numerous reasons and we simply will not spend time trying to explain God’s reasons.

All this is simply a reminder to us of how little we truly know about the pre-flood world. What was that place like? What types of fruits were available for man? What animals were domesticated in Abel’s flocks? How did they survive without ever tasting a steak or bacon? It is fun to imagine what it was like, but in truth we are given very little information concerning it.

Question 44: Does God have a plan for your life? Does He have a certain career picked out for you? Does He have a certain spouse picked out for you?

Answer 44: We need to break this question up into its two parts. Let’s deal with the first part of the question. Does God have a plan for your life? The answer is yes. God has a plan laid out for every single person that has ever lived on this earth. The plan is very simple. God wants every single one of us to make it to Heaven (**2 Peter 2:9**). The problem is that not everyone is willing to follow the plan.

Now let’s dive into what I believe is the real question. Does God have individual plans laid out for each and every person here? Does He want certain people in this world to be garbage men, mailmen, soldiers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, politicians, etc.? Does He handpick spouses for us? Does He individually direct our steps in such a way as to exercise control over our lives? I believe the answer is no. God gives us guidelines which will help us accomplish His overall plan for our lives (Heaven). For instance, He places guidelines for His People concerning who will make the best spouse for us (**2 Corinthians 6:14-15**). With these guidelines in place, God establishes the very same plan for all people to follow. However, I think it is a dangerous thing to believe God is guiding our steps in an individual way. To do this is to take all the responsibility for our choices and place it squarely on God’s shoulders. Where there is choice, there is responsibility. God never takes our ability to choose our own path away from us. In all this, we must remember that God can work around your plan if you allow Him full control of your life.

Question 45: Does Satan have to stand before God at the last judgment? What about the other angels?

Answer 45: John described the final judgment in **Revelation 20:11-15**. Here, as in other descriptions of the judgment, Satan is not mentioned as taking part in this judgment. Because we know little concerning the angels, we will handle this with an educated guess and nothing more. I believe the angels are held to a higher standard than humans. They live in the very presence of God. They have interacted with God for centuries. They have seen the very face of God. For this reason, they are held to a higher standard. I believe Satan has already been judged. He faces an eternity separated from the presence of God. For Satan, his time on earth may be compared to the rich man of Luke 16. His waiting place is here. His judgment is sure. I believe Satan's role in the judgment will be as the first being cast into Hell. His angels will follow after him. After this, those who face the retribution of God will descend into the lake of fire as well. I think it is better for us to think of Satan as opening the doors of hell as God casts him down than to think of him standing at our side waiting to be judged as we will.

As far as the other angels, they will have no reason to face the judgment. They have proven themselves to be righteous beings. We know this because they did not follow after Satan in his rebellion and they are still in service to God. Their role in the judgment is seen as being gatherers (**Matthew 13:37-39**). We must remember that based on history angels who rebel face an immediate judgment as they are cast out of Heaven. Any angel who remains in God's service has already faced His judgment and has been found innocent.

Question 46: Why do you refer to an angel as "it"? Aren't Michael and Gabriel referred to as "He"?

Answer 46: This resulted from last month's fishbowl night. During that sermon I referred to angels as an "it". The reason for this is found in **Luke 20:27-36**. In this passage, Jesus deals with the special nature of angels. They are spiritual beings and do not conform to the physical standards of this world. With that being said, there is nothing wrong at all with referring to angels as males. The Bible is filled with angels being connected with masculinity. In fact, I don't believe there is a single mention of female angels in the Bible. I refer to them as "it" simply to make note of their special spiritual nature. However, don't be surprised at all if I call an angel he at some point.

Question 47: When was Satan bound and who bound him?

Answer 47: Read Revelation 20:1-3. Anytime that we are dealing with the book of Revelation, we must be careful that our understanding of the vision is in line with our understanding of the rest of the New Testament. Many have fallen into the trap of basing their doctrines on this book of apocryphal visions and symbols while completely ignoring the clear teachings of other books. With that in mind, let us take a look at this passage.

As we answer the first question asked, we must ask when Satan was "unbound" on this earth. That answer comes in two basic forms. First, Satan was unbound in the sense that he was able to use direct contact with individuals in order to lead them into sin (See Luke 4) and even control

individuals for his service (demonic possession). The second sense in which we can understand this is in the sense that until God's Word spread through the Gentile world, Satan had the power to deceive nations because they had little or no point of reference. Imagine trying to serve God in a world where the Bible does not exist! In either case, the time of binding is the same. Satan was bound by the full revelation of the Word of God shortly after the time of Christ.

Now for the second question. Who bound Satan? The key of the angel is a sign of power and authority. There is only one thing on this earth that can destroy the power of Satan to lure souls into his fold. The key is the Word of God. With it, any person can stand against the schemes of Satan and achieve eternal salvation of their soul (Romans 1:16, Luke 4).

In our world today, Satan is limited in what he can do to us. Because God chose to end New Testament miracles, He also chose to end Satan's power to use supernatural means in order to win souls. Satan is also limited in his ability to pull people from God because all of us can turn to the pages of the Bible to discover the truth. In these two ways, Satan has been bound by God through the power of the Bible.

Question 48: Are widows (as in Acts 6:1) treated differently than single, unmarried women? When reading Acts 6:1 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10, does the Bible imply that we are to treat males differently than females with regard to their food and personal needs?

Answer 48: Read Acts 6:1 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10. I think the key word to look at in regards to this question is the word "willing" found in 2 Thessalonians. This word literally means having a desire to do something. So as we examine this passage in particular, I believe it is designed to protect the church from those that would take advantage of her. If a person is physically unable to work, or has lost their job for some unforeseen reason and requires financial support, the church can help that individual because they are willing, but unable to work. We actually see this taking place in **1 Corinthians 16:1-4**. Now let us take this idea with us to the situation we read in Acts.

In the book of Acts, we read of a group of widows who were being overlooked in the "daily serving of food". This tells us a couple of things. First, the early church was a benevolent church. Second, widows were part of the focus of this benevolent program. To completely understand this, we need to examine the roles of women in the Jewish and Roman worlds. In both cases, women were very limited. Especially at the time of the New Testament, women who were widows had very few options. Their children should take care of them, but this was not always done. They could make their way into business, but this was unbelievably difficult (especially in the Jewish world). Even if a widow was willing to work, she may not be able to do so. This led the early church to step in. It is for this reason that the early church made the distinction between widows and other women. I also find it interesting the Paul had to address widows specifically and their ability to get financial support from the in church in **1 Timothy 5:3-4, 9-16**. Here we are provided with specific guidelines on giving of our funds to widows. Even in the earliest days, the church had a hard time deciding who to help and who not to help.

Question 49: Clarify “miracle” as used in today’s terminology. Discuss the difference between answered prayers and miracles.

Answer 49: The Greek word translated miracle derives its meaning from the word for power. In short, a miracle is a supernatural display of power from God. In today’s world, we throw around the term miracle very loosely. As we examine this question, we must first say that New Testament miracles have ceased on this earth. The power for men to perform miracles in the name of Christ died within two generations of the church (**Acts 8:18**). Now let us deal with the question of whether or not we still have miracles today.

I believe it is very possible that God continues to work outside of natural means to accomplish His goals on the earth. Based on this, I cannot say that miracles have ceased. I can however say that we cannot identify them. God can answer prayers any way He sees fit. When He uses natural means, it is hard to call that a miracle. On the other hand, if God chooses to use supernatural means to work on this earth, a miracle has taken place. How do we know the difference? I don’t believe we can. Perhaps God only uses natural means, or perhaps He uses divine intervention. Either way, we should give Him the glory for His work in our lives.

Question 50: In what manner did Jesus escape the angry crowd that had led Him out of the city to throw Him over a cliff (Luke 4:28-30).

Answer 50: This is one of the most interesting accounts in the life of Christ. He has appeared in His hometown of Nazareth and through His lesson in the synagogue, has declared Himself to be the promised Messiah. As this message sinks into the listeners’ hearts, Jesus knows they will never accept what He has said. Undoubtedly the murmuring of the people had already begun as Jesus defends Himself. He points out that a prophet is without honor in his hometown (4:24). He points out that the people will seek a sign as He has performed in Capernaum (4:23). Then He gives several illustrations from the Old Testament explaining that God often worked outside of the nation of Israel to perform His signs and wonders (4:25-27). It was at this moment that the mob mentality consumed this group. Anger and jealousy filled their hearts as they examined the words of Jesus. They rushed forward and drove Jesus to a high cliff. Then, Jesus “passed through their midst and went on His way” (4:30). This may be the most anticlimactic account in all the New Testament. There can simply be no way to know how Jesus did this. It could have been in all the confusion He was somehow able to elude His attackers. It could be that supernatural forces were at work. In either case, the Son of God was not ready to be murdered. Until that time came, this group never stood a chance of fulfilling their desires for blood.

Question 51: Based on Ephesians 5:27, I have heard it preached that we do not have to worry about keeping the church pure; rather God does that Himself.

Answer 51: Read Ephesians 5:25-27. I don’t want to overstate this, but I believe this may be one of the most dangerous sermons I have never heard. First, let’s deal with the text itself to say what is actually being said here. Paul is not writing to remove our responsibilities of keeping the church pure. Rather, he is describing the actions of Christ to bring about the purity of those in the church. Without the blood of Christ, no one can be presented without spot or wrinkle. It is only through the ultimate loving sacrifice of Christ on the cross that we can be purified of our sins.

However, this does not mean that we have no responsibility to Christ. Unless we are willing to follow God's plan for us, we still cannot be presented as holy to Christ. Christ is working through our obedience to cleanse our sins.

Next, let's take a look at some clear places that tell Christians to do their part to maintain purity within the church. In Acts 20:28-31, Paul gives the commandment to elders at Ephesus to maintain the doctrinal purity of the church. Why do this if Christ will handle it Himself? In Romans 16:17-18, Paul gives the commandment to all members to "turn away" from those that teach false doctrines. Why do this if Christ will do it Himself? Jesus told the church to treat the fallen, unrepentant sinner as a Gentile and tax-collector (Matthew 18:15-17). Why do this if Christ can handle it Himself? Paul commanded Christians to break ties with unrepentant backsliders (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Again, why do this if Christ will do it Himself? This is only a tiny sampling of the warnings for Christians to act when they see sin in their midst.

Christ will present Himself a holy group of people on judgment day. However, He is counting on us to maintain the purity of His church while we are on this earth.

Question 52: How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

Answer 52: A woodchuck could chuck very much wood if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

Question 53: Was Satan not bound when God told him that he could test Job but could not take his life?

Answer 53: This comes from a question in last month's fishbowl concerning the binding of Satan found in Revelation chapter 20. **Read Job 1:9-12.** Satan was certainly limited on what he could and could not do to Job. However, the account in Revelation indicates a much bigger picture. It is not just that God is limiting Satan's power in one specific instance. Rather, the scene in Revelation depicts a time when Satan would be fully bound by the Gospel for all people. God has always placed certain limits on Satan. If not, Satan would simply wait for us to sin and kill us immediately. However, the final binding took place when the Gospel bound him in his eternal fate.

Question 54: I often hear in a prayer during the Lord's Supper to take the bread and fruit of the vine in a manner well-pleasing in God's sight. What would be an unpleasing way in God's sight?

Answer 54: Read 1 Corinthians 11:26-29. Like all acts of worship, partaking of the communion is both physical and mental. The physical act is to drink of the fruit of the vine and eat of the bread. The mental act is two-fold. First, a person is supposed to be focusing their hearts and minds on the cross of Calvary (**1 Corinthians 11:23-25**). Second, a person is supposed to be examining their lives to make sure that the sacrifice on Calvary is working in their lives. If these two ideas are ignored, a person has taken the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner.

This takes three different forms that we can consider. First, if a person does not think of the cross during communion, they have partaken in an unworthy manner. God wants your body and your heart for worship! Second, if a person refuses to examine his or her life during the communion, they have partaken in an unworthy manner. Finally, if a person examines their life, finds sin, and ignores it, they have partaken of the communion in an unworthy manner. It is a very serious thing to partake of the memorial feast in an unworthy manner and each Christian must be sure not to fall into that trap (**1 Corinthians 11:29-31**).

Question 55: How did Satan fight Satan?

Answer 55: Read Matthew 12:26. This passage takes place in a larger scene in the life of Christ. Jesus heals a demon-possessed man and is attacked by the Pharisees. Since they have witnessed the miracle first-hand, they cannot deny the power of Christ. Instead, they accuse Him of using the power of Beelzebul to cast out demons. The passage in question is a rhetorical question asked by Jesus to prove a point. When He asks this question, He means to point out how silly it would be for Satan to cast out demons. The ridiculousness of the idea of Satan fighting against himself by casting out demons showed the ridiculousness of the Pharisees accusing Christ of using Satan's power.

Question 56: Even though it is wrong to participate in the lottery, is it wrong to accept the HOPE (Tn Lottery) scholarship?

Answer 56: I agree with this person that participating in the lottery is a sinful practice. In a world that has come to the conclusion that the ends justify any means, legalized gambling has become commonplace. The dangers of this activity cannot be overemphasized. A lottery ticket is an open door for Satan to plant the seeds of greed, idolatry, addiction, and idleness. With all that said, let us turn our attention to the end that was used to justify this dangerous practice.

According to the State of Tennessee web site, graduates who reach certain requirements may receive up to \$6,000 per year up to four years. In other words, the lottery pays every graduate that meets their standards \$24,000 if they choose to attain a four-year degree. This idea built the lottery and allowed it to become legal in the state of Tennessee. Should Christians accept this money? To answer this question, I want us to read **John 17:13-16**. From this passage, we get the idea that Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. There is simply no way to remove ourselves from the world around us.

How does this relate the question at hand? I do not believe that a person commits a sin when they accept this scholarship any more than any of us commit a sin when we drive down the street or call the police department. Government services are paid for by taxes. To this point, our government has not excluded sinful things such as alcohol or tobacco from their list of taxable goods. In short, if we were to demand that students not accept these funds, we would have to demand of ourselves not to use any government helps (roads, police, fireman, military, social security, disability, welfare, public television, etc). With all this said, there is one more passage to consider (**James 4:17**). I think we have to leave this issue up to each individual person. If you as an individual do not think that you should accept this scholarship, \$24,000 is not enough to

sell your peace of mind. I would urge all of our graduates and our parents to examine this issue for yourselves and make sure you do not violate your own conscience in the process.

Question 57: In Revelation, John tells of a New Heaven and New Earth. What does John mean by this?

Answer 57: Read Revelation 21:1-9. As we all know, one specific religious groups has turned this passage into the idea that our earth will be destroyed only to produce a new physical planet where perfect peace will exist. Those who are not “faithful” enough to reach Heaven will instead receive a place on this new planet. All of this sounds good until you compare any number of other texts concerning the judgment day and eternity. We could spend time on this, but instead, we will simply answer the question that has been asked.

The book of Revelation is a book of symbols (**Revelation 1:1**- KJV correctly renders “communicated” as “signified” in this passage). Until one understands and accepts this, the book will lead us into a path of misunderstanding. Now let us consider the passage in question. I believe that the symbols used in this passage are meant to direct us to a specific place in our Bibles. That place is **Genesis 1:1**. In the creation account, we need to figure out just what created. He did not simply create a planet...He created a home for His People. In the same way, John does not mean that a new planet will replace this one. Rather, he means that God will give His People a new home. In this new home, God will reestablish some of the initial parts of creation. 1) He will recreate the direct contact He had in the garden (21:3). 2) He will recreate the innocence of His creation (21:8). 3) He will recreate immortality by granting access to the tree of life (22:2). What are the New Heavens and the New Earth? They are simply a way of telling us that our Heavenly home is a great place to be!

Question 58: The Bible says to confess our sins. Is it enough to come forward and say that I have sinned or that I am a sinner?

Answer 58: Public confession is a commandment from God (**James 5:16**). Private confession is also a commandment from God (**1 John 1:8-9**). These two commandments are given because based on circumstances we need to choose whether or not public confession is necessary. Private confession should be a part of the daily repentance of a Christian. It will restore one’s relationship with God. Now let’s deal with public confession.

Public confession may be needed in two cases. The first one is that you are struggling with a sin on a consistent basis and wish to ask for the help of brothers and sisters to resist temptation. The other case is that you have lost your relationship in the church or with certain brothers or sisters in the church and wish to restore it. This involves public sin that tarnishes your reputation in some way. In these cases, one needs to make a public confession so that their reputation may be restored. In either of these cases, I believe we need to be more blunt in the sins we have committed. The more specific a person can be about the sin they have committed, the better. In this way, a person leaves little or no doubt as to what their struggle is and what they are seeking forgiveness for. I believe this makes public confession far more useful to us in our daily lives.

Question 59: First Corinthians 11:20-22 seems to indicate that the Lord's Supper at one time was a meal. Why and when did it change?

Answer 59: The New Testament indicates that the Lord's Supper was indeed a part of a larger meal in the church (Jude 12). However, a man named Justin Martyr gave a full description of the worship of the early church and does not mention such a feast. By 165 A.D. (J.M.'s death), this practice seems to have been absent from the worship services. This helps us to know when it changed.

As far as why it changed, the answer lies in the passage under consideration. In the early church, it was very useful for a meal to be prepared for the church to partake in. The poor of the church could partake in a meal with the rich and be cared for by them at this time. As we say before the contribution is collected, this was separate and apart from the communion but was conducted at a similar time because of convenience. Very quickly, problems arose from this. People began to treat the Lord's Supper as they had done during their pagan feasts. They began to celebrate and party for their worship services. This came to a head with Paul's instructions. He insisted that they were not behaving appropriately. The Lord's Supper was a time for sober remembrance, not celebratory hoopla. The option he gave was simple. These people had no choice but to practice the weekly communion. However, the meal was completely optional. Paul insisted that this group either straighten up or forget the meal. It seems that within a hundred years or so most congregations gave up their meal.

Question 60: Jesus came across false miracle workers and approved of their actions. Please explain.

Answer 60: Read Mark 9:38-40. I think this is one of the most interesting passages in the life of Christ. What unfolds here is fascinating and is in fact a great lesson for us. We will ask a few questions concerning this passage that might come to mind as we read it.

First, where did this man get the power to exorcise demons? There are two possible answers here. The first is that this man was a false miracle worker. I personally don't hold this belief because the Apostles recognize his power. However, some believe that the Apostles were simply mistaken in their belief that he truly performed a miracle. The other option is that this man is in fact a believer in Christ who has had some sort of contact with Him. This makes sense because he obviously believes in the power of Christ. The idea with this is that the Apostles were jealous because they had given up everything to follow Christ, but this man was able to do the same works in his home.

Second, why did Jesus not condemn this man? In this, we get a glimpse into the heart of the man. Jesus shows this man to be a man with an open heart. This man performing these works is seen as someone who will accept the power of Christ when he sees it working. For this reason, Christ does not condemn the man. He may not realize it yet, but this exorcist is well on his way to giving up all in service to Christ Himself.

There are more questions to be asked, but we will leave it here. I will also point out that we do not know enough about this man to understand entirely the passage at hand. Who is he? Where

did he come from? How did he know Jesus? Did Jesus give him this power? Did he become a follower? All these questions are lost to history, so don't drive yourself crazy with this particular passage.

I also want to mention one lesson learned here. Watchdogism is a dangerous thing. The Apostles were basically tattling on this man because he was not with them. The New Testament is clear that we must stand for the right in every fight that comes our way. It is even clear that sometimes we must mark people for their false teaching or rebellious lifestyle. However, we must never think of ourselves as a taskmaster just waiting for someone to step out of line.

Question 61: How do you recognize Satan? How can you tell if he is working on you?

Answer 61: The way to recognize Satan is very simple. The first step is to learn all you can about God and His nature. Invest your time into studying God's interactions with mankind. The second step is to look at the world around you. Who are you surrounding yourself with? What do you watch or listen to? What fills your heart's desires? The third step is to find all the things that are contrary to the nature of God you have spent time investigating. Anything contrary to God is in fact the work of Satan himself in one form or another.

The way to know if Satan is working on you is also easy. **Read 1 Peter 5:8.** Satan is described as a lion looking for prey in this passage. I want all of us to participate in an experiment tonight. Ask audience to take in a breath of air and release it. If you were able to complete this task, Satan is without a doubt working on you or figuring out a new way to attack you.

Question 62: Will God create another world after the Judgment Day has come and ended?

Answer 62: This question comes off of our last fishbowl night. It dies in directly with that night's question so I will review it very quickly. In Revelation 21:1-9, John tells of a new heaven and new earth. As we pointed out last month, I believe this simply refers to the idea that God will create a new home for His people. I believe this passage points us back the beginning of the human race when God created the heavens and the earth (i.e. our home).

The answer to tonight's question hinges on this idea. It also hinges on one well-known passage. **Read John 14:1-6.** Jesus is giving instructions to His apostles at this time. He is preparing them for His death. In preparing them, He tells them that He is going somewhere to prepare a place for His followers. He then tells them that if He goes, He will also come back to take them to the place where He is going. Now all we have to do is figure out where Jesus went. **Read Acts 1:11.** Our place after judgment is not a new world. It is a place in Heaven with Jesus and God. To believe that God will recreate our world is to ignore this teaching and reveals an overinvestment in the physical world.

Question 63: How do you compare texts that tell us to be confident in our salvation with texts telling us that some will have confidence and be lost?

Answer 63: Read Matthew 7:21-23 and 1 John 5:13. To the naked eye, these two texts seem to stand in contradiction to each other. One seems to tell us that we can't be sure of our salvation

while the other seems to tell us we can know the state of our salvation. The question we must ask is which is it?

I think the answer to this question lies in what we place our confidence in. In the case where Jesus says that some will believe they are saved when they are not, these people put their confidence in their works rather than the teachings of Christ. This is a plan that leads to destruction. However, in the case of John's writing, he tells us that we can have confidence in our salvation by the things that are written. The way to have true confidence in our salvation is by conforming our lives to the Word of God. When we allow God's Word to direct each step we take, we can be sure that we are on our way to Heaven. However, when we choose to put our faith in man-made doctrines or our own spirituality, we will most likely be shocked on judgment day when Christ rejects us.

Question 64: What is the first mention of prayer in the Bible?

Answer 64: The first mention of prayer in the Bible is found in **Genesis 20:7, 17**. In this passage, God instructs Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham so that Abraham might offer a prayer on behalf of the king. This is the first occasion where the word prayer is mentioned. However, this is not the first time in human history that prayer is used by man. Many sound scholars believe that the book of Job predates the great flood of Genesis chapter 6. In **Job 22:27**, we have one of Job's friends exhorting him to pray. Chronologically speaking, Job almost certainly predates Abraham so it becomes the first recorded use of the word prayer. With all this said, it is most likely that prayer has been a part of man's relationship with God since the very beginning. After losing contact with God in the Garden of Eden, God gave prayer as a way for us to make our requests and give our thanksgiving to Him.

Question 65: When comparing Acts 20:7 with Acts 2:42, 46, how can we be certain that the Lord's Supper should only be partaken of on Sunday?

Answer 65: Let's begin by taking a long look at the Acts 2 passages. These two scriptures have left many people in a state of confusion. However, this does not have to be the case. The key to understanding these two texts is to realize that they describe two very different things in two very different ways. In Acts 2:42, we have the word "continually" or "steadfastly" being used to describe one event. To understand that event, we simply need to look at the things it consists of 1) A lesson from the Apostles 2) Fellowship (the same word used to describe the contribution in Romans 15:26 3) Breaking of Bread (a reference to the Lord's Supper) 4) prayer. Nothing more than a New Testament worship service is being described here. Special times of worship have always been a part of the New Testament church and we see here how vital they were. The steadfastly simply means that these people did not miss worship services.

In Acts 2:46, we see a very different word used. It literally means "every day". These Christians were a part of each other's lives. They met to learn more every day. They broke bread (which here means partook of meals together as seen by the description of breaking bread used) and praised God. Like all Christians, these people did not forget God when they left worship services.

Now let us deal with Acts 20:7. This passage is often ripped from its most vital piece of context. Paul arrived in Troas seven days before these events took place (20:6). We know that on the first day of the week they come together with the church for the purpose of “breaking bread”. Now all we have to do is decide if this is meal time or communion time. The answer lies in the context. Paul did not wait in Troas seven days to eat a meal. He waiting in Troas for the opportunity to worship with the saints. The Lord’s Day was special to them. Partially because it ensured that the whole church would be gathered and partially because it was the time for the communion. As we read, we see that Paul was right in the middle of travelling. Why not simply change the day for the worship service and communion? He could not do this because he did not have the authority to do it. In the same way, neither do we.

Question 66: Please explain Christ’s 1,000-year reign.

Answer 66: Read **Revelation 20:1-4**. To answer this question, we must gain an understanding of the popular false doctrine of premillennialism. Based on a literal view of Revelation, many believe in this doctrine. It states that Christ came to this earth to establish His earthly kingdom. However, because the Jews rejected Christ, God was forced to establish the church instead. One day, Jesus is going to come back to this earth. He will establish a literal earthly Kingdom whose capital will be Jerusalem. He will sit on His throne in Jerusalem and reign in peace with the saints for 1,000 years. After this, Satan will be loosed and will wreak havoc on the world. These events will culminate in the final battle of good and evil called Armageddon. Jesus will defeat Satan in this battle and the saved of the earth will go to Heaven with Him. (This is the edited version).

There are numerous problems with this doctrine:

- 1) It relies almost exclusively on a literal view of Revelation.
- 2) It relegates the church which God called eternal to an afterthought.
- 3) It tells us that Satan actually stopped the plans of God.

Now let us turn our attention back to the original question. The 1,000 year reign mentioned in Revelation is a symbolic representation. Revelation is part of a genre called apocalyptic literature. This style of literature is used to reveal messages of impending doom to the enemies of God’s people. The 1,000 year reign represents a time when Christ will rule over His Kingdom with complete authority. We know that the Kingdom of Christ is already here (**Mark 9:1**). We also know that Christ is currently reigning over the church. What is the 1,000 year reign? It is the time we are currently living in. The 1,000 year reign is simply a symbolic representation of the Christian Age.

Question 67: Where is the Ark of the Covenant? Why are Christians today not searching for it?

Answer 67: Read **Exodus 25:10-22**. The Ark of the Covenant was special to the people of Israel. In many ways, it represented their special relationship with God. It was often taken into battle to represent God’s presence on the field. It was kept pure and undefiled because only priests were supposed to look upon it. It was protected in the Temple with the most holy objects in the nation of Israel. Our question is “what happened to it?” All we know for certain is that it

disappears from history around the time of the Babylonian captivity. A few theories exist as to what happened to it...

- 1) Some believe that it was shipped to Ethiopia for safe keeping when the Babylonians approached and remains there today.
- 2) Some believe it was hidden by Jeremiah inside a cave around Jerusalem (story taken from 2nd Maccabees).
- 3) Some believe it is buried under the city of Jerusalem.
- 4) Others believe it was carried off in captivity and eventually destroyed.
- 5) Some believe it was discovered by the Knights Templar and shipped to Europe or America where the secret society of the Freemasons has possession of it to this day.

The power of the Ark was for a different time. Its purpose is not past. If it exists, wherever it is, it is doing nothing for those that possess it.

Question 68: If a person born of God does not sin, why do Christians?

Answer 68: Read **1 John 3:9**. The KJV renders this passage “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin”. This translation (along with NKJV) gives the impression that Christians no longer sin against God. We do not have to travel very far to find that this is not the case (**1 John 1:8**). So, what is the passage actually saying? This passage simply repeats an idea that Paul wrote in **Romans 6:1**. Christians do not continue to live a life of willful rebellion against God. To be born of God is to have God as your father. This means you will listen to and strive to obey Him. When a person who is truly born of God sins, they get out of the mud rather than wallow in it!

Question 69: If getting a tattoo isn't sinful, should we judge them at all? Wouldn't it be a sin to look at someone different since we should only judge by the standards of the Bible?

Answer 69: This is a follow-up from our last fishbowl night where we spent some time discussing tattoos and piercings. To answer this question, I want us to turn to 1 Corinthians 8. 1 Corinthians 8 contains some of the most ignored instructions in all of the New Testament. In this passage, Paul is dealing with a group of Christians who are divided over an issue. That issue is whether or not people could eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. One group said yes because idols don't exist and therefore it's just meat. One group said no because it was too close to idolatry. Paul weighs in to bring about peace. Let's notice some things that Paul says...

First, Paul indicates that no sin is being committed when someone eats meat sacrificed to idols (8:4). Next, Paul indicates that this is an issue which God is simply not concerned with (8:8). In other words, this is what we can call a grey issue (not black and white). The same can very easily be said of tattoos and excessive piercings. Next, Paul tells every Christian reading his letter that they must take into account how their actions affect other people (8:8-10). Finally, he puts the responsibility of peace on those that choose to do the action in question (8:12-13). Even when the Word of God gives us freedom to partake in a certain action, Paul tells us to sacrifice that liberty if it's going to cause harm a brother or sister (10:23-28). In other words, Paul basically tells us that if we have an issue that causes problems within the church that is not a matter of Scripture, the plan to follow is to not participate in that particular action in order to maintain unity in the bonds of Christ. This takes us back to our last fishbowl night where we said that an

action can become sinful based on numerous factors. I believe this passage would solve many problems in our churches if it would be followed as Paul instructed.

This question takes us back to a point I have made several times in this pulpit. As Christians, we must stop asking what is wrong with an action and start asking what is right with it.

Question 70: Was the Garden of Eden destroyed in the flood? If not, do we know where it is?

Answer 70: I have received this question a couple of times since the last time we answered it so I thought it was time to answer it again. After the flood, the geography of this earth would have been drastically different. We can know this simply by studying the effects of relatively “small” flooding that we see today on the earth’s terrain. For this reason, there is simply no way to know where the Garden of Eden was located. Theories are abundant, but facts are few in the search for the garden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life would have been destroyed in the flood which is really what made the Garden of Eden special after the fall of man and so its protection and preservation was simply not needed after the flood of Noah’s time.

Question 71: Read Genesis 4:26. What does it mean that men “began to call on the name of the Lord”? Were men not worshipping God before this time?

Answer 71: The context of this passage helps us to understand its meaning. The context here is a contrast between the worldly Cainites who were interested in building cities and making technological advances which would help them control others and the Sethites who were interested in godly pursuits.

I think the best way to understand this passage is to first identify what it doesn’t say. First off, this passage does not mean that God gave the people His name. Eve already had a name for God (Genesis 3:3). Second, this passage does not mean that this was the first time man worshipped God. Cain and Able were worshipping God when they were offering their sacrifices to Him (Genesis 3:3-4). So what does it mean? I think it simply means that the descendents of Seth were the originators of what we would call “public” or “corporate” worship. They would come together to call on the name of God (worship) as a group rather than individually. Again, this fits perfectly with the contrast of the two sons of Adam and their descendents.

Question 72: What are the differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees?

Answer 72: To fully understand some of the debates between Christ and these two religious groups, one must first gain an understanding of the two groups in question. For this reason, this question is a vital one for Christians to answer.

1) The Pharisees believed in the entire Old Testament as the inspired Word of God while the Sadducees held only the Pentateuch in their canon. 2) The Pharisees were more of a religious sect while the Sadducees were more of an aristocratic political movement. 3) The Pharisees believed in the resurrection from the dead while the Sadducees rejected the ideas of a resurrection, immortal soul, and eternal judgment. 4) The Pharisees believed in the works of

angels while the Sadducees rejected the idea of spiritual beings. 5) The main problem Jesus had with the Pharisees was their overly strict additions to the Word of God while the main problem He had with the Sadducees was their rejection of the fundamentals of God's Word which led to their immorality.

Question 73: In Luke 16:23-26, why is Abraham able to cross over? Why is Abraham talking rather than God or Jesus?

Answer 73: The first thing for us to notice from this account is that Abraham did not cross over to the other side. He simply called over across the great chasm. This chasm was such that no one could cross to the opposite side of it (16:26).

The second question is an interesting one. Why is Abraham the voice of reason and authority rather than God? The answer to this question lies in an understanding of Hades. Hades is not Heaven. Hades is not Hell. Hades is a place of death where those who have passed from this world await the final judgment. God is not residing in this place as He resides in Heaven (Revelation 21:3-4). Based on what we know from Scripture, Jesus only made one three-day visit to the land of Hades (Luke 22:42-43). Jesus and God do not answer because they are not present to do so. All those who have lived in a way to make Heaven their home will arrive at their destination together after the coming of Christ.

Question 74: Is there any special meaning to the handkerchief from the head of Christ being left folded separate from the other cloths at the resurrection?

Answer 74: Read John 20:6-7. No moment in human history can hold a candle to the scene witnessed by John and Peter on the morning of Christ's resurrection. As they entered the tomb, they find it empty of everything except the wrappings that once contained the body of Christ. This is perhaps the greatest evidence we have for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This tomb was not robbed by someone who came in. Has anyone ever heard of robbers cleaning up their mess before leaving a house?! This tomb was not left empty by a group of scared Apostles who came through Roman soldiers to steal the body and then took the time to tidy up while the guards were sleeping! This is a sign of a man who came back from the dead calmly undoing the bindings from about His body. The details of this account fit perfectly with what we know of the ancient burial practices. The body was wrapped first and anointed with perfumes. The dead was wrapped last and done in such a way as to keep the mouth closed. If a body came back from the dead, all the cloths would not be mangled together because the head wrappings was a completely separate piece and would have been the last part to be removed (Jesus needed His hands to unwrap the head cloth and He had to unwrap His hands first). This tiny detail given by John is some of the most compelling evidence that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and undid His own wrappings.

Question 75: How did God get fish on the ark? Didn't He say two of every kind of animal and that everything died outside the ark?

Answer 75: Read Genesis 7:13-23. The fish of Noah's world were spared the fate of all other creatures. Genesis 7:14 actually gives a list of every type of animal that went into the ark and

fish are left off this list. Genesis 7:21-23 tells us that God destroyed all that was on the land as opposed to all that was outside the ark. Every creature from man to cattle to bird that breathed air died in the flood. Fish are left off this list.

Question 76: Some people say that you can get forgiveness for committing adultery and that there is only one unforgivable sin (Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit). Is this true?

Answer 76: Can the sin of adultery be forgiven? Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. The answer is yes. Paul lists adultery in with many other sins in this passage and assures us that some Christians in Corinth fit the definitions given until they were “washed”. In other words, adultery was one of the sins on the souls of some Christians in Corinth, but they had been cleansed of that sin through baptism.

Does this mean there are no earthly consequences for adultery when it is forgiven by God? Suppose a man lives his life being a serial killer. He is arrested and tried. He is convicted and sentenced to die. Before his execution, he is converted to Christ. Does this mean he is released from prison to live his life without consequences? NO! Jesus explained to us that when one divorces his wife and marries another without meeting one requirement commit adultery (Matthew 19:9). If this were to happen, a person could repent of this sin (leave the adulterous relationship) and be forgiven by God. However, this would not take away the earthly consequence that person has from their previous marriage. That person would either have to be reconciled to their first spouse or live the life of a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom (Matthew 19:12).

Question 76: Why did God curse the serpent? Wasn't he simply a medium for Satan?

Answer 76: Who was the serpent of Genesis 3:1-5? We know that this creature is a representation of Satan. We know this from his description in Revelation 12:9. Satan took the form of this serpent in order to deceive Eve. That part is easy enough.

What was the serpent of Genesis 3:1-5? This question involves a much deeper investigation. Suppose you were walking your dog one day and he suddenly looked up at you and asked you to get him a drink of water. What would you do? We need to take note of the reaction of Eve to this “talking serpent”. She was not taken aback at all. She simply responds and begins a dialogue. It is also interesting to note that this serpent was more crafty than “any beast of the field”. Notice it does not seem to put this creature in category with the beasts of the field (“any other beast of the field”). So, what was the creature? It seems that this was a creature with the power of speech which at very least walked upright and may have even flown. This was no ordinary boa constrictor as is depicted in all our coloring books!

Why did God curse him? To answer this would be to get into the mind of God. Perhaps the serpent was himself a willing accomplice to Satan on this day. Perhaps God saw the dangers of allowing such a creature in our world and removed him. Or perhaps the serpent was as innocent as the ground which was cursed for Adam's sin (3:17). In the end we simply aren't given enough information to know for sure.

Question 77: Please explain the fiery serpent of Deuteronomy 8:15 and the flying serpent of Isaiah 14:29.

Answer 77: I believe the fiery serpents of Deuteronomy seem to indicate nothing more than poisonous snakes. Fiery actually describes both the serpents and scorpions that would have been encountered by the Israelites during their exodus. It is also the same term used to describe the serpents sent by God to punish the Israelites (Numbers 21:6).

As for the flying serpent in Isaiah, we must understand that Isaiah was writing in a poetic form to illustrate the coming doom for the Philistines. The beginning of Isaiah 14 describes the fall of the Babylonian empire. God Himself will bring the empire to extinction. The middle of this passage turns its attention to the Assyrian Empire which would also be broken by God (verses 24-28). The passage in question tonight turns God's attention to the Philistines. God does not want to comfort them in the destruction of Assyria so He assures these enemies of Israel that something worse is going to come after them. This is a reference to the Babylonians who would be just as cruel and unyielding as the Assyrians were. God describes the Babylonians as a flying serpent. This is a nightmarish vision that can only be compared to the medieval fear of dragons in Europe. The Babylonians would be like a giant dragon swooping on her prey when they came for the Philistines.

Question 78: Please explain God hardening Pharaoh's heart. How does this fit in with our understanding of free will?

Answer 78: As you read through the Exodus account, Pharaoh's heart is said to be hardened (by himself, by God, or simply hardened) after each of the ten plagues and after the first sign of Aaron's rod becoming a serpent. We are going to focus in on those occasions when God was said to harden Pharaoh's heart. However, I want to mention those times that we are told that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. The simple truth is that no hardening happens without our permission.

Now let's deal with those times when the Bible clearly says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. This is often very confusing for people who have always learned that we are governed by our power to choose whether or not we serve God. Did God here take away that right for Pharaoh so that He could implement His plan to punish Egypt? The answer is no. How do we explain this? First, we must understand that as the ultimate power of the universe, God does indeed "control" everything in the sense that everything must submit to any decision He makes. In other words, when God decides something, none of us can prevent it because we cannot match His power. Second, we must understand that the Bible often refers to God doing various things which in fact were not done personally by Him. One of the best examples is the fact that God is said to be punishing nations through His use of other nations. The reason this is true is because God could in fact defeat any nation at any time. Therefore, the Bible writers indicate that God is doing this. As we read through the Bible and especially the Old Testament, we must understand that all the events that unfold take place by God's direct interference or His allowance of events to unfold. Because God allowed Pharaoh to harden his heart, He is said to have hardened the heart. In truth, as we have already noted, only Pharaoh could be responsible for his own heart.

Question 79: How can someone christen an infant for sins? Do they believe that child inherited family sins?

Answer 79: Christening of infants is a very old practice within some denominations. The basic reason for this practice is found in **Romans 5:10-14**. According to proponents of infant baptism, this passage teaches that Adam's sin is hereditary. In other words, Adam passed on his initial sin to each and every person on the planet. Sin becomes a birth defect in the human race. To correct this, infants are baptized in order to cleanse them of this sin. Let us look at a few problems that exist with this thought...

First, Jesus proclaimed the innocence of children (**Matthew 18:2-3**). Second, the Old Testament makes it clear that we will be judged for OUR actions, not our ancestors (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Ezekiel 18:20**). Third, an infant can meet no other requirements put forth by the New Testament to be forgiven (belief, hearing, repentance, confession). Finally, the passage in question reveals a problem with this doctrine. Assuming this passage actually does say that infants are born in sin, it also tells us that infants are born into Christ's righteousness (**Romans 5:18**). In truth, infants are born in innocence and remain in this state until they are capable of understanding God's plan for them.

Question 80: How can a person be perfect when no one is perfect?

Answer 80: Read Matthew 5:48. This is one of the passages of the Bible that seems difficult until we learn one secret concerning one of the words found within it. The word we need to focus in on is "perfect". In our language, this word means without flaw. With that understanding, we would find this passage in direct opposition to John's teaching (**1 John 1:10**). In the Greek language, this word meant something similar, but different. The Greek word translated "perfect" in the New Testament means that it is lacking in nothing necessary to be complete or whole. In other words, Christ's commandment here means that we are to be lacking in nothing that is offered from God in order to make us complete or whole. I think the easiest way to understand this is to understand that Christians are perfected by Christ rather than be without fault on their own.

Question 81: I know the world celebrates Christmas as the day of Christ's birth. Should the church do this? Why or why not?

Answer 81: As we start this question, let us consider the history of Christmas for just a moment. The Christmas Holiday was instituted by the Catholic Church sometime around the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) which made the Christian religion the official state religion of Rome. As this happened, there was pressure for Christian leaders (the beginning of the Catholic hierarchy) to embrace certain elements of the older pagan religions in order to be more appealing to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. One way of doing this was to take the old dates and traditions of Pagan festivals and transform them into Christian holy days. And so December 25th which had formerly been a day to celebrate the Roman god Saturn became a day to celebrate Christ's birth. During the week-long festival honoring Saturn, there would be a great feast, parents would give their children toys, and symbols of life such as wreaths and trees would be used as decoration. Sound familiar?

As Christmas travelled through time, the Scriptural authority of this holiday came into question. There is no evidence whatsoever of any celebration of Christ's birth in the New Testament church. In fact, the last mention of Christ's birth in the Bible is the night it happened! With its roots firmly engrained in paganism, it should not surprise us that some Christians tend to take offence at large groups of Christians returning to pagan traditions. And so, we come to tonight's questions. Should the church celebrate Christmas? The answer to this question is found in **Romans 14:5**. In his great discussion on not causing harm to our brothers through our actions, Paul includes "holy days" like Christmas. His point is very simple. If you want to set aside a special day to remember the birth of Christ, go for it. However, because others argue against this type of celebration based on the pagan roots, denominational example, and lack of Scriptural example, keep it out of the church/worship setting. Celebrating this holiday as a holy day for the church would violate Paul's instructions not to set a stumbling block in front of others.

Question 82: What is the difference between jealousy and covetousness?

Answer 82: Both these words are very similar in thought and idea. Both deal with a desire to tear another down in order to take something. However, jealousy as a general rule deals with non-material things (talents or prestige). Covetousness usually deals with material things (cars, houses, etc.) While this is not always the case, I think if we are going to separate these two ideas, this is the best way to do so. The most important thing to note is that both these thoughts are condemned by God in His Word.

Question 83: What evidence doe the Bible give for the existence of dinosaurs on the earth?

Answer 83: The best evidence the Bible gives for the existence of dinosaurs is found in **Exodus 20:9-11**. In this passage, God is said to have made the earth and all that in it in six days. If all creatures (birds, animals, and fish) were made in six days, then I believe dinosaurs should not be excluded from them.

A more controversial text that falls into this discussion is **Job 40:15-24**. In this passage, the writer of Job describes a beast known simply as the behemoth. The controversy comes in trying to identify this creature. For many, the behemoth is nothing more than some type of cattle or oxen. For others, this behemoth does not describe anything we can see in the world today and actually describes a now extinct dinosaur. I would leave you to your reading of this passage and let you decide for yourself. For me, I believe that the Genesis account of creation includes, man, birds, fish, mammals, reptiles, and dinosaurs and that the account in Job describes a great beast that only fits with the giant herbivores of what science currently calls prehistory.

Question 84: We offer the Lord's Supper on Sunday mornings. On Sunday nights it is offered to those unable to attend Sunday morning. Should those serving at night also partake? Is there a problem with partaking a second time?

Answer 84: The Lord's Supper is to be taken on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**) by all Christians. However, the exact time is left up to individual congregations. Let us first begin by understanding that partaking in the morning or night would be just fine in the sight of God. Let us also note that the early church practiced taking the communion to shut-ins. Early in the second

century, the early church sent deacons to the sick and shut-in in order to administer the Lord's Supper (Justin Martyr). This is early enough to believe the Apostles approved of this action.

With this backdrop, we can now get to tonight's question. Should Christians partake of communion each time it is offered in their presence on Sundays? I think the answer to this is no. I cannot point to a Scripture to say that we should not do this. Likewise, I cannot point to a Scripture that requires us to do this. However, I can say that the multiplicity of taking communion each Lord's Day may not be the best example and may go beyond what we can see in the Word. To partake multiple times on any given Sunday (remember those delivering to shut-ins) would tend to cheapen this chief act of worship. The purpose of coming together on the Lord's Day is to partake of communion. However, most here tonight came together for a different purpose. We are here to worship and learn as we do on Wednesday night and at Sunday class. I think the key to understanding this is understanding that not every gathering of Christians (even on the Lord's Day) must center on the Lord's Supper. However, one of them must!

Question 85: Who is Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and why was he chosen to kill so many in the name of Solomon?

Answer 85: Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was one of David's mighty men (**2 Samuel 23:20-23**). These thirty men formed a sort of secret service for King David. They were his personal body guard and each was known for his military prowess. Benaiah was also present when the throne of David was given into the hands of Solomon. He carried on his duties to Solomon as he had his father. Part of those duties was to ensure that Solomon was allowed to reign as David had desired. Like any throne, the one in Jerusalem was fraught with danger. Solomon was not the only one who wanted to rule. The men whom Benaiah killed in 1 Kings 2:19-46 were threats to the throne of Israel. They were destroyed for their rebellion to the appointed King of Israel. They died at Benaiah's hand because of the role he served in Solomon's court.

Question 86: The Leviticus Questions 1) Why was the wood to be laid in order on the altar (Leviticus 1:7-8)? 2) Why was the head of the bird to be wrung off while they were also told not to strangle an animal to be offered (Leviticus 1:15)? 3) How were defected men to make their offerings (Leviticus 21:18-21)?

- 1) Leviticus chapter 1 discusses the guidelines for offering a burnt offering to God. The wood was to be arranged on the altar by the priests of Israel. The butchered animal was to be placed correctly on the altar by the priests. I think this is nothing more than making sure that the animal was consumed by the fire. When camping, there are right ways and wrong ways to build a fire. The last thing these priests needed to do was let the fire go out on their burnt offering to God!
- 2) As far as I could find, the law of not strangling an animal was not in place until the council of Acts 15 where this restriction was placed on Christians. Even if this was the case in the Old Testament Law, the description here is not strangling. It is wringing the neck completely from the body which kills the bird and allows it to be drained of its blood.

- 3) The men who had defects mentioned in Leviticus 21 were of the descendents of Aaron. In other words, they were the priests of the day. Because of their physical defects, God forbade them from carrying out their priestly duties at the Tabernacle/Temple. In short, they were not allowed to make sacrifices on behalf of the people. They were still given the provisions offered to the priesthood (21:22), but were not required to perform the duties.

Question 87: Did they have churches in the Noah's time? If so, what kind?

Answer 87: I would answer this question yes. The yes answer comes three different ways. First, Noah shows us that the patriarchal age had altars which were used to offer sacrifices up to God (**Genesis 8:20-22**). This was in many ways their "church". They were places where the saved of God came to worship and serve Him. Second, those who listened to God were called out of a world of sin which is exactly what a church actually is. Second, this was a world filled with wickedness (**Genesis 6:5**). Third, in a world filled with this type of wickedness, I have no doubt that the people were building altars to false gods and possibly even erecting temples in the names of false gods. They would have been considered churches in the ancient world.

Question 88: Didn't the Lord want everyone to be saved? What about the people mentioned in Mark 4:11-12?

Answer 88: This is a much-discussed passage. The question is simple enough. Did Jesus purposefully hide His message from some in order to ensure their eternal destruction? Did Jesus hand-pick those that He wanted to understand His message? Did He willfully not give all people a chance at salvation?

The answer to all of these is no. Jesus' desire, like the Father's desire was that all men be saved by His blood. Jesus came to show God's love for the world, not for some in the world (John 3:16). So why does Jesus say that He spoke in parable so that some would not repent and be saved? This passage is a direct quote from Isaiah 6:9-10. It is God's instructions to Isaiah concerning the way in which he was to speak to the people. In short, what this passage means is that some in Israel were not going to believe the report of the Isaiah just as some did not believe the report of Christ. The best way for us to understand the meaning of these words is to turn to the mirror account found in **Matthew 13:14-15**. No one is blinded to God's Word without first closing their own eyes. This is similar to the hardening of a person's heart. Those who had their minds set on serving God would sit at the feet of Jesus and understand the spiritual meaning of His lessons. Those who had as Matthew says closed their ears and eyes to the will of God (in particular the Pharisees, but not only them) would never understand the messages of Christ. God had run out of patience with these people and their destruction was assured by the concealment of the message.

Question 89: Sometimes when I pray, I have no idea what to say and I feel there is so much to say, but I just do not know how to say it. What should I do and why does that happen?

Question 89: Prayer is one of the most powerful tools we have that helps us walk with Christ. With it, we can seek help in times of trouble, seek wisdom in times of confusion, and seek forgiveness in times of sin. However, there are times in this world when we simply do not know what to pray. Sometimes, this comes down to the fact that we are not sure which decision God

would have us make. Sometimes, we are not able to see far enough into the future to know what to pray. Sometimes, the world knocks us down so far that we do not have the strength or words to express how we feel. In all of this, we need to remember a few things about prayer.

First, we need to remember to pray that all things be done within the will of God (**Matthew 6:10**). Every prayer should contain the humble thought that God is in complete control and will act in the best interest of His Will on this planet. This is a total reliance on our faith in God. We must trust Him and His decision.

Second, we need to remember that God already knows what we are going to ask (**Matthew 6:8**). Prayer is not a matter of revealing information to God. It is an act of obedience that represents the fact that God is in control of our lives. It is not that prayer does not work to change things. It is simply that prayer does not tell God what needs to be changed.

Finally, we must remember that we have a translator in our prayer lives (**Romans 8:26-27**). One of the roles performed by the Holy Spirit in our lives is that of intercessor for our prayers. How this works is left a mystery to us, but we know that the Spirit will intercede for us when we don't have the words to express our concerns to God.

Question 90: Did Judas have a choice in the betrayal of Jesus?

Answer 90: This is an interesting question. It centers on the ideas of prophecy and free will. Because the ultimate plan of God was to have a sacrifice in the form of Jesus, many wonder if Judas had any choice in the matter. The answer is yes he did.

First, we must all understand that God never takes away our freedom of choice. He never forces us to obey or disobey Him. Our faithfulness must come from our desire to serve Him. In the same way, Judas did not lose his power of choice. God's plan would have been enacted with or without Judas.

Second, we must understand God's use of prophecy. When God looked into our world and prophesied concerning future events, He obviously knew the details of those events. In fact, God exists outside the realm of time and can see each moment of human history as if it is happening. However, we must also understand that God's knowledge does not equal God's control. Each of us makes our choices in this life and each of us will be judged for them. However, God knows each choice that we choose to make before it happens! In short, God knew Judas would betray Christ, but did not control Judas' betrayal of Christ.

Question 91: Who is the "Man of Lawlessness" mentioned in 2nd Thessalonians 2?

Answer 91: Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. The "man of lawlessness" has captured the imagination of students of the Bible for centuries. Many different theories have been produced. Of all of them, I believe two are worthy of our consideration tonight.

The first states that this is not a specific person, but rather is a characterization of all those who would oppose Christ. It takes the view that this man of lawlessness could include various people and groups of people throughout time which oppose Christ. This is one view.

The second view is the one which I think makes more sense. It holds that this portion of 2nd Thessalonians points to the coming Pope of the Catholic Church. In this passage, Paul is describing events that must unfold before Christ returns. He mentions the apostasy which he describes fully in **1st Timothy 4:1-3**. Because this apostasy clearly describes the Catholic Church, I see no reason to distinguish the man of lawlessness from it. The description of the man of lawlessness (**2:4**) also fits with the Pope. Although others have placed themselves in the position of God, only the papacy has continually done so in a way that led to great apostasy. In the end, the man of lawlessness will be slain. Again, we can look at this in two ways. First, the Word of God consistently refutes those who act counter to it. In this way, the false teacher in the form of the Pope is indeed slain. It may also point to a day when the Protestant Reformers would seek to translate the Bible into the common languages which certainly led to a decrease in power and influence of the Papacy.

Questions 92: Does the Bible speak of dead spirits returning to this earth? If so, is it possible that spirits can still do this?

Answer 92: I can only think of two cases where most believe that spirits returned to walk on this earth in the form of spirits. One of them is found in **Matthew 27:52-53**. A careful examination of this text reveals that actually these were not spirits which exited the graves as many have in their minds. Rather, the resurrected corpses of the faithful returned to this earth at the time of Jesus' death.

The other is found in **1 Samuel 28:8-15**. In this case, the spirit of Samuel does indeed come back to speak to King Saul. However, there are two things which we need to note. First, it is obvious that this woman was not used to having her powers actually work (**28:12**). Second, it was a nuisance for Samuel to be called back to this world (**28:15**). On this very RARE occasion, we can say that a spirit arose to speak to a living human.

The final thing for us to consider in answering this question is **Luke 16:19-31**. This is the account of a man who wished to return from the grave to visit this world. When he asks, the answer to his question, as well as ours is given (**16:27-31**). Once this life is over, our time on earth is over. We are "asleep" in this world. Our spirit is either in torment or paradise and awaits judgment. It cannot return to our bodies or to this world.

Question 93: Why does the lying prophet in 1 Kings 13 receive no condemnation while the prophet believing the lie is killed?

Answer 93: Read 1 Kings 13:11-22, 29-32. I am not sure that we can truly answer this question. The answer lies within the judgment of God. It was His decision to punish the prophet who disobeyed. In doing so, He gave a warning that was ignored and the prophet paid the price. As far as the lying prophet, I think he paid a price too. He lived with the blood of an innocent prophet on his hands. This grieved him so much that he offered his own grave for the prophet

and had his own body buried next to him. Perhaps that is why God does not announce His condemnation because the prophet already knows his faults. Perhaps God's condemnation is simply not recorded. We know that both these men were wrong in their actions. We also know that they later helped to be a reminder to the people of the faithfulness God requires of us (**2 Kings 23:17-20**).

Question 94: Is there a significant connection between the veil that split at the death of Christ and the veil mentioned in Exodus 26:31?

Answer 94: The veil of the Temple separated the Temple into two parts. For the Israelites, God rested behind the veil. In fact, only the High Priest had the right to enter the Holy of Holies behind the veil. Even then, this occurred only once a year. At the crucifixion of Christ, this veil was torn apart (**Matthew 27:51**). It was ripped from top to bottom as if being torn like a sheet of paper. Given the material and construction of this veil, this was a miraculous event. As with most of the signs which occurred at the crucifixion, this event holds special meaning.

At the Cross of Calvary, Jesus forever tore down the wall of separation between man and God. As sin separated us from God, so the sacrifice for sin in the form of Christ gave us the ability to draw close to Him. On the cross, Jesus created a way for us to approach the very throne of God. We must do this through Jesus, but this was the first time when it was possible (**1st Timothy 2:5**). The tearing of the veil represents to us the union of Christ and man through the Son.

Question 95: Were there any prophecies in the Bible that were altered or changed when the prophecies were fulfilled?

Answer 95: Prophecy is one of the most powerful proofs of the Bible we have. With prophecy, God gave men the ability to pen events centuries before they occurred. With that in mind, all the prophecies of the Old Testament happened exactly as God stated they would with one exception.

Read Jeremiah 18:7-10. As God delivered prophecies of destruction or blessing upon nations and individuals, He did so based on that nation or individual's moral uprightness. When God promises to destroy a nation that is doing evil, that nation has the option to turn away from that evil and return for God's blessing. We see this happening in the Book of Isaiah.

First, we see it taking place with the nation of Israel (**Isaiah 37:21, 33**). The nation of Assyria stands by to be God's arm of punishment upon the city of Jerusalem. However, because Israel's king turns to God, the Assyrians will not lay siege to Jerusalem and will in fact leave before doing any damage.

Second, we see it taking place with King Hezekiah (**Isaiah 38:1-5**). Hezekiah becomes ill and is told that he will soon die. However, based on his prayer to God, Hezekiah's life is spared and he is given fifteen extra years of life. Again, God's prophecy changed based upon the reaction of the hearer to the news.

Question 96: Please explain the connection between Galatians 6:2 and Galatians 6:5.

Answer 96: Depending on your translation, these passages can appear to stand in direct conflict with one another. Like all apparent Biblical contradictions, this one is easily remedied. The Greek reveals the solution...

The burdens (6:2) and load (6:5) are two very different Greek words. The word used in verse 2 literally means “heaviness, weight, burden”. The word used in verse 5 literally means “load” and is most commonly used to refer to the cargo on a ship. Basically, what Paul says in this passage is this: When the load is too heavy for a Christian to bear, brothers and sisters should step in to carry some of that burden. However, each and every one of us should be able to carry some of our load on our own.

Within the church, we must remember that we are all responsibly for ourselves. We must carry the load of obedience that God lays on all of our shoulders. It is only when special circumstances arise that the church should step in to assume the burden of another. Often times, we lay responsibility of a person’s soul upon the church without understanding that we each must handle the day-to-day struggles of Christianity on our own. The church should only step in when those burdens are so great that they require additional support.

Question 97: What was the nature of the covenant between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 18:1-4?

Answer 97: David and Jonathan have one of the most interesting relationships in all the Bible. After David kills Goliath, these two men basically live their lives as brothers in Saul’s house (18:2). The covenant agreement we read about in our passage tonight is one of complete humility on the part of Jonathan. In this passage, Jonathan gives David his royal robe and armor. In this symbolic act, Jonathan accepts the fact that he will not follow his father to the throne. Instead, Jonathan sees that David is the appointed future King of Israel. He submits to this because he is a humble servant of God who sees the wickedness that has enveloped his father’s throne. In short, Jonathan agrees to be a loyal subject of David in the future by agreeing to this covenant relationship with David.

Question 98: There are several translations of the Bible. Which ones are better to use and should we stay away from any?

Answer 98: This is one of the most complex and difficult questions I have been asked in the fishbowl. With that in mind, tonight I hope only to get the ball rolling and ask that each of you invest time and energy into answering this question.

First, we must understand the difference between a translation and a paraphrase. A translation attempts to take the original Hebrew and Greek languages and translate them into English. A paraphrase attempts to take the English Bible translations and make them easier to read. A paraphrase should NEVER be used in personal study or as a basis for religious beliefs. It is not true to the original texts handed down by God and does not claim to be so. In short, a paraphrase is nothing more than a man’s commentary on the Bible. The two most popular paraphrases are

the Message and The Living Bible. The only real use for a paraphrase is to do light positive reading to replace a novel of worldly things.

Second, we need to understand that Bible translations all have strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses of most translations centers around two options for a way a word can be translated. Most translations are more than capable of keeping a person true to God's Word. The best piece of advice I can give you is to own a Bible with footnotes. Footnotes are those tiny numbers that you find beside certain words as you read your Bible. They direct you to the bottom of the page where you will find any alternative meanings of the word in question. These footnotes allow you to use multiple translations because the other options are given to you as you study. Please note that the more you use footnotes the more you will see that using different words rarely affects the meaning of the passage. This is the main reason that pinpointing the exact word may sometimes be difficult.

Now let us get down to the nitty gritty. Are there translations of the Bible which should be avoided in Bible study? My answer to this question would be yes. There are two specific translations which tend to be much more dangerous than any others. The first is called the New American Bible. This Bible is produced by the Catholic Church and upholds its doctrines. It is not true to the original texts and does not uphold the standards set by our canon of Scriptures. I would imagine in this audience, no one currently uses this translation in their study.

The second translation which I would warn against is much more popular. It is the New International Version. The NIV should not be used on its own in Bible study. At most, this translation might help with difficult concepts and make them easier. However, the danger in this is that the only way to make a difficult Biblical concept easier to understand is to insert one's own thoughts into the text. In short, the NIV is dangerous because it treads on the ground of being a paraphrase without admitting it! In the latest update, one of the goals of the NIV was to produce a gender-neutral Bible. They did this by ignoring the original words found in the Hebrew and Greek and supplementing their own non-gender specific words. The most dangerous attack made came in 1 Timothy 2:12 where the translators decided to change the word "exercise" to the word "assume". "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; ^[b] she must be quiet." When we consider this, we must ask why these translators would fly in the face of the Greek and Hebrew to make these "slight" changes. The answer is very simple. This translation comes from the evangelical push for women's equality in the leadership of the church. In my opinion and that of many others, the NIV 2011 is dangerous in its design and methodology and should be avoided by all!

Question 99: What does the Bible say about cremation?

Answer 99: The only place that I find in the New Testament speaking of burning bodies is found in **1 Corinthians 13:3**. As we read this passage, it is painfully obvious that Paul did not have in mind the act of cremation. The Old Testament does mention certain times when bodies were burned after death, but those passages were often simply historical facts and are not binding on us anyway. With that in mind, I would say that the Bible is silent on the issue of cremation for Christians.

The only reason I have ever seen used to argue against cremation is the idea of the resurrection. In short, some believe that a body must be present in order for the resurrection to take place. Since cremation destroys the body, many assume God does not allow it for His followers. Let us think about this line of reasoning...

If this is true, what about those who burn through accidents on the earth? Are they simply lost with no hope of resurrection? Of course not! Let us consider God's Word on the matter. Our physical bodies are returned to the ground after death (**Genesis 3:19**). On Judgment Day, we will all be raised to stand before Christ. However, it will not be our physical bodies that stand in judgment (**1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-53**). To sum it up, God does not need a physical body to resurrect a person from death. Therefore, cremation is in no way sinful against any Biblical thought or doctrine.

Question 100: Read John 9:1-2. Is there any truth that the sins of the parents can be passed on to their children?

Answer 100: This question places two Old Testament passages at odds with each other. The first is found in the book of **Ezekiel 18:20**. In this passage, God makes it clear that each person will be judged for their own deed and the sins of fathers will not be passed on to children. The second passage is found in **Exodus 20:5**. Here, God says that He passes on the iniquities of the father onto the sons, grandsons, great-grandsons, and great-great-grandsons. How can these two passages both be true?

The passage in Ezekiel deals with the spiritual lives of individuals. As the chapter unfolds, you will see the act of repentance described and see the desire God has that all men turn away from their wickedness. When we stand before God on judgment day, we will stand before Him with only our thoughts and actions in consideration. Our eternal destination will be decided based on our behavior here on this earth.

The passage in Exodus deals with something different. We can note this by actually seeing the promise God makes play out in the history of the Israelites. Exodus 20:5 deals with the consequences that come from idolatry. We see those consequences come to fruition when the Babylonian army comes to Jerusalem and takes the Jews into captivity. In this captivity, the children of the rebellious Israelites were indeed punished for the iniquities of those who lived before them.

With this said, I have to answer tonight's question with a yes only because of the word "any". There is absolutely a sense in which children can pay for their parents' sins through earthly consequences (fetal alcohol syndrome, sexual abuse, divorce, etc). However, this idea does not apply to spiritual punishments or rewards and did not apply in the passage under consideration at all.

Question 101: What does Jesus mean when He said “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer” (Mark 9:25-29)?

Answer 101: The passage in question comes as Jesus heals a child with a demon. Jesus is returning from the transfiguration with Peter, James, and John. As He approaches the other Apostles, a man asks Him to heal his son. Jesus does so and the Apostles ask why they had been unable to perform the exorcism. Jesus answers with the words which bring us tonight’s question.

What did Jesus mean? Demonology is without a doubt one of the most confusing topics we can tackle. The reason for this is very simple. We are not given much information concerning who demons are or what they are like. The New Testament gives us only surface information on this topic. However, I believe Jesus’ words here can be understood in this way. There are apparently different types of demons just as there are different types of angels. The one being dealt with in this passage appears to be one of great strength. The Apostles failed in their exorcism because they lacked faith (**Matthew 17:20**). This particular type of demon challenged their power by challenging their faith. Through prayer, these men could have prevailed against the demon by building their faith and calling on God to help. This should have been an obvious first step for these men anyway!

Question 102: Can Children take the Lord’s Supper? Why or why not?

Answer 102: At any gathering where the Communion is served, you will find some who allow their children to partake and others who do not. I happen to be one who does not allow it and so I am going to answer this question by answering why I do not let my child partake of the Lord’s Supper.

The simple answer to this centers on the same reason that I would not allow my young child to be baptized. I believe that a person must have both knowledge and enough maturity to make that knowledge personal before they can understand the true meanings of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These are things which only come from age and wisdom. A person needs to fully understand what the bread and juice represent in order to properly partake of the Lord’s Supper. A person must also be able to bring that knowledge into your own life and judge his or her actions. Only in this way can we examine ourselves to compare our lives to the cross. Because of this, I do not think it is a good idea for a child to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Question 103: Is it wrong to attend a denominational revival or singing with a friend or relative as long as you do not skip a service to do so?

Answer 103: This question is one that I have answered on multiple occasions in my time as a Christian. In my answer, I have often met opposition on this question. In answering this, I want to first answer some of the reasons people have given for attending denominational services. First, people often say that they attend in order to get others to attend with them at some point. In short, this is the ends justifying the means mentality. As long as good comes from the action, the action is ok. This is simply not the way Christianity works. We are not allowed to judge an action as good or bad based on the results. We must judge actions based on God’s Word. Second,

people say that we need to see what others are doing in order to appreciate the church. I could not disagree with this more. We do not need to know and see falsehood to appreciate the truth!

Not let us turn to God's Word. Read **2 John 1:7-11**. Here, we have John's instructions for handling those who teach beyond what God has given. This would certainly include those who have given themselves over to man-made religions. He tells us not to receive such a one into our homes. He tells us that doing so lumps us in with their deeds. In the situation under consideration tonight, not only are we being lumped in with those we gather with, but we are actually seen as seeking out those who go beyond the commandments of God. We join ourselves in fellowship and participate in false worship when we accompany those of denominational backgrounds. We also dampen our influence. After all, how can you possibly tell someone they are worshipping or practicing religion in a false way when you yourself have joined with them? For these reasons, I do not believe it is a wise decision to join ourselves with those that go beyond the teachings of Christ. The one exception I can give is if you get the opportunity to preach the truth to a group of unbelievers. In that setting, go and do what you can do!

Question 104: Are women prohibited from wearing jewelry and makeup?

Answer 104: Read 1 Timothy 2:9-10. This is an excellent question and I believe the answer will help us to be better Bible students. What we have in this passage is a great example of commandment vs. example. In the passage in question, Paul begins by saying that woman should dress properly and modestly. That is our commandment and follows through to this day. Women should still dress modestly or with "shamefulness" in present day America. Then Paul goes on to give examples of immodest dress (braided hair, gold, pearls, and costly garments) for his time. Christians today must learn to separate the commandments from cultural examples. Consider **Romans 16:16**. Again, the commandment is clear enough...greet one another. The example is also clear enough...with a holy kiss. Just as this example has been replaced in our culture, so too has the idea of gold and pearls.

In the ancient world, women would quite literally wear their wealth on their fingers and wrists in the form of rings and bracelets. They would also braid into their hair gold coins and fine jewels. Today, you don't see this practiced very often. In truth, this example left us with the invention of fake jewelry. In today's society, none of us can truly gauge wealth by jewelry because you don't have to be rich to buy it!

A word of warning...Just because some examples changed doesn't mean they all did. A good example of this is our Lord's Supper in which we still use the exact same materials as used by Jesus Christ on the night of His betrayal (unleavened bread and fruit of the vine). We must ask ourselves "what is the difference?" The difference is in the originator of the rules. To an extent, God has left modesty and how we greet one another up to the society in which we live. Society has a large role to play in these examples. On the other hand, God Himself set the materials for the Lord's Supper way back at the first Passover Feast. It is not ours to change. To understand the difference is to dig deep into God's Word and study the world in which the New Testament writers lived! When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

Question 105: What is the second death? Will living people experience two deaths?

Answer 105: Read Revelation 2:11. Here we read Jesus promising to His People that they would not be hurt by the second death. But what is the second death? Read **Revelation 20:14**. The second death is the Lake of Fire which is symbolic of Hell. This makes the answer to the second question fairly simple. Some people will experience the second death because they will rebel against God and live in sin. Others will submit to Christ and be saved from this horrible experience.

Question 106: Why was God angry with David concerning the census?

Answer 106: Read 2 Samuel 24:10-17. This is perhaps one of the most interesting accounts in the life of David. Satan makes a move against David and God allows the temptation to turn into sin (**1 Chronicles 21:1, 1 Samuel 21:1**). David commits the sin and repents within just a few verses. However, the sin must be atoned for so God gives David his three options. David chooses the option of pestilence and God sends his punishment stopping just short of the gates of Jerusalem. Now for the big question...What was David's great sin in the account?

David's sin was the numbering of Israel. Not only did David number Israel, but doing so delighted him (**2 Samuel 24:3**). In this is revealed the pride of life bursting forth in the life of the King of Israel. It was not enough that David was being blessed by God in wealth, prestige, and power. He had to see just how many people he was really in charge of. He had to know if his kingdom was the biggest on the block. In the face of opposition from his trusted military advisor, David demands to know how many people are under his rule. For this pride, God punishes David in the best possible way. David's census means nothing once the pestilence attacks the population. With this, David learns his lesson and makes his offerings to God (2 Samuel 24:18-25).

Question 107: Why did Christ tell Mary Magdalene not to touch Him, but tell Thomas specifically to touch Him?

Answer 107: Read John 20:17, 27. The confusion here lies simply in the translation of John 20:17. The KJV translates this passage as do not touch me. However, only the KJV does this. The Greek word here means to hold onto or cling to. Jesus tells Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him or hold on to Him because He is not leaving her. He tells her to hurry back to the other disciples and let them know that He is raised. On the other hand, Thomas refused to believe and so Jesus commanded him to touch (not cling to) his hands and side in order to prove His identity.

Question 108: Compare **Mark 9:40** and **Matthew 12:30**. Also, does **Mark 9:40** related to present day denominations?

Answer 108: The account in Mark 9 is perhaps one of the most confusing found in the New Testament. Let's read the entire conversation (**Mark 9:38-41**). In this account, we have some of Jesus' Apostles coming back to report of a man who was performing miracles without obedience. Jesus tells His Apostles not to worry about it. How does this fit with other passages we read commanding us to rebuke false teachers?

To solve this puzzle, we need to understand a couple of things from this account. First, John does not mention that this man was not a believer in Jesus. He says he was not following them (i.e.) like the Apostles were following Christ from place to place. Second, no person can invoke the power of God to cast out demons as this man did without Jesus' knowledge and approval. We may not know who this man was, but we can certainly say that Jesus did. Now we need to bring in **Matthew 12:30**. Here, we are told specifically that there are only two options concerning Jesus. We are with Him or against Him. Because this man was able to perform a miracle in the name of Christ with Christ's approval, we know where this man stood. He stood with Christ, not against Him. While the Apostles had no way to remember each and every person who heard and believed in Christ, Jesus did. This man was one of His followers, even though he did not join the Apostles in following Jesus around.

With that in mind, this passage in no way applies to the denominational world we see around us. The two options are still for Christ (in complete submission) or against Christ (in rebellion). There is no middle ground of kind of following Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that there are to be clear and distinct lines drawn between true teachers and false teachers. We must never ignore those lines because doing so cheapens the church and all she stands for.

Question 109: In Acts 18:22, Paul is said to have went down from Caesarea to Antioch, but Antioch is almost due north of Caesarea. Please explain.

Answer 109: Upon closer inspection, I question actually gets harder. It is believed that Paul first went "up to greet the church" which was in Jerusalem. As you can see, Jerusalem lies south of Caesarea. Then, he went down to Antioch. This is not the only place where such language is used and results in confusion for others. Over and over again in the travels of Christ, someone is said to go "up" to Jerusalem when they actually travel south. The answer to this is actually quite simple and I can almost guarantee you will never forget it once you hear it.

When the New Testament writers wrote of travels, they meant what they said. In order to get to Jerusalem, one would travel up the mountain passages when surrounded the city. To get from Jerusalem to Antioch, one would indeed travel north, but for these writers, north was a direction while up was a vertical indicator. Paul indeed traveled north to Antioch, but he travelled down the mountain range to get there!

Question 110: In Numbers 30, rules concerning vows are given. Why are women freed from their vows to God based on the interference of their fathers or husbands?

Answer 110: Read Numbers 30:3-8. Here we see guidelines concerning women in Israel and the making and keeping of vows. As we start, it is important for us to notice that two very specific Hebrew words are used here and translated vow. One denotes devoting certain things to God (financial gifts). The second denotes times of abstinence partaken of as a time devoted to Jehovah. This helps us understand the ability of the men in a woman's life to overrule her vow.

First, a father has rule over his household which includes his children. Notice that this father has rule over his house and the children he has in it. We should note especially the qualifier "in her

youth” in describing this girl. In short, we are dealing with a young woman who has not reached the age of adulthood. She is not expected to meet her vows because she does not fully understand the effects of vows made to God. Nowhere in this passage is the father given this power after the girl’s youth has passed.

Second, a husband had the right to make null any vow which took place outside of his home before he and his wife were married. Consider the consequences if this were not the case. A young woman might make a vow to give 1 million dollars to the Temple. Then she marries before the debt has been paid. Now a newly married man would have to fulfill her debt. Only God does not expect this. He allows the husband to terminate her promise. This law is actually very specific in nature and application and only applies to these specific scenarios.

Question 113: Does the Bible list the rights of citizens as given by God? Is there ever a time when we are allowed to ignore or even rebel against the laws of our government?

Answer 113: This question was submitted as the gun control debate was heating up in our nation. Now that some time has passed for political allegiances to subside, we will spend some time considering these two questions. However, we will answer them in reverse order.

First, is there ever a time when we are allowed as citizens to ignore or rebel against the laws of our land? The answer to this question is yes. However, that answer comes with a hard and fast disclaimer. **Read Romans 13:1-6.** Human governments, even when warped, are upheld by the authority of God. When meeting this divine appointment, a government will act only within the authority God has given it. However, we know that as humans miss the mark so too do the human institutions we create. A Christian’s responsibility is to submit to governments so long as it is in their power to do so.

Having said that, there is only one thing that can take that power away. When a Christian is forced to choose between God and his government, his choice is clear. **Read Acts 5:40-42.** This is extreme measures and should not be entered into lightly. When we rebel against our government, we better make sure our government has done something that makes us make the between them and God. For instance, if the government ever tells the Owl Hollow church of Christ that she must abandon the teachings of the New Testament and conform to the teachings of men, we have no choice to ignore these rules and stand true to God even to the point of death!

Now for the second question. Is there a list of rights citizens receive from God? The answer to this is yes and no. First, it is yes in two senses. The first is that we have a government which has endowed us with rights. That government stands by God’s power and should therefore be respected. The second is a little deeper. When God makes a demand of us, He allows us to do what we must do in order to meet that demand. The only time God laid down a list of rights for citizens of an earthly nation was in the Old Testament when He did so for Israel. Many of these rules still apply to us today in a way. For instance, we are to give as we have been prospered and we are to be good stewards of our property. By definition, stewards defend their property from theft and vandalism. We are to teach others about Christ. By definition, this means that we have a certain freedom of speech regardless of what our government says. We are to worship God in Spirit and Truth. By necessity, we are given the right to do so by God Himself. To find a list of

rights would be an impossible task. However, to find commandments which must be met is rather easy. With every commandment comes the right for Christians to do what must be done in order to follow those commands. By the way, the negative commands show a similar concept. We do not steal because others are entitled to their property. We do not kill because others are entitled to their lives. And so on and so forth.

Question 114: In Numbers chapter 5, what punishment is given to the man who falsely accuses his wife?

Answer 114: Numbers chapter 5 gives us the “law of jealousy”. In short, this law consists of a test. If a man suspected his wife of cheating, he took her to the priests and performed this test. The woman was interviewed by the priest and then given a special drink. If the woman was innocent, the drink would have no effect on her. However, if the woman was guilty, she would face consequences which would let everyone know she had been unfaithful. The question here is what happens to the man if the woman is proved innocent.

The simplest answer is nothing. This was not seen as an accusation. This was seen as a test. This test was done not to harm women, but rather to protect them. With this test, a man could not falsely accuse his wife of cheating because God could intercede on her behalf. When the test revealed that the woman did not cheat, there was no sin and therefore no guilt or punishment.

Question 115: What does Paul mean when he says to “lift holy hands” in 1 Timothy 2:8?

Answer 115: There are two options for what Paul meant in this passage. However, before we get there, let’s talk about what he did not mean. Demonstrate hand lifting/swaying technique.

The two options for what he actually meant are seen in prayer postures of the Bible. These postures indicated something for the one who took them. For instance, prostrating oneself showed humility. Lifting up one’s eyes to Heaven showed who you were addressing. Lifting holy hands could mean a posture that indicates you are expecting an answer from God. It means that you were literally holding out your hands in expectation of a gift.

The other option which I personally think fits the context much better is this. To lift holy hands means simply to hold your hands palm-side up in order to symbolize your innocence before God. Notice the next passage shows that Paul wants to end wrath and dissension (sin) in the life of those praying. To lift your hands means that you have done all you can to keep your hands free from the stains of sin and you are willing to put that to the test before God.

Question 116: Please explain Matthew 8:22.

Answer 116: Let’s read the passage in question. **Read Matthew 8:18-22.** Two theories have developed concerning this account. In all honest, either option will lead us to the same answer. First, some have said that the man’s father was sick and that he was asking to be excused for a time until the death and burial of his father. Others say that the man’s father was already dead. The only difference this makes is the amount of time the disciple was asking for.

This passage may seem harsh to some. However, I think there are a couple of things to remember. First, the call of Christ is an urgent one and waits for no one and nothing. Second, and more importantly, Jesus knew this man's heart. It is dangerous to play a guessing game with what ifs, but we will try it tonight anyway. What if Jesus knew that this man was going to fall from Him and never rejoin Him if he walked away to bury his father? Suddenly, Jesus' words look less insensitive and much more focused on the salvation of the soul.

Question 117: How can God be the God of the living if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are dead?
See Mark 12:26-27.

Answer 117: The most important thing to remember about this passage is who Jesus was addressing. He was speaking to a group of Sadducees (**Mark 12:18**). I hope everyone remembers why they were sad you see. These men did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They approached Jesus in hopes of trapping Him on this subject (**Mark 12:19-23**).

Jesus' answer to the Pharisees ends once and for all the question of the afterlife. Jesus takes these men back to the burning bush (This is important because they only believed in the Pentateuch). He quoted the words from the mouth of God, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". Because God spoke of these men in the present tense, Jesus destroys the Sadducees belief concerning the resurrection.

If God is the God of these men who were long dead by the times of Moses, then these men had to be alive in an afterlife! This is Jesus' point. Perhaps the best illustration of this concept is that of those who are dead being "asleep". To be asleep does not mean to be non-existent.

Question 118: Who is Joshua talking with in **Joshua 5:13-15**?

Answer 118: This is certainly one of the more interesting passages in the Old Testament. Of course, a simple answer to tonight's question is that Joshua spoke to the captain of the Lord's host. However, that leads us to wonder who in the world the captain of the Lord's host is. Let's look at this passage for some clues.

First, we note that this man is called Lord. Second, we notice that this being received and accepted worship from Joshua. This takes away the option of an angel (**Revelation 19:10**). Third, we notice that this being has made the ground where these two stand holy. This should remind us of Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3. So who is this man? I believe the answer is Jesus.

I believe that as we look into the Old Testament, we find several events similar to the one seen here. Scholars call them Christophanies which basically means that Christ appears. I believe it was Christ who appeared to Abraham before the destruction of Sodom. He also made an appearance when He wrestled Jacob. I showed up to encourage three men who were cast into the fiery furnace. And He appears here to Joshua. Let us not forget that before Jesus was a baby in a manger, He was still the eternal Word of God made flesh!

Question 119: What was Paul referring to when he said he fought with beasts at Ephesus in **1 Corinthians 15:32**?

Answer 119: The simple answer to this one is we are just not sure. There are two possible thoughts on it and both seem to fit rather well.

The first is that this should be taken metaphorically. With this, Paul used the words wild beasts to refer to the evil, bloodthirsty men who sought to end his preaching career with his death. **Read Acts 19:23-32**). For me personally, this option makes much more sense. There is little doubt that Paul dealt with his share of men who were acting like beasts rather than humans in the city of Ephesus.

The second is that Paul actually faced wild beasts as a punishment for his preaching. We know that Luke did not record every instance of danger in the life of Paul. We also know that at least once his life was in grave danger (**Romans 16:3-4**) and he was saved by Priscilla and Aquilla. Is it possible that Paul faced the wild animals as a punishment and was spared by God? Yes, but again I don't think it is as likely as the first option.

Question 120: What is the difference between swearing, making a vow, and taking an oath?

Answer 120: These three ideas are very similar and the best way to understand the differences is to look at the original Hebrew words.

To make a vow means to "promise a gift". Consider Jephthah.

To swear and make an oath actually come from the same word. The word literally means "to bind oneself". It usually involves a promise to act or behave in a certain way.

Long story short, there are slight differences here, but all three of these ideas involve being a man of your word.

Question 121: Were the Gospels written when Paul wrote concerning the Scriptures in **1 Corinthians 15:3** or was he referring to the Old Testament?

Answer 121: As far as dating the Gospels, we have a good idea of when they were written. However, nailing down exact dates would be practically impossible at this point. Matthew was probably written 42-58 A.D. as the first Gospel to appear. Conservative scholars date Mark to 65-70 A.D. Luke was probably written 58-60 A.D. The dating of John is more complicated than the first three Gospels. Dates range from the 60's all the way through the 90's A.D. The Corinthian letter is generally given a date of 54-56 A.D.

The word Scriptures was used to describe both the Old Testament and New Testament in **1 Timothy 5:18**. Based on what is said in the Corinthian passage, I actually think Paul is making a reference to the Gospels and the Old Testament prophecies which were fulfilled by the Gospels. Although 3 of the 4 were not written, Matthew was undoubtedly making its way through the early church by the time of Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Question 122: What disease is the one not mentioned in **Deuteronomy 28:61**?

Answer 122: Deuteronomy chapter 28 is a chapter of warnings for those who would turn away from God. The warnings include curses, foreign invasion, failing crops, and plagues. Our particular attention is focused on the last warning by this question. In short, what God says here is that He will bring all the diseases the Israelites feared in Egypt (probably specific reference to the plagues of Egypt) upon those who disobey His Law. Then, He goes one step farther and says He will also send plagues on the disobedient that they weren't worried about in Egypt. Long story short, God will punish the wicked.

Question 123: How was Jesus made?

Answer 123: Read John 8:58. The words spoken here by Jesus take us back to the burning bush and Moses. Jehovah and Jesus say the same thing in this passage, and it is a hard concept to translate from the original languages. In short, what is said is the I was, I am, and I will be. Jehovah and Christ both claimed an eternal nature. This along with other passages answer tonight's question. Jesus was not made. He existed eternally with the Father and the Spirit.

The eternal trinity (3 in 1) is without a doubt one of the most difficult ideas to understand in the Bible. However, it is also one of the most fundamental building blocks we can have for our faith.

Question 124: A terebinth tree is often used as a property line in the Old Testament. What is a terebinth tree?

Answer 124: See Slide. It is a very common tree in Palestine which probably explains its use in the Old Testament. It comes from the Hebrew word Elah. Sometimes this word is translated terebinth. Other times it is translated as oaks. Still other times it is left in its original form as in 1st Samuel 17:2 where the Israelites are camped in the "Valley of Elah".

Question 125: The Bible says to help people financially. Do we help people who will not help themselves?

Answer 125: The church has a responsibility to help people based on the early history of the church in Acts 2 as well as other passages. Individuals have a responsibility to help people as well (**1 Timothy 5:16**). The idea in this passage is that if a widow is coming from your family, you as an individual should support them so that the church can help those who have no one to care for them.

However, neither the church nor the individual has a responsibility to support those who will not support themselves (**2 Thessalonians 3:6-12**). Use illustration of church in Illinois having people come and work at the building in exchange for financial aid. We should never allow our pocket books or the churches funds be used to support a lazy and unruly life.

Question 126: We use the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to prove that spirits can't come back from the dead. However, Samuel was able to. Please explain.

Answer 126: Read 1 Samuel 28:3-14, Luke 16:27-31. First, I would disagree that the rich man and Lazarus is a parable, but that is a question for another night. The rich man and Lazarus do indeed teach us that we cannot come back from the spiritual world after our death. If it were possible, the rich man would have made his way back rather than asking Abraham to send someone back. On the other hand, we see very clearly that Samuel does indeed come from the spiritual world of the dead and speak to Saul. How can we possibly explain this obvious inconsistency?

The answer is actually rather simple. Imagine the spiritual world like a full proof prison. Once you are in, you cannot escape. However, you can absolutely be released. The power is not ours. It was not Samuel's power that brought him back. It was God's. In the same way, it was not Lazarus's power, the girl's whom Jesus raised power, or Eutychus' power that raised them from the dead. When a person breaks from death to life, only God's power can be the cause!

Question 127: What connection was there between the rods stripped from the trees and the flocks conceiving when they came to drink in **Genesis 30:37-39**?

Answer 127: This is one of the more interesting accounts in the Old Testament. TO make a long story short, Jacob arranges to trade his shepherding skills to Laban in exchange for the spotted and speckled goats and sheep and the black lambs of the flocks he watched over (30:32). Laban agrees to the terms and Jacob begins watching the sheep. The next part is what makes this such a confusing account. Jacob begins setting striped branches in front of the stronger members of the flocks when they mate and is able to control what animals produce livestock for his flocks. He ends up getting the strongest of Laban's flocks and takes Laban's riches.

Now for our question: What did the striped branches have to do with producing certain types of animals? I think the answer lies in **Genesis 31:10-13**. We must be careful not to give too much credit to Jacob. It was God who blessed Jacob with Laban's riches. God told Jacob which animals to ask for in exchange for his wages. With that in mind, I think the striped bark was nothing more than a test of obedience for Jacob. We find these tests throughout the Old Testament so I don't believe it is a far stretch to think that one is given here and not recorded for us.

Question 128: At what point does talking to someone about their wrongs become judging? How far can you go?

Answer 128: In today's world, Christians are being indoctrinated with the idea that we cannot judge anyone for anything. It seems the only sin that still exists is the sin of judging. However, that is not a Biblical standard. In the New Testament, Jesus makes it clear that we are to judge people's actions (**John 7:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:21**). If we are talking to someone we love about their wrongs for the purpose of saving their souls, we can never go too far. The only way I see a person going too far in this fashion is if they begin judging the heart rather than the actions. This is nothing we are not capable to doing.

Question 129: According to Matthew 19, if a man puts his wife away and there has been no infidelity, is it possible with repentance to marry again?

Answer 129: Read Matthew 19:3-12. One of the great controversies in the church today is the marriage, divorce and re-marriage. The controversy comes not from confusion about the text, but from a society that is literally filled with the victims of divorce. For many, this passage becomes difficult because it has become so personal. However, we must never let our society change what Jesus had to say about marriage in this passage.

Let us learn the lessons. First, God joins two people together and we do not have the power to separate them. Second, a person who divorces for ANY reason other than adultery and marries someone else becomes guilty of adultery with that person.

Now to the question: Can repentance allow a person to remarry? The answer to this is actually an easy one. If a person is living in marriage with someone after divorcing for an unscriptural reason, they live in adultery. The only sin to repent of is that adultery and it must be repented of by ending the relationship. We cannot repent of a marriage. If a marriage is approved of by God in the first place, it is accepted by Him and is not a sin. If it is not a sin, it cannot be repented of to allow a person the right to remarry. When a person divorces when no adultery has been committed, they have three options. They can remain single (a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom). They can return to their spouse. They can rebel against God and live in sin by marrying another.

Question 130: Did Nebuchadnezzar's reasoning leave him the entire time he lives as an animal? What exactly does it mean when it says his reasoning left him?

Answer 130: Read Daniel 4:28-37. Like one of our previous questions, this one comes from one of the most interesting accounts in the Old Testament. Nebuchadnezzar is King of Babylon and is basking in his own glory rather than giving glory to God. To punish him, God makes him like a beast in the fields. Now let's discuss what this actually means.

To put it in our terms, Nebuchadnezzar went plum looney. He lost his mind for a time of what is believed to be seven years. His mental breakdown led him to flee from society and live as an animal. Interestingly enough, we now have a name for his condition. It is called lycanthropy. It is a mental disease which makes someone behave as an animal would. Cases have been reported and documented including one in England in 1946 which is practically identical in its details with this account. Also of interest is the fact that there is a text from antiquity that speaks of Nebuchadnezzar having a mental disorder that caused him to leave Babylon. When God set out to humble Nebuchadnezzar, He achieved His goal!

Question 131: Since Judas betrayed Jesus, will he be in hell? What about the Pharisees and Pilate who allowed Jesus to die?

Answer 131: To be guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ is a terrible sin. All those mentioned certainly had a hand in His death and therefore had His blood in their conscience. However, this act was not an unforgivable sin. I believe Jesus answered this question for us concerning Judas.

Read Luke 22:22. A woe is given on Judas here that I believe reaches into eternity. Pilate was a Pagan ruler and we have no indication whatsoever that he ever became a believer. Without that belief, he could not possibly reach Heaven. For the Pharisees, their fate lies in their individual decisions. For those who would one day accept the truth, they would be forgiven. For those who would not, they will stand condemned.

In truth, these people are no different than us. Our betrayal of Jesus through our sins leaves us in need of forgiveness. God offers that forgiveness to all who will obey Him. He also promises punishment for all who will not.

Question 132: What is the difference between jealousies and envying mentioned in the works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-21**)?

Answer 132: This passage in Galatians contains a list of sins Paul saw in his day as great threats to the souls of mankind. These threats have not changed since Paul penned this letter. It would do us all a great deal of good to examine these items one by one in order to make sure we know what each of them looks like in our world today. In particular, it should be noted that this list makes two or three different chains of connected sins. The chain we are concerned with begins with “enmities” (hatred) and ends with “envying”.

To answer this question, we need to focus on jealousy and envying. However, if we skip the other links of this particular chain, I think we will miss the distinction being made here. This entire group attacks the sins that attack the unity of the church. The chain begins with enmities (hatred). Pride drives some to wish to impose their will on the church. This inward enmity will lead to strife (variance) which is the physical acts of disunity. After this strife sets in, we get jealousy (emulations). This describes the constant bickering that results from unimpeded strife. As the bickering reaches boiling points, outbursts of anger (wrath) will soon follow. When sheer anger does not work, people will turn to disputes (selfish ambition). This word describes a dirty politician using deceit to gain votes. Dissensions which are the breaking up of the church into factions comes as the disputes work to cement the division in the church. . The next link is factions. This describes the solidifying the factions through politicking. Envying is the result of these two groups wanting the other group/s to fail.

Jealousies and envying are not set in opposition to each other. Rather, they are two steps in the process that has destroyed countless congregations all over the world.

Question 133: How can we know where to look when we need to find information about a certain topic?

Answer 133: If you use the internet, this is a very simple thing to do. Anyone who knows how to use the internet can visit www.biblegateway.com. This website contains numerous translations of the Bible which you can choose from. It also contains a search box where you can type any word in and immediately have every time that word is used in the Bible appears on your screen. If one catches your eye, you can click on it to open the passage in its context.

For those who do not use the internet, you can get the same results with just a little more work. You will need to invest in a good concordance that fits the particular translation you rely on. A concordance list words in alphabetical order. To look up particular topics, you will simply turn to a word that fits your topic and it will give you all the times that word is used in your Bible translation. You can turn to any of these passages.

Either of these tools will prove to be invaluable to your Bible study!

Question 134: How was the known world divided in New Testament times?

Answer 134: This question mentioned Asia and Europe specifically so we will turn our attention there. I am glad this question was asked because it reminds us of something that we can easily forget. The Bible was not written in a vacuum. During Biblical times, other cultures and areas existed. With the Bible, we have a tiny view on a small part of a very large world and it's important to remember that.

We will begin with the continent of Europe. Much of Europe was covered in Jesus' time by the Roman Empire. (**See Map**). However, it never conquered this entire continent. In the far north, a culture called the La Tene retreated to modern day Northern England, Scotland, and Ireland. This culture was the frontrunner to what we now call the Celtic and Gaelic societies. Across central and eastern Europe, Germanic tribes could be found. These are the groups we commonly think of when we think of the Barbarians. These were often loosely affiliated tribes that at various times were under Roman possession, yet never were considered worthy of receiving Roman society from their oppressors.

As we turn our attention to Asia, we first must speak of the Kushan Empire. This empire began in modern day India and worked its way north through Pakistan and Afghanistan and east all the way through Mongolia and into China. This dynasty controlled movement between the Roman and Asian worlds and had diplomatic ties with both groups. The other major player in Asia was of course China who was under the Han Dynasty. China had major connections to the European world because of the "silk road".

Time will not allow for a full discussion of the entire world at the time of Christ and the political/social events that made it up. However, it is important to remember that the more we learn about this world, the more we learn about Christ's world.

Question 135: Why did Mordecai take Esther to be a concubine for King Ahasuerus?

Answer 135: The book of Esther takes place during the captivity of the Jewish People in the Persian Empire. The first chapter of the book sets the stage for our question tonight. During a banquet which lasted for seven days, wine flowed freely. In a drunken moment, King Ahasuerus calls for his queen to display her beauty to the crowd. When she refuses, she is exiled which left the king with no queen.

Read Esther 2:1-8. The question asked tonight rests on an assumption. That assumption is that Mordecai had a choice in taking Esther to the king's eunuch. That assumption is not accurate.

Once a decree was made by the king in Persia, it was a law which carried the power of a god. To reject this law would have resulted in a death sentence for the crime of treason. One may think that Mordecai could have protected Esther, but that is highly unlikely. Esther was noted for her beauty. Dislike for the Jews in the Persian Empire can be seen as the rest of this book unfolds. To think that Esther could have gone unnoticed or would have been hidden within the cities of Persia is nearly impossible. To answer the question, Mordecai took Esther to be a candidate for Queen because he had no choice.

Question 136: Read **1 Corinthians 15:29**. Why would someone be baptized for the dead? What good does it do?

Answer 136: Without a doubt this passage is one of the most controversial in all of the New Testament. Tonight, we are going to take a quick look at three possible meanings.

First is the idea that this passage teaches us to baptize dead ancestors by proxy. Today, one of the greatest resources for anyone doing genealogical research can be found in Salt Lake City, Utah. It is the sight where the Mormon Church has established a library of genealogical records so that anyone practicing the Mormon faith can be baptized for their dead ancestors. We could spend much time discussing all the problems with this, but we will leave it with two. First, there is no way for a dead person to obey the other commandments connected with salvation. Second, once you are dead, your eternity is set in stone (**Hebrews 9:27**). Now let us move on to Biblical solutions to this text.

The second option is that this is a reference to those who are spiritually dead. In this chapter, Paul is discussing the factual nature of the coming resurrection. The idea with this option is that Paul appeals to the fact that every Christian in Corinth was once dead spiritually and has been resurrected spiritually through the power of Christ. In short, Paul's point would be that if the Corinthians believe in the spiritual resurrection, they should have no problem believing in the physical resurrection. This is certainly a reasonable assumption based on the context of the passage. However, I tend to think our third option is the most appropriate one.

The third option rests on one word in this passage. That word is "they". Paul says "why then are they baptized for them." In the New Testament, there are two groups of people: they and we. They are always those who are outside of Christ and His teachings. We are always Christians who are serving Christ to the best of their ability. Paul here is not saying that Christians baptize for the dead. Rather, he is using a practice (probably pagan or a distorted version of Christianity) which is taking place in Corinth. His point is that even those outside of Christ believe in a resurrection or else they would not baptize for the dead. If non-believers attest to the resurrection, how much trouble should it be for Christians to believe in it?

Both these last options approach the question from a Biblical viewpoint and both present viable options. However, the first viewpoint shows us one of the most dangerous things in Biblical study. To remove a passage not only from its immediate context, but from the context of other clear Scriptures is a dangerous thing. Many have stood in baptisteries being baptized for the dead not realizing that their own souls are in danger because of their religious teachers.

Question 137: Explain Joshua 24:19-20.

Answer 137: In this passage, the Israelites have just announced that they will serve God as Joshua and his house do. They reject the idea that they would ever consider the possibility of serving idols. Joshua's response is the subject of our question tonight. He begins by saying that the people would not be able to serve God. This is a simple statement of fact. Each and every one of us has given into temptations and lost the battle with sin. What Joshua said to the Israelites could be said of each of us (**Romans 6:23**).

Joshua then explains why we cannot serve God. Because God is completely holy and His commandments are pure, our evil hearts will never fully obey Christ in every situation. As long as humans exist on this planet, sinners will exist on this planet as well. Again, this is something that can be said of Christians today.

The last part of this passage is probably what led to tonight's question. Joshua says that God will not forgive the sins of the people. Most believe that the meaning here is also very simple. Under the Old Law, people would inevitably sin, but they could find no forgiveness. This is certainly a Biblical point, but I have one other possibility for us tonight. I believe this could simply be a prophecy given by Joshua concerning the people. A glimpse into the future reveals that Israel would indeed forsake God to worship idols. The problem would eventually lead to the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jewish people. Either of these options has Biblical grounding and so I leave it with you to decide for yourselves.

Question 138: The Lord's Prayer says, "Lead us not into temptation" (**Matthew 6:13**). Does God lead us into temptation?

Answer 138: Let us first begin by stating that God does not tempt any person in this world at any time (**James 1:13**). God is not a tempter. He never places things in our paths in the hopes that we will give in and sin. Ultimately, every temptation starts with our lusts. With this truth firmly in place we can turn our attention to the question.

The petition made in this passage is a beautiful one. It admits human weakness and acknowledges that only God can save us from our sins. It reflects a humble spirit that longs for God's protections in this world. It admits the dangers of sins and the desires that lie beneath the surface of our faith. In all this, it also leads to a problem when trying to harmonize it with the passage we have seen in James.

Perhaps the best answer I can offer is this. Every Christian is to be led by God and His Spirit (**Romans 8:14**). God is ultimately in control of this world and all that is in it. Nature itself obeys the will of God. If God wants, He could spare us every trial by leading us away from every danger. However, in doing this, God would create stunted followers. Therefore, God allows temptations to come. This prayer simply asks that we be spared some of these trials. God's power often makes the Bible attribute all to Him.

Question 139: In Mark 3:12, who is the “them”? Is it the people or the unclean spirits?

Answer 139: Let us read this passage (**Mark 3:7-12**). This is a fascinating passage concerning the demons in Jesus’ day. The demons believe in God and shudder at the thought of Him according to James. In this account, the demons confess their belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus refutes these demons and commands them to tell no one.

The reason for this refutation is three-fold. First, anything a demon is doing does not serve God’s purposes. In short, if a demon thinks this is the right thing to do, God doesn’t. Second, these demons seek to reveal a truth that the world is not ready to receive. It was deep into Jesus’ ministry that He revealed His true identity as the Son of God. Finally, the demons agreeing with Christ might lead some to speculate that He was working with them. Remember the Pharisees made the claim that Jesus was a servant of Satan. Christ ends Satan’s plot by refuting the demons and ending their confessions.

Question 140: According to **1 Corinthians 1:17**, Christ did not send Paul to baptize. Does this indicate that baptism is not important?

Answer 140: This passage has been used by people for a long time to deny the importance of baptism. Let’s start by showing the importance of the act of baptism. Our entire time tonight could be filled just by reading every passage concerning baptism in the New Testament. However, we will begin and end this demonstration with one passage. Read **1 Peter 3:21**. What saves us is important. Baptism saves us, so it is certainly important.

Now that we know that baptism is indeed important, let’s take a look at the passage in question. The context of this passage is vital to its understanding. In Corinth, division has arisen in the church. People are beginning to divide based on who they choose to follow. The options given are Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Christ. Paul calls this division exactly what it is: sinful. If Christ is an option, He is the only option! Paul’s words must be understood with this context.

Why does he say he is glad he did not baptize many? He says this because baptism was apparently being used to decide who a person would follow. He points out that he baptized very few people in Corinth and that his job was to preach, not baptize. Paul does not deny the importance of baptism. Paul simply denies the importance of the one doing the baptizing.

Question 141: Is it ok to address a prayer to Jesus as well as to God the Father?

Answer 141: This is a hot topic amongst preachers and leaders in the church today. Articles are being devoted to it. Books are being devoted to it. And some would make this question a great test of fellowship amongst the brethren. Although I can’t be certain, I believe one of the songs in our songbook has fueled the fires of this question. We have sung it here. “Now let us have a little talk with Jesus. Let us tell Him all about our troubles. He will hear our faintest cry and He will answer by and by.” The question becomes is this a Biblical idea.

We could spend much time going through the arguments of those who stand on either side of this issue. Instead, I have tried to pick out the best possible argument for both and go from there.

First, in support of praying to Jesus, many turn to Acts 7 and a man named Stephen lifting his eyes to Heaven and addressing Jesus Christ. Now in opposition to this view are passages such as **Ephesians 5:20** and **Philippians 4:6**. Again, there are other arguments, but these two seem to sum both sides of the argument up rather nicely.

So, which is right? If you push me for an answer on this question, I would side with those who say leave our prayers addressed to the Father. Jesus is our mediator and therefore hears our requests, but every good and perfect gift comes from the Father, not the Son. On the other hand, I think those who are standing concretely on either side attempting to make this an issue that decides whether or not a person is a false teacher are on shaky ground. In truth, both sides make a strong argument. I just think the latter happens to be the strongest.

Question 142: What is your opinion on replacing worship services with small house church groups?

Answer 142: This idea has been making its way through churches for some time now. Let's start with whether or not we have the authority to do this. The answer is absolutely. The early church met in homes every week (**1 Corinthians 16:19**) and at least some of them were small in number (**Revelation 3:8**). To say the least, this is not a new concept by any stretch of the imagination.

Now that we know that we have authority, let us decide if it is a good idea to do this. First, many proponents argue that this is all about church unity. It is believed that through small groups, we can have a closer fellowship and increase unity. In truth, I don't believe this is true. In fact, I would argue this mentality actually causes cliques and division rather than bringing unity. Second, many argue this is a good way to learn God's Word because many feel comfortable in a small group setting. Again, I would argue that this can actually be the exact opposite of what happens. In small groups, it becomes far too easy to divide along doctrinal lines into factions where everyone agrees and false teaching festers. With many small groups, elder oversight becomes at best problematic which means no correction from leadership takes place. Finally, I would point out that Owl Hollow has small groups meeting right now every Sunday morning, Tuesday morning, and Wednesday night. We call them Bible classes, but if a person truly believes positive things come from small groups, spend time in these classes rather than taking away times to worship as a family together.

The question asks for my opinion on small groups. My opinion is this. If a person feels that they can benefit from these, open your home on a weeknight and add your small group worship to the assemblies already in place. This will tell us how many truly want to have this experience and how many are simply looking for something new and different to do instead of church assemblies.

Question 143: **Genesis 5:23-24** tells us of Enoch. Is he now in Paradise or Heaven?

Answer 143: Yes. I am sure he is in Paradise or Heaven. In this passage we are told that Enoch walked with God. This phrase is only used of two men: Enoch and Noah. This word speaks of the closest relationship one can have with God and literally means to walk side by side. We are

told also in Hebrews that Enoch did not experience death. He was indeed “taken by God” and was exempted from the law that all would die. The question is where was he taken.

In truth, we just don’t know. Many have assumed from these two verses that he now dwells with God in Heaven. However we know that all people go to the waiting place known as death before judgment. This passage does not indicate either for Enoch and so must be left as one of the unknowns. However, it points out that we often simply accept our narrative of events without ever examining them for ourselves.

Question 144: Were there thorns and thistles present on earth before sin? Did they come after the fall?

Answer 144: This is another question concerning the anti-deluvian world. We have had several of them, and I love answering them because they truly make us think about the perfection that was God’s initial creation. In this question, we are asking specifically about the curse of God placed on Adam in Genesis 3. **Read Genesis 3:17-19.**

I think the answer to this question is no. There were no thorns, thistles, or rocky soil deposits in the Garden of Eden. Based on what we read, the earth offered absolutely no resistance to the efforts of Adam to perform his duties as given by God (**Genesis 2:15**). In the beginning, God created the perfect world for mankind.

After the fall, things were different. We know that woman was cursed with painful childbirth and a subjection to her husband which continues to this day. We spend less time on the curse of Adam. However, his curse is actually much longer than Eve’s. His curse is that the earth would no longer be in willing subjection to him. He would have to work to put the earth in that subjection. He would sweat and toil to produce what he needed until finally returning to the cursed ground and becoming dust once more. There are always consequences to our sins and usually, we do not realize how bad they are until they happen.

Question 145: Why is the fruit of the vine mentioned twice in **Luke 22:14-20**?

Answer 145: To understand this question, we must first understand the elements of the Passover Feast. We know that the Passover Feast commemorated the night that the angel of death passed over the Jewish homes in Egypt as he sought out the first born of every other household. It was the most important feast of the Jewish people and Jesus here upholds its place in the Old Testament Law. Let’s see how this meal would have been celebrated.

1. Each person present would drink a cup of the fruit of the vine.
2. Hands were then washed and a clean table brought in for the meal. On this table would rest the herbs, bread, lamb, etc.
3. The head of the table would dip one piece of bread into the herbs for every person present.
4. A second cup of the fruit of the vine was poured and the Passover story was recited.
5. The first part of a special song (the Hallel) was sung.
6. A prayer was offered and the rest of the food was distributed amongst the guests.

7. The lamb was eaten with a third cup of fruit of the vine.
8. After the meal, a fourth cup of fruit of the vine was given to the guests.
9. Finally, the second part of the Hallel was sung and the meal was concluded.

These steps constituted the Passover supper. By putting Paul and Matthew's account of this event together, we see that it was as this supper was concluding that Jesus created the Lord's Supper (**Matthew 26:26, 1 Corinthians 11:25**). The reason Luke includes two cups of fruit of the vine is because he is including part of the Passover feast in his account. Indeed the cup used to institute the Lord's Supper was most likely the fourth cup of the evening. Afterward, they sang a hymn (most likely the Hallel) and departed for the Garden of Gethsemane.

Question 146: Explain **Genesis 32:30-32**.

Answer 146: Genesis 32:24-31 is one of the most interesting accounts in the entire Bible. Jacob is dealing with extreme fear and apprehension because he knows he is about to meet his brother Esau. Jacob fears Esau will seek revenge on him for stealing his birthright. As Jacob sends everyone away to contemplate his predicament, he meets a physical incarnation of God. All night they wrestle. Finally, God sees Jacob's perseverance and ends the match. Jacob is given the name "Israel" which will forever remind him of this great night.

I think there are a few lessons we can learn from this account, but I will leave it at one tonight. For years, Jacob had been running from his problems. He had been a sojourner because of his fear of his brother. On this night, Jacob stood face to face with God and was able to persevere through the night. Now we all know God was holding Himself back, but Jacob could become the leader of God's people and take them where Jehovah wanted them to go because after this night, Jacob never had to be afraid of anything in his life.

Question 147: As the God Head Three is in Spirit form and made man in their image, is the spirit in the form of a man?

Answer 147: Read Genesis 1:26. As an answer to this question, I want us to simply spend some time examining this passage from Genesis. This is one of those passages that we have heard so often we sometimes lose the meaning. The meaning of this passage is one of the most special things for any person reading God's Word. In it, we see a kinship with God that separates us from the rest of the created world. In these few words, we see how special mankind is in the sight of God. Let's think about how special we are...

When God made us, he created our physical bodies first. We were made from the dust of the ground (**Read Genesis 2:7**). However, according to this passage, man was not alive. What made man become a living being? That occurred only when God breathed into man the "breath of life". It is that breath of life which is made in the image of God. God is Spirit (John 4:24). What we often forget is man is also spirit. The flesh and the blood lying on the ground of Eden was not Adam. The breath of life (the soul) was Adam. Likewise, our physical bodies do not make us who we are. If they do, who are we when our bodies return to the ground from which they were made (**Genesis 3:19**). These bodies are not us! They are simply a storage place for us (2

Corinthians 5:1-4). Man is the only creature made by God that received the blessing of a soul. We are truly special in the sight of God because we are made in His Spiritual image!

Question 148: What was David's sin in 1 Chronicles 21? Why was it wrong for him to count Israel?

Answer 148: Read 1 Chronicles 21:1-4. In this moment, David makes a great mistake which he and his people will pay dearly for (21:14). What exactly was his mistake? Numbering people is not in and of itself sinful. In fact, God ordered Moses to number the children of Israel in Numbers chapter 1. What was different when David did it?

The opening line of the chapter in question gives us the answer. Satan stood up to convince David to number his people. As the story continues, we see that at least one advisor to the throne saw the sinful nature of the numbering. With these two things, we are given the clues that I think reveals the true nature of David's sin. David was not numbering the people so as to get information. David's numbering of the people was a show of arrogance and pride.

David wanted to number the people so that he could know how many subjects he had. He also probably wanted to compare his nation to others in the world. All these ideas are sinful. The nation of Israel was never David's nation. It was God's. The people of Israel were never David's subjects. They were God's. The victories of David were not because of the strength of his army. They were the result of God standing with David on the battlefield. What we see in 1 Chronicles 21 is a display of power going to a man's head. David's arrogance led to a humbling experience as 70,000 people who had been numbered lost their lives to appease the wrath of God.

Question 149: Why does Paul say the lame man had faith to be healed (**Acts 14:9**)? Why does Jesus say that a woman's faith made her well (**Mark 5:34**)? Is faith a requirement to being healed?

Answer 149: Let us start by answering the question. Then we can get to the passages in question. Is faith a requirement to be healed? This question arises from the modern day teaching that when a faith healer fails, it is the faith of the one attempting to be healed that has truly failed. These faith healers turn to passages like the ones we have just read to justify their shortcomings. Does the Bible give the answer?

The answer lies in a question. Do dead people have faith? What about people who are absolutely crippled by the effects of demonic possession? Jesus raised the dead and cast out demons without once asking about the faith of the one being healed. Faith was never a prerequisite for healing. So, what about those passages we have just read?

Just because a person has faith to be healed and that particular person's faith led to their healing does not mean it is required. For instance, one man was lowered through a roof to be healed, but that was not a requirement for all people who wanted healing. Notice that Paul saw the faith in the man. He literally saw that the man believed his message. If the man did not believe, I have no doubt he would not have been healed. It was his faith that first drew Paul's attention to him. In

Jesus' case, the woman's faith is what brought her in contact with the cloak of Christ in the first place.

Question 150: What is a wave offering and heave offering (Leviticus 7:30-32)?

Answer 150: A wave offering is described in **Leviticus 23:9-11**. To perform a wave offering, the priests of Israel quite literally had to wave the object being offered over the people making the sacrifice. Doing this would basically immerse the person in the smoke of the sacrifice. Once this was done, the meat or grain from the sacrifice would become the property of the priests.

The heave offering is described in **Leviticus 10:14-15**. These are both connected in that they are both a part of the same sacrifice. This piece of meat was literally heaved up as if being lifted up to God on behalf of the person presenting the offering. Again, the offering became the property of the priests once the ritual was complete.

Question 151: Will those in Heaven be able to see into Hell as the rich man and Lazarus can see from Paradise to Torment?

Answer 151: This question comes from **Isaiah 66:24**. We should also include **Revelation 14:9-11**. In these two passages, there seems to be a connection between Heaven and Hell. In one, we can look on the corpses of those in Hell while the other tells us that we can smell the aroma of their sacrifice rising to Heaven. This leads us to wonder if we will be able to see into Hell from Heaven. It also leads to another question. Will we remember those who are not in Heaven with us?

I must first say that all we know of Heaven and Hell is what God has revealed. In the grand scheme of eternity, we know very little. I think it is important to note that both passages we have read come from books of prophecy which often are symbolic in their nature. My thought on this question is that we will not have any connection to Hell from our place in Heaven. In short, I say this because there is no sadness in Heaven and Hell is a place filled with it. How this will work, I would not dare to speculate, but I cannot imagine an eternal home with no pain knowing that a loved one resides in a place of punishment.

Having said that, there is another theory on this idea that I would like to share. Some have hypothesized that we actually will have memory of loved ones who lost their spiritual battles and are separated from God. The idea is that once we get to Heaven, we will have a perfect understanding of justice and judgment and will therefore not be caused pain at the thought of those who did not make it.

Above all, this question reminds us of two simple things. 1. We want to be on the right side of eternity. 2. We want to take as many as we can with us.

Question 152: How was Satan in Heaven if he is evil (**Job 1:6-8**)?

Answer 152: Let's dive into this interesting question. First, can someone point to me in this passage where the word "Heaven" is used? The answer is no. The word Heaven is not used here. So why do we assume the scene we see here takes place in Heaven? Two things lead us to this conclusion. First, the angels are presenting themselves before God. Obviously angels would do this in Heaven. Can anyone point to the word "angel" in their text? If you are using the NIV, you may be able to do so, but it should contain a footnote telling you that the Hebrew word here literally means "sons of God". Who are the sons of God? This word can indeed be used of angels, but more often than that it is used to describe God's people (Romans 8:14, Hebrews 12:7-8). What if we do not have a Heavenly scene at all in Job chapter one? What if we see a group of God's people coming together to present themselves before the "throne of God" in worship? (NOTE: We use the same imagery to describe our prayers!) I believe we have completely missed what is actually occurring in Job 1. I believe this describes a worship service to God where we see Satan in the midst of the assembly. We see God also there in the midst of the assembly. As Satan seeks to point out all that is wrong with God's people, God comes to our defense. Does this happen in our worship today? God is certainly present. Satan is certainly present. Satan is known as the accuser. God is certainly known as our defender. How much more meaning does this passage take on when we realize that this same event may be happening tonight as we gather here to worship God?

Question 153: Is it ok for a song leader to use a pitchpipe?

Answer 153: This question centers on the concept of aid versus addition. To help us with this discussion, let us first define aid and addition. An aid is anything which helps us to obey a commandment from God and does not cause us to violate any commandment of God. An addition is something that goes beyond God's commandments in such a way as to violate other principles of God's Word.

Let us notice a couple of examples. We are commanded to participate in the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. In order to aid us in this, we use communion trays designed to make passing out the bread and fruit of the vine easier. This in no way violates any other commandment or example given by God. However, if we were to add some leaven to our bread in order to make it more pleasing to our tastes, we would violate the example we have of Christ using unleavened bread for the Passover feast.

Again, we are commanded to sing our songs one to another making melody in our hearts unto the Lord. To aid us in this we may use a songbook or a PowerPoint screen which displays the words of the song. However, if we were to add musical instruments to this worship, we would be violating the commandment to make melody in our hearts.

There are literally hundreds of other illustrations to this point, but let us turn our attention to a pitchpipe. A pitchpipe aids our worship in song by starting us on the same pitch. It does not violate any commandment of God because it does not make melody during the singing. A pitchpipe is an aid, not an addition and is therefore no more sinful than a communion tray or a songbook.

Question 154: How did killing the pigs with the demons destroy the demons?

Answer 154: Read Luke 8:26-33. This question comes from last month's fishbowl sermon. The simple answer to this is that the Bible does not indicate the destruction of the demons in this account. In answering a question last month, I made that statement, but it is an incorrect one. I apologize for that mistake. By implication, the demons were indeed not destroyed, but rather were allowed to remain on the earth. They were not sent into the abyss but into a herd of swine that immediately destroyed themselves.

Before leaving this passage, I would make one point from it. Satan always destroys. Although these demons got a reprieve, their eternal destination is not in question. Their eternal home is a lake of fire prepared for them and those like them. Satan and his workers have destroyed far more than a bunch of pigs.

Question 155: Is "sacred" a Biblical word? If so, what does it mean and can it be applied to material things?

Answer 155: The word "sacred" is definitely a Biblical word. It comes from the same Hebrew word most often translated "consecrated". I think this translation makes the meaning much clearer. The root Hebrew word literally means "apartness". The words sacred and consecrated simply mean that the items being referenced are literally set apart from other objects like them. In the Old Testament, this word is used to describe the Temple, the garments and oil of the priests, works of God, and even places of specific contact with God.

In the New Testament, the word sacred is rarely found. It comes from a Greek word literally meaning consecrated to God. It again is used of temple service and is also used of the Scriptures of God.

In short, the word sacred simply means that God has done something special to that particular item. God made the Temple and the priesthood sacred. God made various altar sites sacred. God made His Word sacred. Man can make nothing sacred, but God can make anything sacred.

Question 156: Will God always be there to help even when you haven't paid enough attention to Him?

Answer 156: This is a great question. How many of us have ever felt like we do not deserve the attention of God because of our own shortcomings. We may feel like our prayers shouldn't be answered because we haven't given enough or done enough good deeds. We may feel like God won't help us because we are struggling with sin (emphasis on struggling) or our faith is not as strong as it should be. I truly believe this is one of Satan's greatest attempts at our souls. If Satan can convince us that our weaknesses negate God in our lives, he has won a great victory.

The truth is that God works in our lives in spite of us. In fact, it is often our greatest weaknesses that demonstrate God working the most in our lives. Consider a couple of passages on the matter. **Read 1 Peter 3:9.** From this passage, we see that God does not want any to perish. It is His

desire to help each and every person on this planet survive this world with our souls intact. To ensure we all have that chance, God has to do a lot of work to cover our weaknesses. **Read 1 John 1:7.** We will have more to say in a moment on the walking in the light portion of this passage. For now, let us simply notice that God is consistently having to cleanse us of our shortcomings. Why would God do this? Why does He care? To answer this, you only have to ask a parent. God is our Father through adoption according to Paul. How many parents give up on their children after a mistake? God never leaves our side in this world. He is truly always there for His children.

NOTE: Do not use this answer as a reason not to try. God will be there for us no matter what we have done. However, this does not mean that God will not punish the wicked. It also does not mean that God does not reserve certain privileges only for His children. It also does not mean that we can ignore the standards of God and expect Him to rescue us in this world or the next!

Question 157: How old was Sarah when Abimelech took her (Genesis 20)?

Answer 157: Read Genesis 20:1-2. In this passage, it is believed that Sarah was about the age of ninety. This is actually the second recorded time that Abraham and Sarah have used this deception. It is also evident from this passage that this was Abraham and Sarah's normal procedure when they wandered (**Genesis 20:13**). The first was in the land of Egypt where it is said that Abraham feared the Egyptians because of Sarah's beauty (**Genesis 12:10-13**). In this instance, Sarah's beauty is not mentioned. In fact, Abimelech probably had other motives for wanting Sarah as a wife. Abraham at this point was a very powerful nomadic tribesman. Abimelech could use a marriage to his sister in order to further his own political power and influence. It is important to note that in both these instances God intervened on behalf of Abraham and Sarah. For the promise to come as God had said, these two individuals would need to live their lives as a couple married to each other.

Question 158: What is the Book of Jashar in the Old Testament? What was it used for?

Answer 158: The book of Jashar is spoken of twice in the Old Testament (**Joshua 10:13, 2 Samuel 1:18**). In both of these instances what was written in the Book of Jashar is actually repeated in the text. It may also be that this is the book referenced in Numbers 21:14 as The Book of the Wars of the Lord. One of the few things we know for certain about this book is that it has been lost to the hands of time. It is far from the only such book. In the Old Testament, numerous books are mentioned by title with little or no indication of what they contained. Based on what we know, most of these were probably histories of Israel and her military conquests. For instance, many believe that the Book of Jashar was actually a detailed account of Joshua's conquest of Canaan.

It is also worth our time to note that this is not just an Old Testament occurrence. For instance, we know that there was a third letter written to the Christians in Corinth (**1 Corinthians 5:9**). We also know that there is a lost letter written to the Laodiceans (**Colossians 4:16**).

While whatever was written in these letters has been lost, we can be certain of one thing. What was in them was not needed. God has both written and protected all that we need to make it to Heaven (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

Question 159: Should we give credibility to “out of body experience” books like Heaven Is Real?

Answer 159: Heaven Is for Real is the true story of a four-year old son of a small-town Nebraska pastor who experienced heaven during emergency surgery. This is far from the only time someone has made the claim to have visited the afterlife and returned. In fact, I can remember watching a show called Unsolved Mysteries when I was a kid and one episode had several people who had supposedly visited hell during a near death experience. Our question tonight is very simply: do these accounts harmonize with what the Bible tells us concerning the afterlife?

The first thing we need to notice is the Biblical definition of death. **Read James 2:26.** The Bible clearly defines death as the separation of the body and the spirit. This makes perfect sense considering that God breathed into us the spirit of life. This tells us that breathing and a heartbeat do not determine life and death in God’s eyes. Now that this has been established, let’s read **Hebrews 9:27.** Death only occurs once. While it is true that God has demonstrated His power by raising the dead in the past, this period has ended. Finally, let us consider the story of the rich man and Lazarus. If it was possible for us to return from death, the rich man would not have asked to do so. He would simply have done it. Once we reach the Hadean realm, we cannot cross back over to the world of the living.

Does that mean that all these people are lying? Not necessarily although I am sure some are. Most describing these instances are facing extreme physical trauma to put them near death in the first place. It is not beyond possibility that their minds are simply leading them to have visions and experiences. In the end, Christians should not endorse such things, but should take advantage of them. After all, this movie might make people think about the afterlife and create an opportunity to teach.

Question 160: Based on 1 Timothy 1:3-7 and Titus 3:9, should we avoid doing family histories?

Answer 160: With the current interest in researching genealogies, these two passages become important to look at. The key to understanding them is to understand what is being addressed. The key word in both these passages is the Law (**1 Timothy 1:7**). In these passages Paul is addressing false Judaizing teachers who were causing dissensions within the church. Part of this was to trace their ancestry back to Abraham and to one of the tribes of Israel. We are not to pay attention to these things as a way to bolster our spirituality. However, a person interested in their family history as a hobby are not being addressed in these passages.

Question 161: Who are God's People in Acts 18:8-10?

Answer 161: This passage records a fascinating event in the life of Paul. He is on a missionary journey and finds himself in the city of Corinth. Corinth is known as one of the most evil cities in the Roman world. It was basically a port city and one of its temples was said to house 10,000 prostitutes. Paul receives a promise from Christ that he would not be harmed and was told to stay in Corinth. He settles there for a year and a half and meets no harm. According to Christ, this is because He has "many people" in the city of Corinth. Who are these people in this wicked city?

There are two Biblical ways to view this statement. First, in verse 8 we are told that "many Corinthians" had heard the Gospel, believed it, and were baptized. By the time the promise is given, many in Corinth were Christians. This certainly fits with what is given in this passage. It is also given credit by the fact that Jews were the main source of persecution on Paul and he was able to convert some of the main players in the Jewish faith in Corinth (Acts 18:8). The second way to look at this actually just adds to this first thought. It could be that God is making a promise to Paul that many more would be saved in Corinth. Being eternal, God knows the choices of mankind and knew that many would be saved in Corinth by Paul's preaching. This certainly does not violate this passage and seems quite possible. Either way, the point is that this wicked city was full of potential. Often, the darker the circumstances, the easier it is for the light of Christians to shine.

Before leaving this passage let us note the simplicity of God's plan of salvation. People hear the Gospel, believe it, and are baptized. Are you in need of that salvation tonight?

Question 162: The Bible speaks of Satan approaching Jesus. Based on the account, Satan was visible. Can you see or touch the devil today?

Answer 162: In New Testament times, Satan was able to do many things. He was able to be seen visibly as **Luke 4:1-3** suggests. He was able to speak directly to men. He was able to use demons to possess men. He was able to do all this. Our question is whether or not he can do these things today.

Read Revelation 10:1-3. In this passage we are told that for the thousand-year reign of Christ (the Christian Age) Satan is chained and bound. He is not allowed to use his full force of deception on us anymore. For instance, he is no longer allowed to possess people because there is no longer a cure for possession. He is no longer allowed to appear to us or speak to us. Instead, he uses influence and subtle attacks to do his damage.

When Christ walked this earth and those who could perform miracles through the Holy Spirit did their work, Satan was allowed to show his power. I think the reason for this is very simple. When God unleashed His power in the form of miracles, He wanted to show Satan's power as weaker. The only way to do this was to allow him full abilities. Now that the miraculous age has passed, so too has Satan's time of full strength.

It is also interesting to note that at the end of the Revelation passage Satan is once again freed. This is the time of the judgment. Satan is loosed so that the world can see God's Power cast the fully functioning Satan into the lake of fire where he will be eternally punished.

Question 163: How was Paul a Roman citizen?

Answer 163: Roman citizenship was the greatest of privileges in the Roman world. It gave its bearer certain freedoms which were not afforded others. Roman citizenship allowed a person to own land, have a state-recognized marriage, appeal to the Roman courts, avoid certain forms of capital punishment, and travel more freely in the Roman Empire. It also came with a certain amount of respect from those within the Empire. This tool would undoubtedly aid Paul as he travelled to spread the Gospel of Christ.

There were only three ways to become a Roman citizen. First, a Caesar could arbitrarily award citizenship to individuals or even entire communities. Second, a person could gain citizenship from some great act of service to the Empire (military veterans received citizenship). Finally, a person could be born a Roman citizen. Let us look to see if we can find the answer to Paul's citizenship.

Read Acts 22:28. We know for sure that Paul was born a citizen. This means that Paul's father (it could not pass from the mother) was a Roman citizen. Paul inherited his citizenship from his father. Of course, we also know that Paul's father was a Jew (**Philippians 3:3-6**). He comes from the tribe of Benjamin and this inheritance too would have come from his father. How Paul's father got his citizenship leads us back to the three ways. It could be that Paul's father served in the military in some form, but this is unlikely. It could be that he bought his citizenship by bribing a major official. This could be a little more likely because Tarsus was a very wealthy city. Personally, I think Paul's father was at some point in the right place at the right time and was bestowed citizenship in one of the cities where a Caesar did so.

Question 164: What did Jesus mean by "that you may not enter into temptation" and "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"?

Answer 164: Read Matthew 26:41. As Jesus left His disciples to go pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, He left them with this instruction. First, let us deal with the idea of entering temptation. The farther away from God that we get, the closer to Satan and the world we find ourselves. Through prayer, we are drawing near to the throne of God in full humility and submission. The stronger we are in our prayer life, the closer we are to God. The closer we are to God, the farther we are from Satan (**James 4:7-8**). Jesus' instructions here should be a great lesson to us. May we all look for ways to stay close to God that we might not enter temptation.

Now let us deal with the second part of this instruction. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak shows the constant battle between our desires to serve God and our desires to serve man. Our fleshly desires constantly pull us to the world of sin. On the other hand, our spiritual desires constantly pull us to the world of God. Jesus' statement simply reveals the dual nature of our being. It is a theme that Paul would take up on numerous occasions including the lists of the

works of the flesh vs. the works of the spirit. By drawing close to God, we focus on the spiritual rather than the physical.

Question 165: During the persecution, why did the Apostles remain in Jerusalem?

Answer 165: Read Acts 8:1. This is an excellent question that I am not sure we can accurately answer. With that in mind, we will take a look at just a few things that may have led to this decision by the Apostles and leave it at that.

First, let us remember the mission the Apostles have been given (**Read Acts 1:7-8**). Their ministry was to begin in Jerusalem. This may simply be a case where they did not believe the work in Jerusalem was finished.

Second, it may come from a continued misunderstanding of the nature of the church (See Acts 10). Based on the account of Peter with Cornelius, I am not sure that the Apostles were prepared to open their arms to the Gentile world in chapter 8. They may have simply stayed where their main audience of Jews existed.

Finally, they may have been a little more devoted than others. I think these Apostles knew their lives would end in martyrdom. This is purely a guess on my part, but I don't think they thought they could survive this world both physically and spiritually. Their commission was too great not to bring the persecutions upon them. This could have made them a little more willing to face the dangers that others fled from.

Question 166: In 1 Timothy 3, why does Paul say elders should not be given to wine, but say deacons should not be given to much wine? Is it ok for Christians to drink?

Answer 166: Imagine a mother telling her child that when he goes outside to play he needs to watch out for snakes. "Snakes can be dangerous. Some of them are poisonous and even the ones that aren't can bite you and hurt you," she says. Later on, her child is playing in the yard when she hears him scream in pain. She rushes outside and the panicked child explains that he was trying to catch a snake and it bit him. "Didn't you hear what I said about how dangerous snakes are?" the mom asks her child. "Yes, but you never said not to catch one," comes the child's response.

Sometimes I wonder if God feels like the mom in our story when we talk about alcohol. He has given us constant and forceful warnings concerning alcohol, yet we seem to want to poke this particular sin with a stick just to see if it will bite us! Let us begin by looking at one of the passages in the New Testament where God speaks of alcohol. **Read Ephesians 5:18.** People are quick to point out that this passage says drunk and so if a person doesn't get drunk they are ok. However, let us focus our attention on the second part of this passage. Being filled with the Spirit is here directly contrasted with the idea of filling up on alcohol. My question to any Christian would be "How much spirit are you willing to give up for your drink?"

Now let us turn to the passage in question. **Read 1 Timothy 3:2-3, 8.** Why were Deacons not to be addicted to much wine when elders were told not to be addicted to any? Does this free us up

to have alcohol? Well first we need to notice something that becomes apparent with the use of the KJV. These two words translated “wine” in these passages are actually two different Greek words. The word dealing with elders deals with the idea of being an angry, brawling drunk. The word dealing with deacons simply means to drink wine with no other connotation. This helps us clear up the problem with these two passages.

Under no circumstances should an elder cause strife and fighting. This includes being an angry drunk. However, Paul could not say that deacons (or elders for that matter) could not take any wine at all. Remember what happened when Timothy tried that (**1 Timothy 5:23**). The use of a small amount of alcohol for medicinal purposes must not be equated with the social drinking that we see so often defended by Christians. The dangers are clear and the sin is present when a Christian uses alcohol.

Question 167: Where can we find the first birthday party in the Bible?

Answer 167: The first birthday party of the Bible was held in honor of one of the Pharaohs of Egypt (**Genesis 40:20**). I think this question came from someone who watched the Great American Bible Challenge on the Game Show Network. I would recommend this show as good family entertainment and as a good way to learn basic facts from God’s Word.

Question 168: Is it a sin to dream of saying or doing things that would be sins if you actually did them? If not, why do I feel guilty when I awake?

Answer 168: The Bible makes it clear that we are judged by the actions we take on this earth (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**). This is our answer to the first part of this question. Dreams are not actions. Therefore, do not fall under the judgment. We cannot control our dreams which would make our judgment based on them unfair and unbiblical.

Now let’s get to the second part of the question. This is a common problem among Christians. I will call it false guilt for our purposes tonight. False guilt is without a doubt one of the most dangerous things that can creep into the life of a Christian. False guilt is the feeling of guilt before the throne of God when we have done nothing to feel guilty about. It can also manifest itself by appearing after we have gotten forgiveness for wrongs we have committed in our lives. This is dangerous because it can lead a person who is truly striving to serve God feeling as if they can never be good enough to enter into Heaven.

What do we do about this problem? We need to identify the source of our guilt. There is a good type of guilt which is spoken of in the Bible (**2 Corinthians 7:10**). Godly sorrow is produced when our sinful actions meet the Word of God. When this happens, we must realize how our actions affect God and our eternity. We must be truly sorry to God and be led to repentance. After this repentance, we must take God at His Word that He truly forgives (**1 John 1:7-10**). If God forgives us, we must learn to forgive ourselves.

Guilt is truly one of the great gifts given to us by our Creator. However, Satan has twisted it to discourage those who try to serve God. When we feel guilty, we need to figure out if God or Satan is the source of the guilt.

Question 169: How did the Sanhedrin get its name?

Answer 169: The Sanhedrin traces its roots in practice all the way back to Moses (**Numbers 11:16-17**). In New Testament times, it referred to the supreme court in the Jewish world. The word itself actually traces its roots to the Greek and Roman world. It comes from two words: “Sun” which literally means together and “Hedra” which literally means seat. This was the common phrase for the courts in Roman and Greek cities and was simply adopted by Jews as the name for their court. The Hebrew word used for this institution was “beth-din” which literally means judgment chamber.

Question 170: I would like a discussion centered on abortion in cases where the mother’s life is in danger.

Answer 170: I chose to include this question tonight because of our sermon this morning. As I said then, if we could eliminate all forms of abortion except in instances of rape and the life of the mother, I would consider it a giant leap forward in this discussion. With that in mind, this is one of the most difficult questions to answer in today’s world. With that in mind, I will give the two viewpoints that tend to come up amongst Christians discussing this topic.

First, some believe that there is no reason to ever abort a baby. They would argue that abortion is wrong regardless of reason including danger to the mother. Second, some take the position that this type of abortion is nothing more than an act of self-defense from the mother and is therefore excusable. They would argue that while shooting a random person on the street is sinful, shooting the same person as they attempt to kill you or your family is not. Now I bet you want me to tell you which side I fall on...

Well, I won’t. Instead, I want to approach this subject in this way. If we encounter a family who is having to make this decision, the best plan for us is a lot of prayer and support no matter which choice they make. I think sympathy must replace judgments in this scenario. I hope to never know of this happening to anyone I know personally. If it does, my opinions matter much less than my love for a family who is hurting. When this hypothetical becomes someone’s reality, the last thing they need to hear is what choice we would make.

Question 171: Who established the first church of Christ in the USA and is it still in existence today?

Answer 171: The answer to this question is not really much of an answer at all. We tend to think of the birth of the church in America as we do the birth of the church on Pentecost. However, this is simply not the case. The birth of the church in America was one that took decades and came about through small steps with an occasional large leap mixed in. It came about through various movements in various parts of the country led by various leaders from various religious backgrounds. With the freedom of religion found in America, men began studying God’s Word through fresh eyes of discovery and found that they had long departed from the simply pattern of the New Testament. This doesn’t even take into account the pioneers of the American frontier who had nothing but the Bible and a desire to serve God. These two things may have led to any number of Christians and even pockets of Christians living in the time preceding the 19th

century. The devolution of man-made denominations back into the New Testament church is a fascinating topic worthy of all of our attention, but the answer to this question is lost to all but God.

Question 172: Do we have to break the bread we use during communion or can it be pre-cut?

Answer 172: This question comes from the account of the Lord's Supper found in **Matthew 26:26-29**. I have mentioned before that I usually divide Fishbowl night amongst what I call curiosity questions and questions of importance to salvation. Normally, this would go under the category of curiosity, but this question has actually caused a division in our brotherhood. It goes hand in hand with the so called "one cupper" division which still exists to this day. For that reason, we must look at this as a salvation issue because it has caused such a division.

In Matthew and the other Gospels, we read historical accounts of events from the life of Christ. In this case, we find the Lord's Supper being instituted in the upper room by Jesus Christ. Many details are given in this account which are simply part of the story rather than part of the example. For instance, they are in an upper room. They are reclining at the table. They are meeting at night. They have lamb and herbs present at the meal. This list could go on and on. No one would seek to perfectly recreate this night's setting and events because no rational person would see these details as binding. However, for some they have decided to bind the idea of "breaking" the bread.

The answer to this is very simple. So long as Jesus Christ is not present to do the breaking, the breaking of the bread must be a detail, not a binding example. After all, at some point, someone who serves communion must break the bread he is going to partake in. This is one of those quirks within some congregations which must never be held as a standard for the Lord's Church.

Question 173: Of what was Jesus referring when he said Nathaniel would see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of God?

Answer 173: Read John 1:51. In this account, we see Jesus recruiting Nathanael into the group which would be the twelve Apostles. Nathaniel is hesitant to say the least, but Jesus persuades him by revealing intimate facts that no one should know. Nathaniel becomes convinced and Jesus says that greater things will be seen by him. Specifically, He says that Nathaniel will see angels ascending and descending on Him. Our question is simple. When did this occur?

Let us start with this. This may or may not have a literal meaning. If literal, there are only two options for us to consider. First, this may be a prophecy of an unrecorded event in the life of Christ. We have a very quick glimpse into the life of Christ rather than a full picture (**John 20:30-31**). The only other option that seems to fit this circumstance was the ascension of Jesus Christ (**Acts 1:9-11**). We know that on this occasion Heaven was opened to receive the Son and angels were at least present. However, Jesus may have intended His Words to Nathaniel to bring about a completely different meaning.

If I said we were going to study a time when Heaven was opened up and someone saw angels ascending and descending, what would come to your mind? Jacob's ladder into Heaven. It could

be that Jesus was basically telling Nathaniel that he would one day see Jesus being the connection between God and man. This would take place in the form of the church. Any of these views makes sense and fit the Biblical account, so take your pick.

Question 174: Who are the Freemasons and what are their doctrines?

Answer 174: The Freemasons have captured America's attention along with the Knights Templar. These two groups have been linked together in historical fiction to be secret societies which have done everything from finding the Holy Grail to organizing the governments of the world into the New World Order. It is easy to make these speculations because both of these groups are and were very secretive about their operations. Tonight, we will try to separate fact from fiction in a short amount of time which will be almost impossible.

Masonry dates back to the 1700's although it claims to be much older. Many of America's founding fathers were Masons. To be a Mason is to be in a religious (not social) order. When one reads passages from the Morals and Dogmas Masonry handbook, he finds a basic outline for a religion. Masonry will often claim a connection to Christianity, but I want you to consider this quote from Morals and Dogmas. "Masonry, then is of divine origin, instituted, not to teach religious dogmas, but to prepare the way, and point to the true worship. To be the true depository of the doctrine of God". Within its own handbook, Masonry reveals itself. It considers itself the light that can shine true spiritual light on the masses. We could go farther by looking at some of their initiation practices, creeds, and Pagan beliefs, but I do not see any reason to do so. Only the church is divinely instituted by God and given the responsibility to uphold His truths. No other organization can take her place. Christians need to avoid Freemasonry.

Question 175: Why did Claudius run all the Jews out of Rome (**Acts 18:2**)?

Answer 175: The edict of Claudius took place between 49-52 A.D. As noted in the text, this edict expelled all Jews out of Rome. This simple act would play a great role in the first century church in Rome. In fact, most believe that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to deal with problems which originated with this edict. The question tonight is why Claudius gave this edict.

As we begin, we should note that we have 2 other historical instances of the Jews being thrown out of Rome by an emperor so this is hardly an isolated incident. Suetonius indicates that this edict came about because of "disturbances" caused by the Jews in Rome. He goes into no further detail of these disturbances. I think the simple answer is because most Romans did not like the Jews. In many ways, Jews have been persecuted throughout time and in most corners of the world. Rome was no different. This was simply a form of persecution from the emperor to punish the Jews for being Jews. There were also possible political reasons for this expulsion.

Question 176: Can a Christian participate in combat during war?

Answer 176: This question specifically mentioned the fact that soldiers must take lives in the act of combat, so we will focus our attention there first. We know that within the original Ten Commandments God established a commandment not to commit murder (**Exodus 20:14**). However, we also know that killing in combat was not considered by God to be murder. We

know this because men like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, etc. were involved in conflicts...many of them at the direct command of God!

Of course, many of us would look at this and say, "But that is Old Testament." What about the New Testament. Jesus never took up the sword to fight. We would be correct, but a visitor in our Bible class one Sunday morning brought out a point on this question that I think is worth repeating. He pointed out that the first Gentile convert was in fact a soldier. Nowhere in the context of Cornelius' conversion do we see any commandment for him to give up his post, and as far as we know, he did not have to do so to become a Christian. We must also remember **Romans 13:1-4**. How can the government be a minister of God to punish the wicked if it is not allowed to participate in combat? Remember, we do not have to look overseas for wickedness or for soldiers fighting it. Our streets are filled with domestic soldiers that we call police officers and they are sometimes called to use deadly force in the fulfillment of their job as well. Can a Christian serve as a soldier or police officer? Absolutely, but they have an obligation to serve as a Christian version of a soldier.

Question 177: Was Adam not at least deceived indirectly (**1 Timothy 2:14**)?

Answer 177: To answer this question, we must go back to the beginning. Adam and Eve are in the Garden of Eden. They have been instructed to eat of any tree except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. One day, Eve is approached by the Serpent of Old. **Read Genesis 3:1-7**. From this account, we can answer the question raised tonight.

Was Adam deceived in the Garden of Eden? My answer to this question is no. We know that Eve said something to Adam (**Genesis 3:17**). However, I am not so sure that deception was involved. Based on what Paul says to Timothy, it most surely wasn't involved. So how did Adam fall into sin? Eve was deceived by the Serpent, but it appears Adam did not require that act to fall into temptation. My guess based on what we see from the two passages is that Adam simply followed the command of his wife to eat without questioning her motives or wisdom. In short, Adam became the first man to raise a person's commandments above God's. It just so happens that Adam's instructor was his own wife.

Question 178: What detail does the Bible go into regarding modest dress?

Answer 178: To be honest, I can think of only two passages for us to concern ourselves with in answering this question. First, we can know that clothing tells the world about our character (**Genesis 38:13-15**). Next, we are told that women should dress modestly (**1 Timothy 2:9-10**).

With these two passages, I think we can get a clear understanding of modesty.

Modesty did not include a dress code. Paul gives clear things that a woman should not wear (jewelry and braided hair). However, when one considers the culture Paul lived in, we know why these things were mentioned specifically. What is much more telling to me is the lack of specifics in the Old Law. The Old Law was considered a burden by the New Testament writers because of its intricacy and detail. Yet, when looking at the Old Law, I do not see one mention of detail given concerning modest apparel. We know there was immodest apparel which actually predates the law because Tamar could dress as a prostitute, but we are not even told what a prostitute dressed like. What does all this mean to us?

It means that clothing changes based on culture and our culture must have SOME say in what is or is not modest. What was considered modest to the Jews would not have been modest to the Romans. And what was considered modest to the Romans is not considered modest to us. We must use some common sense when dealing with this question. When we dress, we should do so not to draw attention to ourselves. We must make sure we are not creating opportunities for stumbling as we encounter others. Most importantly, we should make sure our dress agrees with our soul. Christianity on the inside should reflect on the outward apparel.

Question 179: Why did Josiah fight with Necho (2 Chronicles 35:21-23)?

Answer 179: Here we have one of the most interesting accounts of the Old Testament. It is not fascinating because of the death of a king, for that happens quite often. It is fascinating because this king dies after rejecting a commandment from God as given to the Egyptian King Neco. We have no idea how Neco received this instruction, nor is there any reason at all to believe he thought of Jehovah as the one true God of Heaven, but we see him obeying God and going into battle against His enemy. This is perhaps one of the greatest windows into God's orchestration of the ancient rulers of the world as He wielded them to initiate His Will on the world. Now on to the question at hand tonight. Why did Josiah choose to fight? Based on the Biblical timeline, Neco was most about to battle the Assyrians at Carchemish. The Assyrians were already weakened and would actually fall to Babylon within three years of this account. This leaves us two reasons why Josiah would choose to fight Neco. First, Josiah may have believed Assyria would not fall. If so, he would have fought Assyria's enemies in order to make her a stronger ally for Israel. On the other hand, he may have feared that Egypt would simply take the place of Assyria and enslave his people. Josiah may have seen this as an opportunity to fight both Egypt and Assyria in order to gain Israel's independence from both. However, neither of these options was within the Will of God. Josiah would die and Neco would be back months after his death to force Israel into submission.

Question 180: During Creation, did each day account for 24 hours or an undetermined amount of time?

Answer 180: To answer this question, we need to first examine why it is even asked. For thousands of years, the Genesis account of creation has been accepted as literal (i.e. the days mentioned were literal 24 hour days). However, this began to change when Charles Darwin's theory of evolution swept through the scientific community. As it did so, many Christians decided they had to find a way to rationalize this alleged scientific data with the Biblical account. Since Darwinian evolution requires millions of years to take place, those seeking to adapt it into the Scriptures had to find extra time in Genesis chapter one. In order to do this, they developed what is called the Day-Age Theory. In short, this means that the days of Creation were actually long periods (hundreds of millions of years) instead of twenty-four hour days. Depending on the version of this theory, this applies to all the days of creation or only days 1-3 of creation (before the sun and moon were created). We will now take a look at the Bible to decide which of these two ideas is Biblically accurate.

First, let us read what is said about the days of creation (**Genesis 1:3-4**). On day one of creation, God creates light and separates it from the darkness. He calls the light day and the darkness

night. For each day after this, the conclusion is that there was an evening and a morning which constituted one day. This same definition for a day has held true since the Garden of Eden. There is one more passage for us to consider when dealing with the length of Genesis' days (**Exodus 20:8-11**). In this passage, God gives His reason for resting on the Seventh (Sabbath) Day. He states that He made the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. He then demands that the Israelites do this as well. Were the days in Exodus literal or some indefinite period of time? Now, let us consider the biggest logistical problem with the Day-Age Theory. Regardless of the version, days 1-3 of creation are alleged to be periods of thousands or millions of years based on the theory. On day three of creation, God creates the vegetation of the earth. If we are to believe that that vegetation sat during the thousands or millions of years according to the Day-Age Theory, we have thousands or millions of years which are divided among by an evening and a morning. That means there were at least thousands of years of darkness followed by at least thousands of years of light. What plants would have survived these conditions? The truth is the Day-Age Theory is a weak attempt to force a bad scientific theory into God's account of creation. The two cannot be joined together because God defines the days in which He worked. To redefine them is to put ourselves in the place of God which is a bad place for any of us to try to be.

Question 181: Did God create evil since He created Satan?

Question 181: This is one of the great questions of Biblical philosophy. How can an all-loving, omni-benevolent God be responsible for creating Satan and all the things that go with him? The answer is not as complicated as the question may appear. It lies much closer than the mystical world of angels and demons. To answer the question of whether or not God created evil when He created Satan, we need to look at our world instead.

In our world today are around 7 billion people. When one of those people takes a gun and shoots in a movie theater, who is responsible? When one of those people joins a terror group that murders women and children, who is responsible? When one of those people abuses a child, who is responsible? By the same token, when one of those people gives an abused child a home, who is responsible? When a soldier signs up to defend the innocents of the world, who is responsible? When a person starts a hospital, orphanage, or charity to help those in need, who is responsible? What is the difference between these two groups of people? The difference is the choices they make. God is not responsible for creating evil. He is responsible for creating choice. What we do with that choice is our responsibility alone.

Question 182: Was Judas repentant as well as remorseful (**Matthew 27:3-4**)?

Answer 182: First, we must deal with the idea that Judas was remorseful. The Greek word translated here indicates remorse, but is better translated as regret. It is much different from the word translated repent in the New Testament. The word translated repent indicates that a person has changed his or her mind so that the actions they have committed are now causing them guilt. However, the word used here to describe Judas could simply indicate that he regretted his actions because of the consequences he was about to face. Remorse because of fear from consequences is very different than repenting because of godly sorrow.

Now we can move to whether or not Judas was repentant. Ours is not to judge the hearts and minds of men. We can only judge actions. This is always the case unless Christ Himself passes the judgment on the heart. Let us consider a couple of passages from Jesus concerning the betrayer. **Read John 17:12.** Here we see Jesus describing Judas as being the only Apostle to completely turn away from Him. This doesn't mean others didn't fail in some way, but only Judas left the faith up to that point. **Read Mark 14:21.** Jesus gives one of the greatest condemnations we find in the entire Bible. It is aimed directly at Judas. It would not be better for the world that Judas not be born for we would have no Savior. It would not be better for Jesus for God's plan included the betrayal. It would only have been better for Judas to have not been born because the punishment he now faces is a horrible end. It is by this condemnation that we know Judas did not repent of his sins.

Question 183: What are the beasts mentioned in **Leviticus 26:6, 22**?

Answer 183: This passage comes in the middle of a great if/then statement. God tells the people that if they are faithful, they will be granted great rewards. On the other hand, if they are disobedient, they will reap destruction. The bottom line is that the nation of Israel was in a very dangerous area. There were enemies of God that came in the form of humans and animals. David tells of killing both lion and bear during his time as a shepherd (**1 Samuel 17:36**). It is this type of beast that God is referencing when He says He will remove their threat from the people. In short, God will keep His People safe so long as they trust in Him.

Question 184: Where did the demons go when the swine drowned (**Luke 8:27-33**)?

Answer 184: Before we can figure out where the demons went, we need to figure out where they didn't want to go. The answer is simple enough...they did not want to go into the abyss. Now what is the abyss? The word used here means bottomless pit. It is used elsewhere to describe the world of the dead which we know as Hades (Paradise + Torment). For these demons, they feared the thought of Jesus casting them into the world of the dead. Like all who enter Hades without Christ, theirs would have been a torturous existence had Jesus chosen to do this. Now that we know where the demons didn't want to go, we need to figure out where the demons couldn't go. Demons are not allowed entry into Heaven. No person or demon will enter into Heaven so long as they continue reveling in evil. The torture they put this man through indicates they had no intention of leaving their evil lifestyle, so we can be assured that even if demons could be forgiven, these would not be. These demons were also not going to hell. We know for sure that Hell will be the final dwelling place of demons (**Matthew 25:41**). However, we also know that Hell will not be filled until the Judgment (**Revelation 20:10-14**). These demons did have the option of Heaven or Hell on this day.

If these demons could not go to Heaven, Hell, or the waiting place called death, where else is left? These demons stayed right here on earth. They were allowed to continue their time here in order to fulfill Christ's purposes.

Question 185: Did Enoch go straight to Heaven without dying (**Genesis 5:24**)?

Answer 185: Many a sermon and Bible class has included the idea that only two men in the Bible never tasted death. One of them is Enoch and the other is Elijah. Enoch is one of the great men of the Old Testament. Yet, he enters and leaves its pages in six short verses. In those verses, we learn that he walked with God. This phrase is used of only two people in antiquity: Enoch and Noah. Its usage seems to indicate a very close relationship with God and should not be confused with walking before God. Enoch was a righteous man who served God in the way God asked.

Because of this, Enoch was granted a blessing that few have ever known. Enoch never tasted death (**Hebrews 11:5**). How exactly God worked this process is a secret known only to God and Enoch. However, we know that Enoch went to be with God rather than journeying to Paradise. We also know that we want to join Enoch there one day.

Question 186: How can we as Christians conclusively reconcile God's mercy with the suffering of the innocent such as children dealing with cancer?

Answer 186: No question has caused more disbelief in our world than the one posed here. The problem of suffering has inspired books, articles, debates and college courses for decades. It is one that each of us will wrestle with whether we realize it or not. Every time our hearts are broken by sickness and tragedy, we will be drawn into the debate. With that in mind, let's spend some time talking about this great problem in our world.

First, let me say that I am not sure an answer exists for the question posed tonight. I am not sure that we as Christians who are rooted in the belief that we should love and care for all people will ever reach a point where we do not struggle with the idea of innocent people suffering. If we ever find ourselves doing this, it may be more of a problem than we realize. It may be a signal that we are losing our empathy for others. If we reach a point where we see a child suffering from a debilitating disease and don't have difficulty, we may be losing our concern for others. Having said that, there are some things for us to do when these situations cause doubt in our spiritual lives. First, we need to address them. Ignoring these questions will not help our situation and will only let our doubts grow. God has never discouraged us from asking honest and sincere questions of Him. **WARNING!!!** As you do this, you must remember your attitude towards Him (**Hebrews 12:28, Romans 9:20**). After this, we need to ask God for His input (**James 1:5**). Next, we must remember to allow God the opportunity to answer this question (**1 Samuel 28:15**). Finally, we must accept God's answer.

Ultimately God's answer to suffering is a very simple two-fold answer. First, He is not the source of suffering and He never has been (**Genesis 1:31**). Second, He is offering us a place where all this suffering will end (**Revelation 21:3-4**).

Question 187: How did Noah fit all the animals on the ark?

Answer 187: As we begin, let's first understand how big the ark truly was (**Genesis 6:15**). Using a conservative figure for the length of a cubit, the ark was 450' long, 75' wide, and 45' tall. This

boat's decks were over 95,000 sq. ft. of flooring. It's total carrying capacity was more than 500 standard railway cars. In short, this boat was huge!

Next, let's understand that Noah did not have to take two of every species of animal on the ark. This is a misunderstanding of what is said in the Genesis account. Noah is told to take two of every "kind" of animal. This does not mean one of every species of animal. In other words, Noah had two dogs on the ark, not two Labs, two German Shepherds, two Yorkies, etc. etc. This brings the number down from what most think of as entering the ark.

Finally, let's look at the question we were asked. I think there is a major flaw in this question. Noah did not have to fit the animals on the ark at all (**Genesis 7:13-16**). Notice in this account that Noah did not take the animals on the ark. Rather, the animals went "to" Noah who was already on the ark. In truth, Noah had little if anything to do with this. These animals went where they were sent by God. It is God that is overlooked in our question tonight. How could God get all the animals to fit on the ark? Any way He wanted!

Question 188: Was David wrong to leap and dance before the Lord (**2 Samuel 6:12-15**)?

Answer 188: This is one of the more interesting accounts from the life of David. In short, the setting of this account is that a joyous celebration where the Israelites are bringing back the Ark of the Covenant from the land of the Philistines. As they do so, David begins dancing and leaping before the ark as part of his celebration. Our question tonight is whether or not this action was wrong.

It should be noted that dancing before God in praise to Him was an acceptable form of worship in the Old Testament times (**Psalms 149:3**). As is the case with all these worship practices, we must not allow it to control what is or is not appropriate in our lives. Having said that, the word translated dancing here is not found anywhere else in the Bible. It's literal meaning seems to carry the idea of spinning around and jumping up and down. I dare say none of us would consider this to be immoral behavior in and of itself. However, our answer must not end there. We must now turn our attention to what could have brought about the response from Michal which we see. Of interest to us is the fact that David was wearing a linen ephod. This means that David was performing the duty of priest on this occasion and was wearing a priestly garment. This is where our problem arises. There were very specific instructions for priests on how they were to be dressed at all ceremonial times (**Exodus 28:40-43**). In short, David needed a pair of pants on under his linen ephod when he danced around. Based on what we read as well as the reaction of Michal, it appears this item was missing. As David spun, he also exposed himself to all who watched. This was the sin of David here.

Question 189: Is it wrong to explore space or the oceans? What about moving beyond the boundary of a country (**Acts 17:26**)?

Answer 189: Here in the middle of Paul's Sermon on Mars Hill, he makes an interesting statement. In it, he says God has put people right where he wants them and set limits on their boundaries. Our question tonight is whether or not these boundaries are being ignored by mankind as they push farther into space, our oceans, and even into each other's countries.

I think the answer to this question can be found in the way God has dealt with nations throughout time. The point Paul makes is that God is the creator of all things and has His hands directly in the business of the world. Paul says that God made all the nations known to man which is true in the sense that He created the first link in the chain (Adam). It is also true that God has set borders for mankind that they must respect. When Israel was invaded, God could and did defend His people on occasion. On the other hand, sometimes He let them fall into the hands of their enemy, thus removing their boundaries. The same is true for all nations. After all, is not God responsible for the rise and fall of every nation on this planet (**Romans 13:1**)?

This passage does not stop our exploration or relocation. Rather, it points to the supreme omnipotent power of God and His workings with mankind.

Question 190: Is it ok for young people to be a part of spiritual organizations like FCA which allow things that are contrary to God's Word to take place i.e. allowing females to lead the prayer? What about programs like Upwards basketball?

Answer 190: This was an interesting question with interesting timing. We were about to sign Marley up for Upwards basketball when I got this question. That made us do some digging and we decided against her playing. Our reasons for this will be the way I answer this question. On the surface, these types of organizations may appear as harmless. However, it is never a good idea to subject our children to false religious practices or false teaching. If we spend our time teaching our children that women are not to lead Christin males and that worship practices are important, we must be consistent. If we teach our children that the church of Christ is special because she is faithful to God's Word, we must be consistent. When we preach one thing, but allow our children to be subjected to another, I fear we do them a great disservice. If it is wrong for our Christian males to be led in prayer by women in our gathering, why is it ok for them to be led in a school "church"?

The next problem I see is that religious teachings can easily come from these types of organizations. Whether it be our young children or our teenagers, we must be protective of their souls. Exposing a child to false teaching is a dangerous game to play. After all, how can you be certain the false teaching won't stick?

We are told that the light has no fellowship with the darkness. If we truly believe that there is a difference between the church and our denominational neighbors, why are we mixing the two together? I urge parents to think about these things and consider the dangers that exist.

Question 191: What will happen to Christians who are alive when Christ returns?

Answer 191: The first thing we need to note is that we will in a sense die. Death is defined by the New Testament as the body being separated from the spirit (**James 2:26**). Paul tells us that this will indeed happen on Judgment Day (**1 Corinthians 15:50-53**). In an instant, we will be changed from the physical body into a spiritual creature. We will become the type of creature who can inhabit Heaven which is a spiritual place. Our earthly tent will be cast aside and we will become an eternal version of ourselves.

After this, we will be judged (**Matthew 25:31-33**). As Paul says in Corinthians, each of us must die and then appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here, we will be judged for our deeds on this earth. We will found innocent only if we have become covered in the blood of Christ through baptism and remained covered through faithful obedience.

After Judgment, we only have one place to go (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**). We will rise with Christ from the fiery furnace that engulfs and destroys this world. We will enter Heaven and will dwell there for all eternity. All temptations and trials will be behind us and we will begin anew in our new home.

Question 192: Where does the term “Jew” come from?

Answer 192: The word “Jew” first appears in 2 Kings 25:25 in the NASB, but the first use of the Hebrew word is actually in 1 Kings 16:6 where it is translated as “Judeans”. This word being translated in two different ways shows us the root meaning of the word. The Hebrew word “Yehudi” (Je-Hudi) literally means “from the tribe of Judah”. It began as being just a reference to this specific tribe, but eventually came to encompass all people who claim to be Abraham’s descendants.

Our term Jew comes to us from the Greek word “Ioudaios” which also means people of Judea/Judah. As it moved through the European languages, it eventually found its final form in the word “Jew” which we are familiar with today. It can refer to the religious group or the ethnic group which originates around the lands of Judah to this day.

Question 193: Does God hear “silent” prayers (**1 Samuel 1:12-13**)?

Answer 193: In this passage, we see the beginning of one of the great men of faith from the Old Testament. Samuel’s story begins with his mother Hannah standing in the Temple praying to God that she would have a child. That faith led Hannah to devote Samuel to God and Samuel went on to become one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament. Our question tonight deals with the prayer Hannah offered.

The simple answer to our question is yes. God does indeed hear silent prayer. As Hannah prayed, her heart was opened to God. We must not mistake Eli’s lack of understanding to mean that God disapproved of Hannah’s actions. Indeed, the very fact that God answered Hannah’s prayer tells us that He accepted it.

Now let’s get to the not-so-simple answer. God doesn’t have to hear our prayer to know what we desire. He knows our needs long before we ask (**Matthew 6:7-8**). In fact, our words are of little importance to God as it relates to our prayers (**Romans 8:26**). The important things to God are the purity of our prayer (**Isaiah 59:1-2**), the humility of our prayer (**Psalms 10:17**), and the intention of the prayer (**Matthew 6:10**). Whether our prayer is silent, or verbal has no bearing on God’s ability or willingness to hear it.

Question 194: What does the term “dead dog” mean? It is mentioned twice in 2 Samuel.

Answer 194: We must look at both uses of this term individually in order to determine the meaning that is intended. First, let’s read **2 Samuel 9:8**. This passage takes place in the middle of a story in which David seeks out a descendent of Johnathan in order to bestow a blessing upon him. The descendent he finds is Johnathan’s son Mephisbosheth. When this man appears before David, he says he is just a dead dog. In this instance, this is a complete sign of humility. Mephisbosheth is telling David that he is unworthy to receive such a blessing or even appear before the King of Israel. We may compare it to the old song “At The Cross” that refers to us as “worms” receiving the salvation of God.

The second mention of this term is **2 Samuel 16:9**. In this account, another member of Saul’s family has come out to greet David. He does so by throwing rocks at him and cursing him. It is one of David’s men who uses the term in this instance. In it, he refers to the man doing the cursing as the dead dog. In short, he tells David that this guy doesn’t deserve to live after insulting the king. He goes on to offer to “go over and cut off his head”. When spoken of oneself, it is a sign of humility, when spoken of others, it becomes a great insult.

Question 195: To what degree should we concern ourselves with caring for our body, the Lord’s Temple?

Answer 195: Let’s begin by noting some things about the passage in question. Read **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. I believe this passage is often taken out of its original context to fit all sorts of circumstances today. The context of this passage tells us specifically what is being dealt with. Read **1 Corinthians 6:16-20**. Sexual immorality is the topic that Paul is dealing with in 1 Corinthians 6. He even specifically states that this immorality is that which stains the inward man. The reason he brings up the idea of our bodies being a temple in the first place is to show that sexual immorality joins us and by relation God to that specific sin. I believe it is a mistake to push the meaning of this passage beyond that.

Now let’s get to the question at hand. There are several things which we will consider as we answer this question. The first is this. Christians are not to be overly invested in this world (**1 John 2:15-17**). In the same sense, we should not be overly invested in our physical bodies. By the same token, we must understand that we are the stewards of our body which is a gift from God. Part of being a good steward is the idea that you will take care of that which you are overseeing. This means we should not take our bodies for granted. In short, we have to find a balance to this and all other things we choose to invest in in our lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-5. This body is our tent. It cannot compare to the eternal home we will one day share with God in glory. In the same way, if you have a tent at home, it cannot compare to the dwelling that is your house. However, does this mean that you neglect your tent? I hope not. After all, that tent serves a purpose. On the other hand, do you spend more time on your tent than you do your home? Again, I hope this is not the case because it shows priorities that are out of alignment.

Question 196: What was the purpose for the Nazirite law and what is the law of separation (Numbers 6:1-20)?

Answer 196: The Law of the Nazirite was a complex one that takes up 20 verses in our modern Bibles. It involved not drinking any alcohol or grape juice and not eating grapes. He or she had to allow their hair to grow for the entire period of time and there were very specific regulations concerning dead bodies and sacrifices to cleanse oneself if you came in contact with a corpse. Even ending the Nazirite vow was a complicated procedure involving the priests and special sacrifices. It took an incredible amount of dedication and self-control to fulfill the Nazirite vow. So, what exactly was its purpose? Well, the name gives us one clue. The Hebrew word “Nazir” literally means to separate or sanctify oneself. A person taking this vow was signifying to God a specific set time where he or she would dedicate themselves fully to his service. Based on Samuel’s example, this probably included time spent working in the Temple of God or in some other service to Him. In truth, we do not know a lot of specifics about this particular vow. However, like many Old Testament principles, it does foreshadow a New Testament idea. **Read Romans 12:1-2.** In the world of Christianity, every Christian makes a vow to God that he will be sanctified and fruitful in the Kingdom. We set ourselves apart at baptism to serve God and Him alone. In many ways, all of us take a Nazirite vow when we become Christians.

Question 197: Please comment on the sin of calling a man a fool (Matthew 5:21-22).

Answer 197: To begin an understanding of this passage, we must look at all the offenses and punishments given by Christ. When we place these in the cultural context of Judaism, we will be able to gain a better understanding of the teachings found here. Jesus gives a gradual increase of both offense and punishment in this passage.

First, He says that a person who is angry with his brother shall be just as guilty as the one who commits murder. The connection here is easy enough to see. Anger is the root of murder and therefore brings about the same consequences.

Next, He says that calling a brother a good-for-nothing will make you guilty before the supreme court. This phrase is the least offensive of the insults given in this list. It shows the initial steps a person takes when anger is left unchecked. The supreme court here is a step up from what was mentioned earlier. It could not give the punishment of stoning in the Jewish world.

Finally, He says that calling a brother a fool will make a person guilty enough to go into the fires of hell. This is the greatest of all insults in the Jewish culture. The word used here indicates a person who has given up their place as a Jew and has been abandoned by God for their choice. It condemns a man’s soul to hell and expresses the vilest of all hatred. This was to be punished by burning the guilty outside the city walls.

Ultimately Christ does something here that I think is lost in our translations. He shows a gradual increase in the anger that exists in a person’s heart. The longer the anger sits, the more it is demonstrated through ever increasing insults. The final demonstration is to wish someone eternity separated from God. If this desire is found in our hearts, we will be guilty before God. However, we must not forget that all the other offenses (beginning with undisplayed anger) are also punished in this passage.

Question 198: Is there any mention of Methuselah's cause of death in the Bible?

Answer 198: This question came out of our Genesis class on Tuesday mornings. In it, we have worked our way through the flood of Noah's day and this was one of the topics we discussed (PLUG CLASS HERE). Methuselah was the oldest man to be recorded in the Bible. He lived 969 years before dying (**Genesis 5:25-27**). As you can see, nothing is mentioned in the text other than the fact that he died.

However, a little deeper digging finds something very interesting. If you do the math on the genealogies from Methuselah to Noah, you will find that Noah would have been six hundred years old when Methuselah died. Now that isn't too interesting until you read **Genesis 7:6**. By doing this, we find that Methuselah died the year the world was flooded. Since we don't know the month of his death, we can't know for sure, but there is a good probability that the oldest man to ever live and also the grandfather of Noah actually died in the great deluge that destroyed the world in Noah's day.

Question 199: Why is Islam growing so quickly while Christianity seems to be shrinking?

Answer 199: This is an interesting question that does not have a simple answer. First, let's deal with Christianity. When we are discussing world-wide numbers, I think we will find "Christianity" to be growing or at very least holding steady. In our nation, the influence of Christianity is certainly decreasing and the numbers of those who adhere to the commandments of God are definitely shrinking. The answer to this problem is actually very simple. People are getting bored with the religion of their fathers and are seeking to try new things (atheism, spiritualism, or paganism). We saw this happen again and again to Israel of old and it should come as no surprise that it is happening to us. In fact, the only surprising thing is that it took so long for us to fall into the trap of various forms of idolatry. However, having said all that, I would remind us tonight of a story from the Old Testament. It is the story of Elijah who would become so depressed that he actually prayed that God would take his life. His depression stemmed from the fact that he thought he was the only servant God had left in Israel (**1 Kings 19:9-10**). As the story continues to unfold, we find that Elijah was wrong (**1 Kings 19:18**). There were actually many others who had not abandoned God. The same is true for us. We don't know how many Americans or people worldwide have not caved to the pressures of the world and denied Christ.

Now let's look at the growth of Islam. The first factor we need to consider is simple addition through births. When you look at third world countries and impoverished areas of the world, birthrights tend to be higher. Add to that the act of polygamy, and you have a huge contributing factor: Islamic people in the Middle East have more children on average than Christian people in developed countries. The average American birthrate as of 2013 was 13 per 1,000 citizens. Muslim countries are at 25 per 1,000 citizens. In our country, the growth of Islam is a combination of rebellion (it is seen as a rebellion against Christianity), people's need to belong (Islam terror groups are much like American gangs), rampant tolerance of a false religion (to the point that it has become a chosen religion of liberal thinking), etc. and you find it setting its roots and growing in our nation.

Question 200: God is usually described as a God of light. Why does He appear as thick darkness in **Exodus 20:21**?

Answer 200: God is certainly a God of light. He dwells in light, is the Father of lights with no darkness at all, and is the light of the world when taking on the form of man. The real question for us is what does all this mean? In a debate with Kyle Butt, Dan Barker actually used this very question as a point to prove that the Bible was filled with contradictions. Of course he was wrong and the reason he was wrong is because he either did not know what God was saying or he simply didn't care to tell what he knew God was saying. What does God mean by the idea that He dwells in light.

Throughout the New Testament, we see a constant contrast between light and darkness. Darkness is the evil of the world while light represents purity and knowledge in the world. God is completely pure, dwelling constantly in perfection. He is also the knowledge giver for all mankind. In these ways (and others) God is the light.

There are also various places where God says that He dwells in darkness or is surrounded by darkness. Often the term translated darkness can also be translated as cloud (as it is here in the NASB). The word literally means a dark storm cloud and often symbolizes the approach of God. We sing a devo song that says "Every time I see a storm, I know the awesome power of my God". The preceding line is, "Every time I see a child, I see the gentleness of my God". The truth is we can't fully explain God's nature without giving multiple examples that seem to contradict. The power and mystery of our God is dark. The goodness of God is light. It should not surprise us that God uses both these to describe Himself.

Question 201: How can we be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect (**Matthew 5:48**)?

Answer 201: First off, we need to note that the word translated perfect in the Bible simply means lacking in nothing or complete. Spiritually speaking, we are perfect when we lack nothing that is needed to be so. Now I am going to ask you to follow me for a moment and bear with me to the end.

Sin is the opposite of perfection. Sin by definition is the missing of the mark. It shows that something is amiss in our life. So long as sin exists in a person's life, that person can never be perfect. However, Christ came to erase sin from our lives. In short, He came to perfect us (**Romans 11:25-27**). When God does the perfecting, what is lacking in us? NOTHING! Having said that, a person will continue to fall short of God's glory by committing sin. Does this mean that God has given us an impossible commandment? After all, if sin is imperfection and we know we will all sin even after conversion, does that mean we can never be perfect? For the Christian who fights against sin and wages a war against his temptations, he is perfect (**1 John 1:6-8**). Christ's blood is working on every Christian. It is working all the time because of our imperfections. However, the work the blood does is the work of perfecting us! How can we be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect? By being perfected through the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God!

Question 202: I know Christmas is not Christ's birthday, but why is it wrong to observe it since we have set it aside as a birthday for Him?

Answer 202: Let's start with the idea of Christ's birthday. The idea of Christ being born in December is refuted by two key passages from the Bible. First is the passage that tells us that a census was taking place in Rome. Romans were master administrators who would not have set the winter time as the scene for a census. Travelling conditions were simply not conducive to getting an accurate count of all people. Since the tax system was reliant upon an accurate count, it makes no sense to think they would have done it in the winter time. The more obvious evidence lies in the passage that tells us that the shepherds were with their sheep in the fields. During the winter months, the area around Jerusalem gets bitterly cold at night. Shepherds did not sleep with their flocks during the months of December-February. Jesus was not born on December 25th.

So why do we celebrate this day? The December 25th date came as a result of the spread of Catholicism into the pagan world of what is now the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, etc. This date is a very special one for the pagan religions which proliferated this area. It is the winter solstice and was the date for a pagan festival Saturnalia. As the Catholic church spread, it was easy to adapt this ancient Pagan festival, wrap it in a Christian idea, and present it to new converts from these Pagan religions. So, December 25th became a day to celebrate Christ's birth rather than the birth of the new sun.

Finally, is it sinful to celebrate this holiday? The answer is absolutely not. **Read Romans 14:5-9.** Each of us has the right as given by God to celebrate any day we see fit. We could celebrate Jesus' birth on April ninth just because we want to. We could set aside a special day to remember the healings of Jesus, another to remember the teaching of Jesus, and another to remember the Apostles of Jesus. Each individual has this right. However, our rights end where others' rights not to do so begin. **Read Romans 14:12-13.** Because some may have legitimate concerns about celebrating a holiday which is not shown in the New Testament and which has its roots in paganism, we should not bring our celebration into our church assemblies. A person should be able to worship God without having to worry that their consciences are violated by the celebration of Christ's birth. This is why the closes thing we do to celebrate Christmas at Owl Hollow is a Christmas party which is completely optional and doesn't have a nativity scene.

Question 203: How did the disciples know Moses and Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1-4**)?

Answer 203: It is possible that this is some sort of miraculous knowledge given to these men on this mountain. We know that we will know one another in Heaven and if we know everyone there, we must have this type of knowledge bestowed upon us. Even if this is not the case, God certainly has the power to do this as He wishes.

However, I think the answer is actually much simpler. During the transfiguration, Jesus, Elijah, and Moses had a discussion. We do not know the content of this conversation, but it is very likely that the things said were enough to let the three disciples present know who the men were. I believe the unknown words spoken are the key to answering this question.

Question 204: Bearing in mind the possibility of addiction, can the purchase of an occasional lottery ticket be sinful? Would it be dishonest gains to win the lottery (Proverbs 13:11)? Please address playing the stock market or buying insurance as a form of gambling.

Answer 204: Gambling is quickly becoming a forgotten sin amongst God's people. In fact, since it has become legal to participate in lotteries, many of us may not even take the time to consider whether or not our state law is supported by God's Law. For many, gambling is simply another form of entertainment that gives money to a good cause and is completely harmless to the masses. However, I want us to take a look at just a few things to consider when asking if God approves of gambling.

Does gambling violate the golden rule? (Matthew 7:12) Would you want someone to take your money for themselves?

Does gambling violate the idea of working in order to eat? (2Thss. 3:10, Ephesians 4:28)

Does gambling violate the idea of coveting? (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Does gambling violate the law of love given by Christ (John 13:34-35).

Does gambling bring with it fruits of righteousness or wickedness?

Does gambling set people up for addiction? (Matthew 6:24) Would we tell people to drink a little bit to see if addiction comes or tell them to avoid even the temptation of addiction?

If gambling violates so much as one of these ideas, it is sinful in the eyes of God. Gambling and investing are indeed two different things. Not simply because we call them different names, but because they ARE different things. When you invest in stock, you get something in return. You have made a purchase of a piece of a company. When you gamble, you have purchased nothing. Your sole reason to play is the CHANCE that you will win. Insurance is in the same category. When you pay your insurance, you are purchasing something. You may or may not use that something (which is true of most purchases), but you now own the protection you have bought (compare to personal bodyguards). When you purchase a lottery ticket, you have bought nothing but a random chance of taking from others and filling your own pockets. Having said all of this, if you believe that stock markets and lotteries are the same, by all means, avoid both. Deciding they are the same does not mean they are both right. If they both violate God's Word, then by all means, avoid them both.

Question 205: Is the modern-day obsession with pets healthy? Is it sinful?

Answer 205: The relationship between humans and animals is set by God (**Genesis 1:28**). We are to have dominion and rule over our animal neighbors. Having said that, this dominion does not come with a license to abuse those animals (**Proverbs 12:10**). We are to be good stewards of

our earth and the animals that live on it. We are to care for animals because God cares for them (**Matthew 6:26**). With all this in place, let's get to the question we are asked.

There is within our society a vertical movement of animals to the point that there are some who would treat them as equal to or even in some cases superior to humans. For some wives, the choice between medicine for a dog or medicine for a husband would require some thought! For some husbands, spending time with a dog is more important than spending time with their children. This is a shameful thing that leads to a devaluing of humanity. It should be avoided at all costs. At the end of the day, God created a hierarchy when He made men and animals and it is not our place to upset that hierarchy!

Question 206: What does "no longer remains a sacrifice for sin" mean (**Hebrews 10:26**)?

Answer 206: I don't think we can answer this question without reading the next verse in Hebrews (**10:27**). When Christ went to the Cross of Calvary, He went with the knowledge that He was offering Himself as a sacrifice for all people. You and I and every other person that has ever or will ever walk this earth can be covered by the blood of the Savior on the cross. However, we all know that there are conditions which must be met in order to gain access to that blood. So, while Jesus' sacrifice is offered to all people, not everyone takes advantage of it. The Hebrews writer is addressing this in Hebrews chapter 10. What he says is very simple. If a person chooses to ignore the commandments of God, then Christ is not a sacrificial offering that can atone for that person's sin. Since Christ is the only offering that can do this, it means that there no longer remains any options for forgiveness for the impenitent sinner. In short, if we reject Christ's commandments, we reject Him. If we reject Him, we are lost with no chance for salvation.

Question 207: Who is King James and what do we know about the way his translation came about?

Answer 207: King James is King James I of England (King James VI of Scotland). He reigned from 1603-1625 on England's throne. During his reign, fierce fighting was being waged between Protestants and Catholics. In January of 1604, King James called a meeting between leaders of both parties in order to find some formal common ground which might alleviate some of the violence. Very little came of this meeting except that a proposal was made to produce an English translation of the Bible. King James latched on to this idea and set about organizing the translation of the Greek and Hebrew texts.

To tackle the great task of translation, King James brought together 47 of the greatest scholars of their day. He broke them into six panels of translators. Three panels dealt with the Old Testament, two dealt with the New Testament, and one handled the Apocrypha. Each panel had a portion of the Bible to deal with. Once each panel had completed their portions, a smaller panel of twelve men (two from each panel) was chosen to do a final check on the entire work. The goal for these panels was very simple. They were to create a word for word translation of the original text absent of theological biases. This was shown most expressly in the fact that the translators were not allowed to insert marginal notes which was common place in the Geneva Bible (a precursor to the KJV).

To doubt the sincerity or abilities of these early translators would be a futile effort. Modern translations will reveal how accurate these men were in their translation of the text. However, the greatest weakness of the KJV is very simple. It was written 400 years ago. In the 400 years since, we have discovered more ancient manuscripts, greatly increased our knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages, and made archeological and cultural discoveries which have helped to settle certain questions in translating. King James and the translators he appointed should be lauded for their scholarship and sincere attempts to keep the Word of God free from human bias.

Question 2: Why should we have fear when we give a defense for the hope in us (**1 Peter 3:15**)?

Answer 2: In this passage, Peter urges Christians to be ready to defend Christ at any moment. He calls us to be the evangelists Christ would have us be. He does this with two basic qualifiers. We should do this with “meekness and fear” (KJV). Meekness carries the idea of gentleness. As is often the case with the word translated “fear” in our Bibles, this word carries the idea of reverence or respect. Peter tells us to evangelize with gentleness and respect.

We should evangelize with meekness because we are nothing more than humble servants. We do not carry the sword of God in order to cut and dismember those around us. Rather, we carry it in the hopes of cutting sin out of lives that are being destroyed. Boldness has never been equal to meanness!

We should evangelize with respect because of the opportunity we have to win a soul. This should not be taken lightly. We should treat all people with respect in order to connect with them in a way to bring them to Christ (**1 Corinthians 9:22**). We should treat the Word of God with respect so that we are prepared to speak the truth when the opportunities come. We must never be flippant when it comes to an opportunity to teach the Gospel. We must study to be prepared when those opportunities come and treat those opportunities as if we have the soul of a person in our hands...because in many ways, when we evangelize, we do!

Question 208: Does God laugh (reference to song “My God and I”)? What does the Bible say about His lighter side?

Answer 208: This is a great question. We always want our songs to teach Biblical truths just as we always want our Bible classes or sermons to teach Biblical truths (**Ephesians 5:19**). In this case, we are asking whether or not God laughs. The answer to this is very simple, but as we will see, our question is not so simple.

God does indeed laugh. Read **Psalm 2:4, 37:13, 59:8**. All three of these passages show God laughing. Of course, they show God laughing because of the futility of man’s wicked plans. This is a mocking laugh rather than a humorous one. And so, our question still begs an answer. Does God laugh in joy?

The Bible is clear that God has and displays emotion. God can be angry, sad (**Genesis 6:6**), proud (**Matthew 3:17**), etc. In reference to God’s lighter side, it should be noted that most of the Bible is written concerning very serious subjects and extremely trying circumstances. However, God does indeed reveal humor through sarcasm and even an occasional pun which gets lost in translation. The Bible is also clear that we are made in the image of God. For many, this includes the emotions which are associated with us. However, emotions don’t have to be included in this

idea. I suppose in the end we are left with the question firmly in place with no real evidence to say either way concerning God and laughter.

In reference specifically to the song in question, I think we can give some poetic license and understand that the writer most likely meant to show a close relationship we can have with God and used human terms to express that relationship.

Question 209: What does it mean to rebuke an elder? Is the only way for an elder to be rebuked before the entire congregation (**1 Timothy 5:19-20**)?

Answer 209: Elders are not above sin. The requirements of their position make them some of the best Christians we will find in our number, but even the best of us fall into the snare of sin from time to time. The instruction given here by Paul to Timothy is very simple. When an elder falls into sin, it must be corroborated by multiple people. If someone comes to me and informs me that an elder is stealing, cheating, lying, etc., I should immediately reject that person and their attempt to spread that information to my ears!

I believe there are two obvious reasons for this instruction. First, a man who meets the requirements to be an elder has earned that level of respect and standing from the flock. Second, this protects us from sour grapes causing a division in the Lord's Body. Men who serve as elders make decisions. Sometimes, people don't agree with those decisions. Some may choose to try to remove an elder from the position he serves in because they do not agree with a decision that has been made. To do this, they may lie and create sin where none exists. To prevent this, God has made to clear that multiple people must be witness to the sin an elder is being accused of. If those witnesses are present, elders are not spared from Jesus' instructions concerning this matter (**Matthew 18:15-17**). In reality, all these steps should be followed, but an elder cannot be removed from position on the basis of one person's testimony.

Question 210: Explain idle words (**Matthew 12:36**).

Answer 210: I have heard various understandings of this passage. I even heard of one preacher who actually set about making a list of all such "idle words". I think that preacher and many others have missed the point altogether. Let us read the entirety of this passage (**Matthew 12:33-37**). Jesus makes it clear that all of our words come from what fills our hearts. What should fill the hearts of Christians? Our love for God and love for others. When we speak to others, we should always do so with a purpose in mind. That purpose may be different in different circumstances. Sometimes we speak to inform others of things. Sometimes we speak to lift a drooping heart. Sometimes we speak to show affection. Sometimes we speak to build relationships. No matter what our purpose is in speaking to someone, we should ultimately have one goal in mind. How can I help this person get to Heaven? When we faithfully live our lives always seeking to get ourselves and someone else into Heaven, none of our words (regardless of how insignificant) will be idle because they will always have that end in mind. Having said that, I think we can all be glad that God is both gracious and merciful to us when our minds slip too far into the things of this world.

Question 211: Why does the Bible say that Jesus could not do any miracles in His hometown because of the people's unbelief (**Mark 6:1-6**)? Was Jesus' power controlled by the belief of others?

Answer 211: First, let's deal with whether or not Jesus needed people's faith in order to perform a miracle. The answer to this question is seen in numerous instances. First, dead people do not have faith, yet Jesus could raise them. Second, Jesus specifically blasted the Apostles for their unbelief right before He calmed a stormy sea. Finally, Jesus healed one person who may or may not have even known who He was (**Matthew 15:21-28**). Faith was not a prerequisite for a miracle from Jesus Christ.

Having said all of that, we have numerous occasions when Jesus specifically says that a person's faith has made them well after performing a miracle. This means something that will help us understand the account in question tonight. A person's faith in Jesus often led that person to seek Jesus out in times of desperation. Without this faith in place, that person may or may not have ever come in contact with the Son of God and received the blessing of one of His miracles. As we read the account in Mark, we need to note two things.

First, the passage does not say that Jesus' power failed Him and He could do no miracle. In fact, His power was working just fine as it was demonstrated on the few sick people who were healed. Second, the people in Jesus' hometown were actually said to have taken offense at Him. These are the clues that we need to understand the scene in Nazareth. The people in this village did not care for the local boy returning home. They envied Him and refused to believe their eyes. In turn, they refused to come in order to be healed. Jesus never forced His way into anyone's life. They did not believe and so they did not come to Him. This is why He performed only a few miracles in this account.

Question 212: Why did the young man drop his wrap and flee naked in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Mark 14:51**)?

Answer 212: This account is only mentioned in Mark and leads most to believe the young man in question is the author of the second Gospel. The scene that unfolds in the Garden of Gethsemane is one of chaos. First, Jesus is betrayed with a kiss by Judas. Then, Peter strikes the servant with a sword and Jesus heals him. After realizing Jesus is going to give up without a fight, the Apostles all flee in fear of their lives. In the confusion that followed, this young man who had probably been following along out of curiosity as young men tend to do was found. Soldiers grabbed hold of the linen cloth (probably like a sheet wrapped around him) which he immediately dropped. He escaped in his naked state.

The answer to this question is very simple. Mark dropped his sheet because he was scared to death. It is the same reason the Apostles fled when they saw Jesus was not going to fight. It is the same reason Peter would follow at a distance into the city. Without Jesus fighting for them, they knew the soldiers who came to arrest them would easily overpower the entire group. For all that they had seen, not one was willing to stand with Jesus on this night and face what He was going to face. And so, they ran in a panic away from the danger of the soldiers.

Question 213: What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (**1 Corinthians 11:27-30**)? Are any of us worthy?

Answer 213: I think the key to answering this question is to understand the difference between being worthy and doing something in a worthy manner. The answer to whether or not any of us are worthy of the death of Jesus Christ is a resounding no. In opposition to this, grace is by definition an unmerited favor. Unmerited means that it is something which we are not worthy of and which we cannot earn. Grace is and always has been the free gift offered by God (**Romans 6:23**). You and I did not deserve the death of Christ on Calvary. It was a gift given freely to us.

However, to do something in a worthy manner which is what is stated here is an entirely different story. This verse is connected with one of the most intricate parts of the Lord's Supper. While partaking of the Lord's Supper, we are to remember Christ's death, proclaim His return, and examine ourselves. It is the last item on this list that is connected with partaking in a worthy manner. As we look back to the cross during our communion, we are to make sure that our lives are being lived in such a way that we make the cross have value in our lives. How do we do that? Our actions throughout the week make us worthy or unworthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. If we live a life which feeds the pleasures of the flesh, we are not worthy. If we live a life which feeds the pleasures of the spirit, God will make us worthy of the emblems of the cross.

Question 214: Please explain Jesus' statement to "tell it to the church" in **Matthew 18:17** in light of the fact that the church did not exist until Pentecost.

Answer 214: This is a good question that has two possible answers. The first answer is that Christ was simply looking forward to a day when the church would be established. Certainly, in using this word, Christ has ensured that all of us would be required to meet the standards of the admonition given here. By using this term, Christ could have simply been reaching into the future and giving a standard for it to live by.

The other possibility is that Christ was using the word church (ekklesia) in its general sense. The word church simply means those called out. The church of Christ has been called out of the world of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of light. For those listening to Jesus during His time on earth, they too were being called out of the world to follow after Him.

In truth, I think that both answers are correct. The commandments mentioned here were given for those in Christ's presence that day and were given for our benefit 2,000 years later. In both instances, there was a group of people who could and should preserve the purity of the group of the called out by confronting any sin that might make its way into their midst.

Question 215: Do we have the names of any of Jesus' sister?

Answer 215: So far as I know there is no mention in any ancient writing which gives us the names of any of Jesus' sisters. However, noted psychic Edgar Cayce revealed that one's name was Ruth...of course he also said that the US would discover a "death ray" used on Atlantis so I wouldn't put much stock in him!

Question 216: Do we have any evidence of how long the waters of the Red Sea were divided or how wide the patch of dry land was?

Answer 216: Nope. We know that the wind blew all night to leave dry land between two walls of water (**Exodus 14:21-22**), but we are not told any other details. We don't know how wide the area was and we don't know how tall the walls of water were. I guess the best answer is it was wide enough to cross and it lasted long enough to get the job done.

Question 217: At what point, if at all, do thoughts unacted upon become sins?

Answer 217: Thoughts can of course be sinful. Jesus made this clear in the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28**). In fact, Christianity is founded on the principle that we must control both heart/mind and action. For this reason, our question tonight is an important one for us to answer.

I link sins of thought with sins of speech. The reason for this is very simple. Our words are a direct link to our mind (**Matthew 15:18**). Most actions that are sinful require preparation in order to commit (drinking, adultery, stealing, etc.). However, sins of speech are often committed before we even fully think of what we are doing. Such is true of our thoughts as well. Sin can overtake our thoughts before we are even prepared to defend against it. With that in mind, what does the Bible say about sins of speech?

Read **James 3:7-8** and **Colossians 3:8-9**. On one hand, James tells us that we can never control the tongue and on the other Paul says to control the tongue! We are to fight against all sin. This includes the idea that we try to bring our thoughts and our speech under full control. However, this is a never-ending task that can never fully be accomplished. Sinful thoughts become sinful when we have them just as sinful words become sinful when we say them. Fortunately for us, God is more concerned with what we do to fight these things than how many times we give in to them. And He is always willing to forgive when sinful thoughts creep into our minds.

Question 218: Read Matthew 10:42. Who is a little one? Why is the gift given "in the name of a disciple"?

Answer 218: This passage comes at the end of Jesus' instructions to the Twelve Apostles concerning their first missionary journey. He has given them miraculous powers and is sending them out on their own. As He does so, He reminds them of the cost of discipleship, the difficulty of convincing men to believe, and of their reward for taking on the monumental task.

The first question asked of us tonight is who are the little ones that are mentioned here. The little ones are in fact the Twelve Apostles. It is them that Jesus is speaking of when He uses this phrase. The term little ones is one of affection and concern. It shows how sympathetic Jesus was to the men who were giving up all in order to serve Him. These men were Jesus' family and He was about to send His children in the faith off into a cold and harsh world where they would often be rejected and ridiculed. It is comforting for us to note that He feels the same way about us today.

The second question cuts to the heart of this text. The whole point of what Jesus is saying here is this: doing a good deed for one of the Apostles was like doing a good deed for Christ. The reward for helping John or Peter was the same reward for offering help to the Son of God. By the

same token, believing the message of the Apostles (doing something in their name) is the same as belief in Christ because He is the message they are preaching.

Question 219: Who does God allow to marry?

Answer 219: First, God allows only a man to marry a woman and vice versa. Marriage creates a husband (male) and wife (female) (**Genesis 2:24**). This is the first rule given to marriage all the way back in the Garden of Eden and God has not changed His position on it. Next, only single people can be married. Polygamy existed in the Old Testament as one of the many actions “winked” at by God (**Acts 17:30**). However, as we are about to see, such relationships today result in adultery. Our problem is that we are confusing our world’s standard of single with God’s standard of the same. What does God consider a single person?

The most obvious way to be a single person by God’s standards is to have never been married. This gives you the right to be married when you so choose in the sight of God. The second most obvious way is to be a widow/widower. Those whose spouses have died have every right to remarry if they so choose (**1 Corinthians 7:8-9**). Finally, we get to one of the most divisive and misunderstood situations in the New Testament. How does divorce fit into our question tonight? While we seem to want to make the question of marriage, divorce, and remarriage as confusing as possible, God has made it very simple. **Read Matthew 19:9**. If a person is married and chooses to divorce their spouse for any reason other than adultery, they cannot enter into another marriage without committing the sin of adultery. This includes people who were married and divorced before becoming Christians. Why is a person baptized if God’s rules do not count until after conversion? This includes those who force a divorce on their spouse against their spouse’s wishes. This scenario creates a divorced by law, married by God situation where the marriage is not ended and either person engaging in a sexual relationship becoming the guilty party. This includes those who make bad choices in their spouse and those who make dumb decisions in their youth. Marriage creates an earthly union with earthly consequences that can and do last after the union is dissolved.

We have made this a confusing topic in order to fit God’s Word around our world instead of fitting our world around God’s Word!

Question 220: Is the Holy Spirit a he or an it? How can the Holy Spirit dwell in man?

Answer 220: First, let’s answer the question of whether the Holy Spirit is a he or an it. The Greek word translated Spirit is “pneuma”. It literally means wind or breath. It is what is called a neuter noun meaning that it is neither male nor female in and of itself. With only the word “pneuma” we would be forced to leave the Holy Spirit as an it. However, we have something else to consider. Jesus described the coming of the Holy Spirit in **John 16:12-14**. Here, Jesus repeatedly uses a masculine Greek word translated “he” to describe the Spirit. Since Jesus is the one who has lived with Him in eternity, I will call the Spirit a He as Jesus did.

Now on to a question that has been around for generations. How does the Holy Spirit dwell within man? Brother Guy Woods and Brother Gus Nichols often debated whether or not the Spirit dwelled in man literally or figuratively. It is a question that often leads to confusion and debate. However, I am going to answer this as simply as possible in the best way I can. First, let’s understand that the Holy Spirit is not the only part of the Godhead said to dwell in us

(Galatians 2:20). How many of us believe that Christ literally dwells in us? That if you took an MRI of our body, somewhere you would see a tiny outline of Christ inside of us? Of course, we do not think this. So far as I know, we have never debated how Jesus dwells within us and it has never been an issue. He dwells figuratively inside of all who have been crucified with Him. By the same token, the Holy Spirit of God figuratively (spiritually) dwells inside each person who lives for Him **(Romans 8:9)**. Compare this to what Paul says about sin dwelling in him **(Romans 7:14-20)**. The idea of dwelling here is one of control. When we are serving God, His Spirit dwells in us through His Word. When we are serving ourselves, sin dwells in us through our disobedience to the same!

Question 221: Where did the sons of Adam and Eve find their wives?

Answer 221: One of the great questions that has been used for centuries to attack the inspiration of the Bible is found in **Genesis 4:17**. Where did Cain's wife come from? For many, this is a glaring error in the Biblical record. After all, we see that Eve had three sons: Cain, Abel, and Seth. Two of these three sons are mentioned as having children with their wives, but where did these wives come from? We know that there were no other people created by God on this earth **(Genesis 3:20)**. The answer to this lies in **Genesis 5:3-4**. Adam and Eve had more than three children. They had other sons and DAUGHTERS which is where all their sons would have found wives. Cain married his sister!

How could this happen without serious deformities, sicknesses, etc.? The simplest answer to this question lies in the fact that God created a perfect gene pool when He made Adam and Eve. This not only helps to explain very long lifespans, it also helps us understand why it was acceptable to marry a sibling. In fact, the idea of marrying a close relative would not be addressed until **Leviticus 18:6-16**. It is believed by most, including me, that God saw that at this point in history our gene pool had been tainted to the point that such relationships were harmful to humanity. Therefore, He made sure they were addressed within His written law.

Question 222: What is the best explanation to give when asked how God could single out innocent firstborn children for killing in Egypt?

Answer 222: The best answer to give to this question is found in **Isaiah 55:8**. However, it is very unlikely that the person asking about this concept from the Book of Exodus will be satisfied with this answer. And so, let us dive deeper into the question.

First, I think it is important to point out that this was not the first attempt by God to get Pharaoh to release His people **(Exodus 7-11)**. Darkness, Locusts, Blood Rivers, Hailstorms, etc. should have been enough to convince Pharaoh of God's powers! As happens in so many cases, when people look to blame God, they often leave off human actions that helped to dictate God's response! While God may have sent the angel that killed the firstborn of Egyptian houses, it was Pharaoh who forced God's hand in the first place!

The second thing to consider forces us to think about an uncomfortable truth. These children who died on this night were destined to be raised serving the false gods of Egypt for their entire lives. Few if any would ever find Jehovah and rest in eternity with Him. However, the death of a child ensured the salvation of the same. Those children in Egypt who lost their lives during the ten

plagues will find Heaven's Gates on Judgment Day. Their loss of time on this earth ended up being the great gain of eternity with God in Heaven.

Question 223: Please explain Matthew 16:20 where Jesus commands His disciples that they should tell no one He was the Christ.

Answer 223: This passage should be considered in the broader context in which it appears (**Matthew 16:17-20**). Jesus has gotten one of the greatest answers ever recorded in the Bible from Simon Peter. In the presence of the disciples, Peter has identified Jesus as the coming messiah that has been awaited for centuries. He goes farther and calls Jesus the Son of God. Based on this, Jesus assured His disciples that He will build a church that will never be destroyed. One would think that at this moment Jesus would send His Apostles out with this great announcement in order to share it with the rest of the world. Instead, Jesus tells His Apostles to tell no one else about the conversation. Why would He do this?

The answer to this question lies in the fact that Jesus had a timetable to live by. Let us consider some passages. **Galatians 4:4** states that Jesus' birth was at exactly the right moment. **Luke 1:20** shows that even Jesus' helper was on a specific timeline. **John 7:5-8** shows that Jesus' miracles and ministry were subject to a specific timeline. Of course, we all know that the Father was the author of the timeline for Jesus' life. Each moment from His birth, to His baptism, to His healings, to His teachings, to His death, and finally His resurrection was carefully planned out in the mind of the Father. Why would Jesus command His followers not to tell people who He was? Because it was simply not the right time.

Question 224: Why did God seek to kill Moses?

Answer 224: This is a fascinating account in the life of Moses. It comes on the heels of Moses speaking to God in the form of the burning bush. After much reluctance, Moses has agreed to leave Midian and return to Egypt in order to free God's people from the oppression of Pharaoh. Moses departs from Midian and is travelling when we come to **Exodus 4:24**. Depending on your translation, God meets Moses on the way to Egypt and seeks/tries to kill/slay/slaughter him. What in the world does this mean?

As is always the case, we must not simply pull this passage from its place in the context of the Bible. Let us finish reading the account (**Exodus 4:24-26**). Much can be learned from this context. First, Moses' son had not been circumcised. This was a major problem for Moses as his child should have been circumcised on the eighth day as commanded to Abraham (**Genesis 17:9-10**). Second, it tells us that Moses' wife was not a fan of circumcision. While it is somewhat lost in our English translation, Zipporah demonstrates disgust after circumcising her son when she calls Moses her "bridegroom of blood". Third, Moses appears to be physically unable to perform the circumcision himself. It is obvious both Zipporah and Moses understand that God is upset that their child is not circumcised. However, as we did deeper, we need to understand that the only reason for Moses not to circumcise his own son is the fact that he is physically unable to do so. The reason he is in this condition is that God has struck Moses with some sort of sickness which is what is meant by "God sought to kill Moses". Finally, we see that the circumcision was

indeed the source of Moses' illness. We note this because as soon as the act is complete God leaves Moses alone.

This account reminds us of a great Biblical truth. God is no respecter of persons. Even the special man Moses was expected to fulfill the basic principles of the covenant if he wished to remain special!

Question 225: Are there any historical references (such as Josephus) to Jesus' resurrection?

Answer 225: Historical references to Jesus Christ's life are few and far between when one excludes the Gospel account. Josephus is mentioned here specifically so we will say what he had to say about Jesus. Josephus was a Jewish historian who wrote an impressive history of the Jewish people. From it, we can learn many nuggets from the oral tradition of the Jews which are not given to us in the Biblical record. These of course are not inspired, but can prove interesting to the student of the Old Testament. The following is a quote from Josephus concerning Jesus:

"Now, there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works; a teacher of such men as received the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day." (Antiquities XVIII 63f)

This is certainly an impressive quote from the historian. However, I see one big problem. I think this is a fake addition to the early manuscripts of Josephus. My reason for this is very simple. Josephus lived and died a Jewish priest. He never became a Christian. No Jewish priest would ever write such a description of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the most impressive historical evidence of the crucifixion comes from the mouth of Tertullian (See Anti-Nicene Fathers volume 3). However, even this must be considered little to nothing of historical evidence. And perhaps there is a good reason for that. Unless one believes that Jesus is the Christ, they would have no reason to record the events of the crucifixion or resurrection. They will simply do as so many do today...explain away what lies right before their eyes. And this is the great frustration for Christians of all time. Faith is the requirement given from God. Faith means that we have evidence that points to Jesus, but nothing that for all people conclusively proves His life.

Question 226: Although the Bible specifies that Christ's bones remained unbroken, we often use the phrase "Christ's broken body" in our prayers and meditations before communion. Is this an addition to the Bible?

Answer 226: Read John 19:31-37. In this passage we see two things that distinguished Jesus' crucifixion. First, His legs were not broken. This was often done in cases of crucifixion. The legs were broken after a certain amount of time in order to prevent the person from lifting in order to breathe. This quickened death and put an end to the torturous side of the crucifixion. Second, because of the quickness of Jesus' death, He was stabbed with a spear to make sure He was not still alive. Both these things were predicted long before Jesus lived.

Now let us consider the question. Is it a bad idea to refer to Christ's broken body? I think when people do this, they are simply referring to the fact that Jesus' body was mortal and was broken in the sense of being killed on the cross. We often say that in old age a person's body is "breaking down" without implying the breaking of bones. Having said that, I usually try to avoid such language. I was once chastised by an elder because I used the words "spilled His blood" to describe Jesus on cross. This was apparently incorrect because spilling implies accident and Jesus' sacrifice was not an accident. Since then, I have tried to be very specific in my description of the cross. However, I see no problem in referencing the broken body for the reasons I have mentioned above.

Question 227: Please explain **Luke 22:36** as it relates to **Matthew 26:52**. They seem contradictory.

Answer 227: As the battle over the right to bear arms plays out on our political stage, these two verses should be considered by every Christian. After all, we are to view all decisions we make (including on political issues) through the lens of the Bible. Let us take each of these passages separately and then bring them both together.

First, let's consider **Luke 22:35-38**. This moment takes place before the events of Matthew 26. Jesus and the disciples are about to make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will be betrayed and arrested. He knows this will be the last time He speaks with the Apostles before His death. He reminds them of a previous occasion when He sent them out without any of the things one would normally have on a journey. He points out that each step of the way they were provided for. However, He now gives a different set of instructions. He tells His closest followers to make ready for their coming journeys spreading His message. He wants them to prepare for this time by getting money, a traveling bag for supplies, clothes, and swords. The final item is the most interesting on our list.

Now let's turn to **Matthew 26:51-52**. In this account, Jesus rebukes Peter who has drawn one of the two swords seen earlier and attacked Jesus' arrestors. Jesus undoes the damage done by the sword and makes this well-known statement: "All those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword". What changes in the moments between Luke and Matthew's accounts? I think the

emphasis here needs to be placed on Matthew. It is here where Jesus appears to undo a commandment He has just put in place. However, I do not believe that happened at all. Instead, I believe Jesus was telling Peter in this moment that it was not time to use the swords. The Apostles were outnumbered and outgunned in the Garden of Gethsemane. Absent a miraculous intervention, fighting in this moment would have ended in the deaths of Jesus' Apostles. Jesus tells Peter that taking up his sword in this moment was folly and would lead to his death. In Luke's account, Jesus tells the men with Him to defend themselves if they could against attacks that would undoubtedly come.

Question 228: Please explain **Luke 10:17** as it relates to **Matthew 17:14-21**.

Answer 228: Luke 10 describes what is called the Limited Commission. It was the sending out of seventy disciples to preach and teach about Jesus. These disciples were given miraculous gifts in order to confirm their message to the masses. As they return, they give a quick report to Jesus explaining that they have power over the demons. However, Matthew 17 describes a scene where the disciples are unable to cast a demon out of a boy and Jesus has to intervene. Our question is why could the disciples not do what they had already done?

The account of the demon possessed child in Matthew 17 is one of the most interesting accounts we have in the New Testament. Let's begin by trying to answer the question under consideration. The most obvious answer is that the disciples lost their faith. Jesus says as much after the disciples approach Him. However, He also seems to give us a hint as to what made them lose their faith. He says that this was a special kind of demon that only went out with prayer and fasting.

I believe these two statements give us the whole picture from this event. Jesus is up on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John. A man brings his demon-possessed child to the disciples who did not accompany Jesus. The disciples assume they can command the demon and he will obey as they have done before. However, this demon is a stronger type. When their immediate attempts do not work, the disciples lose faith and are unable to get the job done. Jesus being the Son of God does not need to fast and pray in order for the demon to listen.

Question 229: What does it mean to be subject to your elders (**1 Peter 5:5**)?

Answer 229: Elders are appointed as shepherds and overseers in the flock of God. For that reason, God has given elders authority which they must exercise in order to perform their duties. This authority is what is under consideration in **1 Peter 5:1-5**. First, Peter tells the shepherds how they are to do their job (5:1-4). Then, in the verse under consideration, he tells young men how they are to treat their elders. Specifically, he tells them to be subject to their elders. While this is specifically addressed to young men, I think we can find Scriptural evidence to apply this passage to all members within the pages of God's Word. We are to be subject to our elders. What does this mean?

This word carries the main idea of obedience and placing oneself beneath another's rule. I believe this passage hits at one of the main problems we are facing in churches today. We are facing a crisis in the form of a lack of men who are both qualified and willing to take on the task of being an elder. The willing part is what I think this passage speaks to. When we place men in the position of elder within our congregations, I am afraid we have some backwards thinking. We believe that placing a man in the position of elder is a trial run to see whether or not that man can gain our trust. This is completely backwards because a man who meets the qualifications of God already has His trust and should in turn begin his job with ours! Unfortunately, this lack of trust leads many today to disobey this clear commandment from God. When a man is a qualified elder of the Lord's church, he should have to work hard in order to lose the trust of the members he oversees. Instead, we have elders working hard to earn trust that should already be in place. Elders are shepherds who lead the flock of God. Members need to be reminded how to act like sheep in submission.

Question 230: Please explain **Galatians 6:2** as it relates to **Galatians 6:5**. Do they contradict?

Answer 230: This alleged contradiction is highlighted in the KJV Bible. In it, the word burden is used in both verses. It says that we are to bear one another's burden in the first verse and that each of us must bear our own burden in the second verse. In most if not all modern translations (NKJV, NASB, NIV, RSV, ESV) the second verse uses the word "load" rather than "burden". These modern versions reveal more of the actual Greek text than the KJV in the fact that two different Greek words are used here. However, they still may not carry the difference between these two words into our language as clearly as we would like. I would encourage you to make some note in your Bibles concerning this passage.

In Galatians 6:2, Paul uses the word "baros". This word always indicates a load that is very heavy and cumbersome. This is why the translators have maintained the use of the word burden in all translations. However, in Galatians 6:5, the word used is "phortion". This word simply means something that must be carried and has no implications on the weight of the load.

The beauty of this passage is seen in the different meanings of these two words. Paul tells us in **Galatians 6:4-5** that we must invest time in examining what we do on this earth because there are consequences to face when we do not bear the load of Christian responsibilities. Before he says this, he points out that we are never supposed to be alone in our darkest moments. When that normal load of Christianity morphs into something too heavy to carry alone (trials, tribulations, and temptations) brothers and sisters are supposed to be there to help bear the load (**Galatians 6:1-2**). May we all live to fulfill the law of Christ in our lives and to help others do the same!

Question 231: Could there be Christians in the USA that are keeping themselves secret on purpose for fear of persecution?

Answer 231: Not only do I believe this is a possibility, I believe there are thousands upon thousands of Christians doing this today in our nation. Christians are living lives of fear when it comes to their faith. Many are afraid to tell someone they go to church. They are especially afraid of telling them they are member of the church of Christ. They are terrified of standing up to the moral decay we see in our society today. They fear losing their job if they show too much faith (teachers, government employees). In response to all this fear, they live in secret. When they leave the doors of their local congregation, their faith goes into hiding! We need to answer this fear with courage only God can give (**Joshua 1:9**).

Of course, I think this question is more trending towards the idea of bigger pockets of Christians taking measures to meet in secret and avoid detection. This is also likely. These groups would not be very large and would be few and far between in my opinion. The reason for this is very simple. Our persecution hasn't gotten that bad yet! For all that we see in today's world, Christians are much better off in today's America than in most geographical locations throughout history!

Question 232: Can we cause another person to sin (**Matthew 5:32**)?

Answer 232: When we are tempted, there is always a choice to avoid sin (**1 Corinthians 10:13**). This is an unalterable promise from God. Based on this fact, the answer to this question is no. We cannot force or cause another person to sin in the sense of taking away their guilt by removing their choice. However, there are times when we take active or passive part in another person's sin.

Jesus made it clear that men and women could become stumbling blocks (**Matthew 18:7**). By definition, a tumbling block is something that makes a person fall (**Leviticus 19:14**). So how do we bring these two ideas together? The answer lies in a discussion Jesus had with Peter (**Matthew 16:21-23**). In this passage, Peter makes himself a stumbling block by seeking to interfere in the plans of God. Jesus can either listen to Peter or reject him. Jesus shows us how to handle a stumbling block in our lives...we reject them and their influence over us.

There is one other perspective we need to take on this question. We must make sure that we never become the stumbling block that has to be rejected in someone's life. When we do this, we become covered in another person's sins. We take their woe on ourselves. While they will still answer for their actions, we will also give an account for the actions that led them to that sin!

Question 233: When Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses for marrying the Cushite woman, why was only Miriam punished by God (**Numbers 12:1-16**).

Answer 233: This is a short chapter, so let's read it in its entirety. In this passage, Miriam and Aaron rise up to challenge Moses as God's chosen spokesman for the Israelites. Their motives seem to be revealed by the fact that they want the position Moses has for themselves (**vs. 2**). As one might imagine, this enrages God who handpicked Moses, not Aaron or Miriam to lead His people. Jehovah's response was rapid and effective in changing the attitude of Moses' siblings. Miriam is struck with leprosy. Aaron appeals for mercy to Moses who in turn appeals to God for mercy. It appears that God immediately heals Miriam of the leprosy, but she must still undergo the week-long quarantine as established in the Law of Moses. Our question tonight is why God did not also strike Aaron with leprosy.

I think there are a couple of things to consider as we look at this question. First, we must admit that we do not know the whole story. We pick up after Aaron and Miriam have begun grumbling and trying to sway the Israelites to follow them. Who was the instigator between the two? Who first had ideas to snatch power from Moses? While we do not know, God does. This may have something to do with the punishment. Second, don't miss the panic and desperation in the actions of Aaron and Moses after Miriam is punished. To say that Aaron is spared completely would be to ignore the pain and guilt he would feel from her sickness and eventual death. Finally, we need to think about another aspect that we cannot know but that God can. Notice that Aaron immediately shows sorrow and repentance for his actions as God deals out punishment, but Miriam is strangely silent. God, knowing the hearts of Aaron and Miriam may have punished Miriam because she had a prouder heart and He knew her attitude. All of this except the sorrow of Aaron is pure speculation, but there are at least three possibilities we can offer and others may come upon further thought.

Question 234: If God forms us in the womb, why are there deformities and birth defects?

Answer 234: This question comes from **Psalms 139:13**. Here, the psalmist states that God was with him inside his mother's womb and formed him. The question we have under consideration tonight deals with the terrible truth that children are sometimes not formed correctly in the womb. Does God mess up in these instances?

The answer to this question comes from everything that we see in nature. When God created the world and all that is in it, He looked to see that it was VERY good (**Genesis 1:32**). There was no sickness, no hardships, and no death in this world that God created. However, along with spiritual consequences of sin, our world has to deal with physical consequences. God is said to hold this world together (**Hebrews 1:1-3**). However, we see natural disaster wreaking havoc all over our planet. While God is actively working to hold the natural processes together, He does not overrule those processes to make this world perfect. In the same way, God forms all of us into humans in the womb. He alone can connect the soul to the body to bring forth life. However,

when problems arise in those natural functions, He does not step in to remove them. Unfortunately, many innocent children have suffered because of the fallen nature of our world. Having said that, no innocent child will ever see Hell or the punishments that come with it.

Question 236: Does **Genesis 6:3** have anything to do with the length of time that people lived?

Answer 236: This passage comes in the middle of a horrible passage. **Read Genesis 6:1-7.** The world was a horrible place and God had decided it was time to change that. I believe this passage refers to this change rather than the age of men. God's mercy led Him to look on this world with anger AND pity. He set a plan in motion that would offer people a chance to return to Him before He brought forth the great flood. This plan included preaching and providing a way to escape destruction (**1 Peter 3:18-21**). The hundred and twenty years represents the length of time that He waited patiently for the people to repent. In the same way, God continues to wait, hoping that all will come to repentance (**2 Peter 3:14-15**).

Question 237: When Jesus returns, will Christians die instantly or die by the fire?

Answer 237: There are several events that are connected with the return of Jesus. It becomes difficult to put these events in order, but here is the best that I can do with it...

1. Jesus descends from Heaven with a shout (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**).
2. Death and Hades give up the dead (**Revelation 20:13a**).
3. Those still alive are instantaneously changed (**1 Corinthians 15:51-53**).
4. The Judgment will take place (**Matthew 25:31-33**).
5. The angels of God will separate the wicked (**Matthew 13:49-50**).
6. The earth will be destroyed as God receives the saved (**2 Peter 3:10, 1 Corinthians 15:24**).

With this as a basic timeline, the death of those still alive will come in step three.

Question 238: Do the warnings of 2 John 9-11 apply only to the situation referred to in verse 7?

Answer 238: Read 2 John 1:7-11. This is one of the stiffest warnings concerning false teachers in the New Testament. In fact, many give this book the theme of "close the door" describing John's admonition to keep the influence of false teachers outside of our congregations. Our question tonight centers on the idea of who is included in those that should not be received into our house as John puts it.

To begin, we need to understand those that denied the coming of Christ in the flesh. The first major heresy of the New Testament was Gnosticism. The title comes from the Greek word that means knowledge. In short, these false teachers claimed that the flesh was pure evil and the spirit was holy. They claimed to have received this special knowledge from God and made their version of Christianity a secret club where only the "enlightened" could find God. One of their major doctrines was the idea that Jesus could not have come in the flesh because the flesh was so

evil. This is the culture specific example given by John in verse 7. However, the passage does not end here.

John goes on to describe false teachers that should not be allowed to have influence over our churches or individual Christians. The most important word used is “anyone” or “any” (KJV). This takes away any restrictions on relationship, education, race, charisma, etc. when considering who to allow influence in our churches. The second most important words are “the teaching of Christ”. In these words, John sums up a false teacher that must be rejected by true Christians. If a person does not conform their teachings to God’s Word (regardless of what form their lie may take) they are to be rejected! One of the best places to start as we look into who falls into this category is **Ephesians 4:4-6**. If a person rejects these basic tenets that bring forth unity, we must reject that person!

Question 239: Genesis 4:26 is the first recorded worship, but did they know God all along?

Answer 239: First, let me say that we have an earlier account of worship to take into consideration. That account is found in the beginning of Genesis 4 where Cain and Abel offer sacrifices (worship) to God. I think that this is the first mention of what we would call congregational worship. It appears that in the third generation of mankind people began gathering together for times of worship. It is interesting that so many in today’s world push back so strongly against this ancient tradition.

With just this information, we have already seen an answer to our question tonight. How could Cain and Abel worship a God through sacrifice that they did not know? God’s interaction with mankind can be seen from the first days in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:8**). He dealt with Adam and Eve in the same way He would deal with all mankind throughout the Patriarchal age: by giving them direct instruction (**Genesis 2:15-17**). Again, this type of relationship demands knowledge of God. While man may have delayed their congregational worship of God for three generations, God made sure to build His relationship with His creation immediately!

Question 240: When Jesus cried out “Father forgive them”, did He fulfill Jesus’ request?

Answer 240: Read Luke 23:33-34. This is one of the most powerful scenes of the crucifixion account. As murderous, evil men nail the Son of God to the Cross of Calvary, He cries out for their forgiveness. These words carry a powerful lesson for each of us. They also leave us with the great question we have tonight. Did God answer Jesus’ prayer in this moment?

To begin, we must admit that God did not always answer Jesus’ prayers in the affirmative (**Matthew 26:39**). Even the Son of God was not granted His every desire through His prayers. With that in place, let us consider this particular prayer. It is interesting that Christ even had to pray this prayer (**Matthew 9:1-2**). If Jesus could forgive sins, why did He look to the Father to forgive this particular one? I think the answer to this lies in the attitude of those with sin. One comes in faith to be healed, while the others ignorantly nail the Son to the cross. It is that ignorance that we need to discuss further.

Ignorance is no excuse to commit sin (**consider Paul’s persecution of the church**). In order for these men to be forgiven, they would need to admit to their sinful acts and repent of them. The reason Jesus had to go to the Father to make this request is the fact that He is asking God to set aside His just nature for these particular men. And therein lies the best answer I can give to this

question tonight. I do not believe that these soldiers were forgiven of their sins in this moment. I emphasize in this moment because one may have found his eventual salvation (**Luke 23:47**). In the end, this decision would be God's to make, but this is the best I can do with what God has revealed to us.

Question 241: Who do the virgins represent in the parable of the virgins?

Answer 241: Read Matthew 25:1-13. In this parable there are two groups of virgins mentioned. One group carries extra oil to keep their lamps lit while the other carries only a small amount of oil since they expect a quick appearance of the bridegroom. As with all parables, it is vital for us to identify the pieces of the puzzle if we are to gain an understanding of the message. First, we understand the bridegroom to be Christ returning on Judgment Day. We also understand the oil of the virgins to represent their faith/faithfulness to the bridegroom. That leaves us with the question under consideration tonight. Who are the virgins?

I believe all ten virgins represent believers. The reason for this is three-fold. First, they have oil in their lamps. If this oil is faithfulness, they are faithful followers. Second, they are awaiting the bridegroom. Only Christians would be gladly looking forward to the bridegroom's return. Third, the idea of virginity was often used to describe those who are spiritually pure. Only Christians can make this claim. The two groups in this parable represent two groups of Christians. The first group begins with enough faith in place to survive until the bridegroom returns. These are Christians who will be rewarded with a place inside the home of the bridegroom (**Revelation 2:10**). The second group of virgins represents those that start their journey with faith, but never allow it to grow and mature. For these people, they cannot expect a place with the bridegroom when He returns (**2 Peter 2:20-22**). Rather, they will hear the words "I do not know you" coming from Jesus' lips. Which group do you belong to tonight?

Question 242: Does Satan have actual seed/offspring (**Genesis 3:15**)?

Answer 242: This passage is in the midst of the curses that came to Adam, Eve, and Satan after the fall of man. As the curses fall, God makes a prophecy that Satan and his seed would find enmity with woman and her seed. The culmination of this prophecy would be a fatal wound to the head of Satan which was fulfilled on the cross. Our question from this passage deals with the offspring of Satan.

As Satan is a spiritual being, we know that he does not have physical offspring walking this earth (**Matthew 22:30**). However, God is also a spiritual being and we know that Christians are His children (**Matthew 6:9**). How can we reconcile these ideas? Spiritual beings must go through an adoption process in order to gain offspring on this earth (**Romans 8:15-16**). This adoption process begins with the person being adopted making a choice (**Romans 8:12-14**). When it comes to Satan and God, whoever a person chooses to follow is their adopted father. When we walk by the Spirit and submit fully to it, we are children of God. On the other hand, when we follow after Satan's lies, we become his adopted children (**John 8:44**). The important thing for us to make sure we make the right choice!

Question 243: Explain the song “Precious Memories”. Why is it a hymn when it is not a spiritual song?

Answer 243: This song is a favorite to be sung at funerals. It is a song with a message of hope for those left here on this earth after a loved one has gone on to Heaven. It is written from the perspective of someone who has lost a faithful loved one and their memories of that person’s faithfulness (sacred scenes, old time singing). This faithfulness inspires the person sitting in a cold and lonely world to persevere with the knowledge that they can one day see their loved one again (hope grows fonder).

As far as the spiritual nature of this song, let me first say that it is important that we sing proper songs for worship. However, we must also remember that there are three different reasons we should sing. First, we should sing in order to praise our God (**Hebrews 2:12**). Second, we should sing in order to teach one another (**Colossians 3:16**). Finally, we should sing in order to encourage each other (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). If a song does any combination of these three things, it is an appropriate song for us to sing in our worship to God.

I think Precious Memories covers at least two of these ideas and possibly all three. This song encourages us to maintain our faith in hopes of that reward that awaits those who do. It also gives praise to God as the creator of the mind and the author of our faith. One could also argue that it teaches others to give this hope to their loved ones and realize the hope of Heaven in their own lives. With all this said, I would point us to a Scripture that may have inspired this song. **Read Hebrews 12:1-2.** We can find hope in those who are faithful around us, even after they have passed on to their reward. This song reminds us of that fact.

Question 244: **Luke 21:37** says Jesus went to the Mount of Olives at night. Did He stay outside or were there houses there?

Answer 244: Jesus spent much time at the Mount of Olives. He would retire there when others were retiring to their homes (**John 7:53-8:1**). He would spend enough time there that Luke would refer to it as His custom (**Luke 22:39**). Many reasons may be offered for this, but I will offer two for us to consider tonight.

First, Jesus may have chosen to do this in order to find some peace and solitude after dealing with people all day long in the overcrowded city of Jerusalem. This place could offer him a refuge which could not be found in the city walls. Second, this place was free. It may be that Jesus simply refused to spend money on a spot to sleep in the city of Jerusalem. This would alleviate any possible accusations of living a pampered life and would allow funds to be used in other ways. In any event, Jesus spent many nights in the Mount of Olives.

During Jesus’ day, the Mount of Olives contained a thriving garden called Gethsemane. There would have most likely been large amounts of olive and fig trees as well as other shrubs and plants. It would have created a cool spot with numerous places to gather for privacy (consider Jesus final prayer in the garden). This garden sanctuary was most likely the usual place for a homeless Jesus to sleep while He was teaching and preaching in Jerusalem. In short, Jesus slept under the stars with little in the way of comforts when He slept in Gethsemane.

Question 245: Is it appropriate for us to clap/gesture during our VBS songs? Does this cause confusion or set a wrong example?

Answer 245: Let us first deal with handclapping in general because many are confused as to why it is a problem in the first place. We can begin this discussion with a reminder of one of our earlier points. There are three purposes to our singing and handclapping does not fulfill a single one of them. Second, creating a beat from the hand is no different than creating a beat from a drum or a rhythm from a guitar. So as long as God dictates to us the way in which to create a melody (through our hearts), we have no authority to create it any other way.

Now on to tonight's question. Before we begin let me say that I try to avoid certain songs at VBS for this very reason. However, if someone else leads them I join in for one simple reason. **Read 1 Corinthians 13:11.** We do not/cannot teach children in the same way we teach adults. Indeed, if we look at most VBS songs, none of us would consider the majority of them to be appropriate for our worship at all (If you're happy and you know it, sit on a tack, wise old king, three wandering Jews, I'm in the Lord's army). Most songs we sing at VBS are for the purpose of teaching basic facts to children. Hand gestures help children learn songs and facts just as coloring sheets and playdough help them in Bible class. As children mature, they find themselves learning more (becoming adults in knowledge) and the childish aids that used to help them are no longer needed. All confusion is removed as teaching takes place.

Question 246: Does God cause calamity (**Isaiah 45:7**)?

Answer 246: This is without a doubt one of the most hotly debated texts in the entire Old Testament. It has led unbelievers to create an imaginary second author of Isaiah who allegedly wrote centuries after the events in question. In truth, this is a potent example of the ability of God to foretell the future through one of His prophets. Here God reaches over 150 years into the future, past the rise and fall of the Babylonian Empire into the King of Persia named Cyrus who would rebuild the city of Jerusalem (including the Temple) after the Babylonian captivity (44:28). In describing His work, God says that causes well-being and calamity. This is the focus of our question tonight.

There are two things to consider when we read passages such as this one. The first is the Old Testament context in which they are found. As we look at that context, we must understand that God was working with His nation on a very personal level to bring about their faithfulness. For this reason, we have times when God will even say that a Pagan king has become His instrument to bring destruction on His people (**Isaiah 7:17-20**). When we read these passages, the first question to ask is what calamity is coming and specifically is the calamity God is causing a punishment meant to bring about repentance. God actively punishes numerous people with a type of calamity in order to accomplish the faithfulness of Israel.

Now we get to the second thing to consider. This is the passive way in which God through His omnipotence must allow anything that does happen to happen. In other words, God can stop anything He wants. In that sense, when bad things happen, they are within the control of God. Of course, we understand that bad things do happen and serve a purpose, but the Bible will often speak of this omnipotence in such a way as to make it seem God is actively doing something when He is in reality allowing that thing to happen.

With both these ideas in place, let us look at our world today. God is no longer punishing us on this earth in order to bring about repentance. Instead, He uses the Gospel to do this (**Romans 1:16**). The punishment for those who do not obey is reserved for the final Judgment. This means He is no longer actively causing bad things to happen as He once did. However, we all know that bad things still happen and that God allows them to happen. He is passively allowing nature to run its course, but has promised the faithful that He will be there for them no matter what comes.

Question 247: It is not sinful for a soldier at war to kill, but what about the executioner in a prison?

Answer 247: I once heard a seasoned Christian say that a person could not be a Christian and believe in the death penalty. His argument was very simple. God told us to be merciful and forgiving and the death penalty is neither. All of this made sense so long as you remove one chapter from our New Testament.

Read **Romans 13:1-5**. God does not tell nations to be merciful to those who are found guilty of evil. In fact, he warns evildoers that the government will become an avenger that bears the sword of punishment to bring condemnation to the wicked. The Greek word used for condemnation denotes the sentence associated with a guilty verdict. Understand that Paul is writing to a Roman government that freely used the death penalty. Our governments have the right under God's Law to punish the wicked in the way they see fit.

Now back to our question. If a government has the authority to wield the sword of justice over its citizens, would it be a sin to take part in the use of that authority? The answer of course is no. An executioner is an arm of the government which bears the sword!

Question 248: Why does God say He was going to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if they were as wicked as He had heard (**Genesis 18:20-21**)? Wouldn't God already know this?

Answer 248: This passage rests in the great conversation between Abraham and God when God is about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. God has delivered good news concerning Abraham's family in the form of the promise to deliver a child to Sarah within the year. He then delivers the devastating news that Abraham's nephew and his family are about to be destroyed in the sinful city of Sodom. Our question tonight comes from the description of God concerning His quest to find the truth about these cities.

Option 1: Every commentary I own on the book of Genesis says that this passage is physical manifestation of the justice of God. In other words, they say that God is using human terms to describe Himself in order to demonstrate that He would not execute a drastic punishment on a city He did not first personally visit. This is a very real possibility which is upheld by men much smarter than me.

Option 2: Having said that, I am going rogue with my answer to this question tonight. I don't believe God was demonstrating His justice for two reasons. First, that would imply that He had to physically visit every city He punished throughout the ages. I believe the Bible would reveal more evidence of these visits if this were the case. Second, God does not have to prove Himself just when He executes judgments. We are clay, not judges of God's actions!

And so, I give you my thought on this passage. I think we need to focus less on who is speaking and more on who is listening! When God visits mankind face-to-face, in visions, or through voices, He is doing so for mankind, not Himself. I think God's Words here are said in order to garner a response from Abraham. Will Abraham be a merciful leader of God's people? Will he be brave enough to speak to God on their behalf? I believe this conversation was a test for Abraham...a test which he passed!

Question 249: Who are the ancestors of modern-day Muslims?

Answer 249: The false religion of Islam was born around 1,400 years ago in what is now Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia during this time rested between two of the world's great empires which allowed it to be self-governed. This led to the formation of numerous nomadic tribes in the area which wielded power over resources, land, and people. As can be imagined, these tribes often fought with one another. Muhammad was born into such a tribe around 570 A.D. Muhammad grew up and grew discontent with the polytheism which was the norm for these nomadic tribes. He began looking for alternatives and eventually created one in the form of Islam. He formed an army and began conquering other tribes and forcing them to adopt his brand-new monotheistic religion. Ironically, he took one of the most popular gods of the tribes as his own. This god's name was Allah and he was the god of the moon. For 400 years, Islam's power in the Middle East went completely unchecked allowing it to put a strangle hold on the nations in that area which exists to this day.

Question 250: Did Judas repent? SEE ACTUAL QUESTION FOR GOSPEL MINUTES SOURCE!!!

Answer 250: The fate of Judas is not in question (**Matthew 26:24**). However, the question tonight comes by asking if Judas repented of his sin of betrayal and was not forgiven or if he did not repent. This question comes from a Gospel Minutes Question.

Brother Thurman is certainly correct in that there is a difference in godly sorrow and repentance. Godly sorrow leads a person to repentance. However, there are also forms of worldly sorrow. I think the distinction helps us to answer this question tonight. Without being able to look into one's heart, we cannot determine what type of sorrow is taking place. Only God can do that. However, our God did not forgive Judas, but did forgive Peter who denied His Son. In so doing, I believe He gave us a glimpse into Judas' heart. In our older translations, the Bible actually says that Judas repented of his sins (**Matthew 27:3**). However, that has been changed by modern translations which says he "felt remorse". I think the latter is a more accurate statement. Judas felt bad that he betrayed Jesus, but I am not sure Judas felt bad that he betrayed the Son of God. Judas felt guilt concerning Jesus, but I am not sure he felt guilt concerning the great sin he had committed. While these may seem like small differences to us, when it comes to our salvation they make all the difference in the world!

I am not sure I can give an exact answer to this question without knowing more information which God has not chosen to reveal. However, I think I can say that Judas did not practice godly repentance for his actions.

Question 251: Does Satan have powers today?

Answer 251: Yes (**Job 1:7, 1 Peter 5:8**). In some ways, God has placed Himself and Satan under the same rules for our world today. Both have a message for the world and both have messengers. Both rely on the message and the influence of men and women to accomplish their respective goals. While Satan is limited by God in what he is allowed to directly do to us (for instance demonic possession is extinct), he is a force to be reckoned with and one that we should not take for granted!

Question 252: In **Genesis 19:15**, the angels tell Lot to take his wife and two daughter “who are here”. Does this mean Lot had other children who could have been killed in the destruction?

Answer 252: This passage falls in the middle of the chaos that led up to the destruction of Sodom. Lot and his family have saved the angels sent to Sodom by God and spent what was undoubtedly a restless night packing for their journey out of the city. When morning broke, it was time for the righteous in Sodom (all of four people) to escape the coming annihilation. The angels tell Lot to take his wife and the daughters who are present out of the city. Does the phrasing of this command indicate more children in Sodom?

I believe the answer to this question is yes. I think there were indeed other children in the city of Sodom. This seems to me to be backed up by the phrasing of **Genesis 19:12** where a singular son-in-law is mentioned as opposed to the two that were to marry his daughters. Also, this passage may reference other children who had already moved from the city of Sodom. Based on all the hints, I think Lot had other children that did not escape the doom of Sodom.

All of this makes little difference in the overall narrative with one exception. This may help to explain the actions of Lot’s wife (**Genesis 19:26**). The Hebrew text here indicates that Lot’s wife did not merely glance over her shoulder, but rather that she turned as if to return. What could possibly have made her do this as the fire from Heaven came raining down? If she had more children who were being consumed by that fire, we have a strong motivation for her actions.

Question 253: Were the years of the first chapters of Genesis the same as our years today?

Answer 253: This question specifically mentioned Methuselah and others who lived to very old ages in the first generations of the world. For many believers in our world today, Biblical teachings take a backseat to scientific “fact”. In other words, when science and the Bible disagree, these people immediately begin looking for ways that the Bible was wrong or misunderstood in order to fit the Biblical record into our scientific understanding. This is a dangerous tactic considering our knowledge of the world is by definition finite as opposed to God’s knowledge of the world being infinite. Since God knows more, we should fit our understanding around His Biblical record, not the other way around!

So, what does the record say about time? Many think that because one day is like a thousand years to God (**2 Peter 3:8**) that He was not the one who gave us our concept of time. However, that is simply not the case (**Genesis 1:14-15**). God gave us time and set the keeper of time by the sun and moon. There is no indication whatsoever in the Biblical record that God changed the

definition of a year after the flood. However, there is very clear evidence that God counted time in the exact same way from the time of the creation to the time of Moses (**Exodus 20:11**). I am also very skeptical of the idea that the **INSPIRED** writers would use an idea of time completely foreign to their world and ours without giving us some clue that they did so! So how did these people live to these great ages? That is a question for another fishbowl!!!

Question 254: How will Job in his flesh see God (**Job 19:25-27**)?

Answer 254: The beauty of this text is seen in the song we sing which pays homage to the first lines of Job 19:25. In the face of the most extreme trials one can imagine (financial ruin, loss of children, loss of health) Job stands secure in the knowledge that his God lives and will reward Job's faithfulness! Oh, for a faith like Job's!

The question from this text tonight centers on the second verse of this passage where Job says that even after his body has been consumed by death, he will see his God one day. Herein lays the hope of all Christians. No matter what this world throws our way, we stand secure in our redeemer and a promise of a brighter day. We stand in God's promises of a new immortal body to replace this cheap tent (**1 Corinthians 5:1-4**), a new home to replace this crumbling earth (**2 Peter 3:13**), and a new beginning to replace the old things we leave behind (**Revelation 21:3-4**). Job sums all of this up in one simple verse that shows his complete trust in God to keep His promises.

Question 255: What is the harmful spirit that attacked Saul (**1 Samuel 18:10**)?

Answer 255: The spirit seen in the passage from tonight's question actually makes his first appearance in **1 Samuel 16:14**. Here, there is a removal of God's Spirit from Saul which leaves his heart open for the evil spirit which comes. This evil spirit comes upon Saul in such a way as to make him appear like a complete lunatic! This all takes place following the disobedience of Saul as it relates to the Amalekites in **1 Samuel 15**. If you remember, Samuel tells Saul that he will lose his throne because of his disobedience! All of this sets the stage for what we see in the form of this evil spirit.

What can we know about this spirit?

First, we know that Saul prepared his heart to receive the spirit through his disobedience before God sent it.

Second, it made Saul do things that would eventually lead to a showdown where God showed David to be His chosen King. In other words, it did the job of removing Saul from God's throne!

Third, it came from God. This may mean that God sent the spirit into Saul or that God simply allowed the spirit to enter into Saul. Either of these meanings can come from the text.

Fourth, the word spirit here can mean either an evil demonic force or a mental illness.

The Hebrew word here allows for both, and I believe it is important for you to know that before I tell you what I think happened here.

I believe that this demon was let off of his leash in order to capture the heart of Saul which had been left empty when God's Spirit departed. It was allowed to take control of Saul's heart and mind in order to accomplish the ultimate will of God which was David replacing Saul as the King of Israel. Once this job was complete, God undoubtedly put the leash back around the demon's throat and held him in check until a time when he again would be useful to the plans of God. This is my best understanding to one of the most confusing passages in the Old Testament.

Question 256: What did the people mean by their statement in **Exodus 14:11**?

Answer 256: The short answer here is that the Israelites were a bunch of smart alecks who forgot how powerful their God was! However, tonight I want to dive a little deeper with them and compare them to Job who we spoke of earlier. We noted Job's faithfulness in times of trial. Compare that with the lack of faith the Israelites demonstrated on multiple occasions. We can't escape the Pharaoh and Moses shouldn't have brought us here to die. We don't have water and we're going to die. We don't have food and we're going to die. We're tired of bread and we're going to die. These are some of the whiniest people in the Bible! As soon as things don't go their way, they turn their back on Jehovah and His chosen leader.

I finish tonight's fishbowl with this question because I wonder if we look more like Job or the Israelites journeying on the Exodus. How many of us maintain our faith as long as God keeps things good in our lives? How many of us turn on God as soon as things don't go as we would like? How many of us forget the promises of God to help us through every trial and guide us safely home to Heaven where trials will end? Tonight, how many of us need to get a facelift so that our faith looks like Job's rather than these whiners?

Question 257: When did Jesus give order through the Holy Spirit to the Apostles (**Acts 1:1-2**)? Did He not teach them directly?

Answer 257: Let's begin answering this question by returning to the first book that Luke is referencing here (**Luke 24:45-49**). Here we see Luke's account of the Great Commission of God. Jesus is speaking directly to His Apostles. We can see His role here, but we can also see the Spirit's role in this account. In verse 45 we see Jesus opening the Apostle's minds to understand the Scriptures. When we compare that to the complete knowledge which the Apostles would get on Pentecost when the Spirit of God fully descended on them, it is not hard for us to see the Spirit involved in Luke 24:45. So we see Luke's reference back to his first letter actually shows both the Son teaching and the Spirit working as well.

Finally, we must remember the Jesus had the full measure of the Spirit throughout His ministry (**John 3:34-35**). In fact, there is a thought that says that Jesus received His full miraculous powers at baptism when the Spirit of God descended on Him. This theory views the Spirit as the battery behind Jesus' powers on this earth. Whether this is true or not, the point is that Jesus and the Spirit were acting (along with the Father) in full harmony. I think this is the point being made by Luke in the first chapter of Acts.

Question 258: How did anyone realize that Abimelech and his household needed healing from God (**Genesis 20:17-18**). Did this narrative not unfold in a matter of days?

Answer 258: The passage under consideration here comes at the end of a long narrative involving Abraham and Sarai plotting together to lie to the people of a foreign land in order to ensure Abraham's safety. In short, they say that Sarai is Abraham's sister rather than his wife! As we deal with this question, we need to make a point that applies to the Book of Genesis as much as if not more than any other book of the Bible. It is nearly impossible to get a good timeline of the events of Genesis as they unfold. The big picture is fairly easy as far as following the genealogies lead us to an understanding of the chronology of the Patriarchs, but as we dive into individual events in the Book of Genesis the chronology can become much more complicated. With that said, it is impossible to say how long the events of Genesis 20 actually took. This is an important fact to remember for any of these stories of the Old Testament. Chronology is almost always a little tricky.

As far as the answer to this question, we need only look to the beginning of this chapter. **Read Genesis 20:1-7.** The realization that God was punishing Abimelech's household came directly from God. God chose to appear to Abimelech and warn him of Abraham's treachery. With the conditions of the dream accepted, Abimelech restores Sarai and thereby restores his own household!

Question 259: Was Satan with God and the angels from the beginning?

Answer 259: Satan is one of the most mysterious characters of the Bible. We see him make only a handful of appearances in the pages of the Old and New Testaments. We do not follow this being that has literally walked the earth since the Garden of Eden. Rather, we see him appear only as a being seeking to destroy the work of God. With that in mind, let's discuss some things that we do know.

1. They were created (**Colossians 1:16, Psalm 148:1-5**).
2. They are spiritual beings (**Hebrews 1:13-14**).
3. They are beings with choice (**2 Peter 2:4**).
4. Satan is a fallen angel (**Revelation 12:7-9**).

Now we can get to tonight's question. The answer relies completely on what is meant by "beginning". If beginning somehow equates to eternal, then the answer is no because only deity is given the classification as eternal. Angels are immortal, not eternal. However, if by beginning you mean the beginning of creation, then I would say yes (**Job 38:1-7**). From this verse we see that the sons of God were there when the foundation of the world was laid. This can't reference humans since we weren't created yet. That leaves only angels as a reasonable option. In fact, many scholars believe that angels were the beginning of the creation week. They point to the fact that God created the "Heavens" which includes His dwelling place and that of the angels on day 1 of creation. Therefore, angels must have been created between the Heavens and the earth being created. In truth, there is much speculation if we want to try to be exact in our dating of God's creation of angels, so maybe it's best to leave it with the fact that they were created and were there when our world was being made.

Question 260: Should we pray to Christ, the Father, or is it ok to pray to both?

Answer 260: This question has led to great difficulty because it centers on the idea of the trinity and the roles of each part of the godhead. This is not an easy topic to understand and has led to great discussion and unfortunately some division. We will begin by addressing the ideas that surround the belief that we should only pray to the Father.

This belief generally relies on two basic ideas. First, we turn to the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6. As Christ begins this prayer to teach us how to pray, He tells us to pray to the Father who is in Heaven. For many this settles the issue. When we pray, we are to pray to the Father. However, this text also makes perfect sense if we believe we can pray to both the Father and the Son. After all, the Son would not address His model prayer to Himself! The second idea given in support of this belief is that Christ is our intermediary, not our benefactor (**1 Timothy 2:5**). In other words, Christ carries our messages to God, but doesn't receive His own messages at all. Again, this passage would lose none of its meaning or effectiveness if we believe that both the Father and Son can receive prayer.

Now let us consider a few passages that I believe are relevant to our discussion. First, let us turn to **Acts 7:59**. In this passage, Stephen utters a phrase very similar to one from Christ on the Cross. However, the difference is that Stephen is asking Jesus to receive his Spirit rather than the Father. Is this a prayer? Next, let's turn to **1 Timothy 1:12**. Here, Paul says that he thanks Jesus for the strength he has been given. How did Paul do this if not by prayer? Finally, let us turn to **John 14:13-14**. Here Jesus instructs His Apostles concerning a time when He will no longer be with them. He tells them that He will answer when they make a request of Him. How can the Apostle's make this request after Jesus is gone? There are also other passages in which Paul talks about making petitions or prayers to "the Lord". For many, this means the Father. However, Paul's normal formula is to refer to Jesus as Lord and the Father as God. In short, I think we can make prayers to both the Father and the Son. However, I don't believe there should be any division over this issue as neither perspective denies the importance of the trinity or the roles of each member of the godhead.

Question 261: Will God always be there to help even if your faithfulness is failing?

Answer 261: The simple answer to this question is yes. God will never leave us nor forsake us. When we choose to leave Him for a life of unfaithful living, He waits eagerly for our return (**Prodigal Son**). He is always there to welcome us home when we take the first steps back to Him.

Question 262: Is there a reason we cannot see God?

Answer 262: As we begin this question, it is important that we point out that the Bible does indeed teach that we cannot see God (**1 Timothy 6:16, 1 John 4:12**). There are two very good reasons we cannot see God. The first is the fact that God is a spirit (**John 4:24**). The word spirit comes from a Greek word meaning a wind or breath of air (Thayer's). A person cannot see a gust of wind or a breath of air just like we cannot see the spirit of God, but we can see the results of a gust of wind as we can see the results of an all-powerful God (**Romans 1:20**). This idea is

demonstrated by the fact that God had to take on various physical forms in the Old Testament in order to be seen by men (a burning bush or the Angel of the Lord who fought Jacob) and took on flesh in the New Testament as the Son of Man.

The second reason we cannot see God is that we cannot survive an encounter with the full image of Jehovah (**Exodus 33:20**). Many speculations as to why this is true may be made, but I believe the great glory of the unobscured image of God is simply too glorious for the physical body to withstand. For this reason, Christians will “put on immortality” before entering Heaven.

Ironically, this passage in Exodus is often said to contradict itself. After all, did Moses not get to see God and live? The answer to this question is seen in the circumstances of Moses’ view of God (**Exodus 33:21-23**). Since God is a “breath of air”, the idea of Him having a face and back is unlikely. What else could these terms mean? God is putting Himself in terms Moses could understand. His face represents His full glory which would lead to Moses’ death. His back then represents a watered-down version that Moses could both see and survive. Only when we reach Heaven will we be able to see the full glory of Jehovah.

Question 263: Are only the poor to have access to the Kingdom (**James 2:5**)?

Answer 263: It will do us well to begin answering this question by asking how God chooses people in the first place. God chooses/calls people through the Gospel of Christ (**2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**). Every time the Gospel is preached, God is choosing someone to be His child. Whether that person chooses to respond positively to that call is the responsibility of the one being called! Now we can dig in a little deeper to the idea that God has called the poor into the Kingdom.

It has been the case for centuries and continues to be the case today that the wealthy of the world are often unaffected by the Gospel call of salvation. The simple reason for this is that they can both afford to feed their sinful desires and can more easily put their hope and trust in the things of this world. On the other hand, the poor of this world are often more inclined to long for a world where they can receive the riches they do not possess on this earth. And so, they look more readily towards Heaven.

Does this mean that only the poor can reach the Kingdom? Of course not! We have examples of people who are wealthy being faithful to God (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Cornelius, Lydia, Caesar’s household (Philippians 4:22), etc.). However, we also have the words of Jesus found in **Matthew 19:24**. The point of Jesus’ statement here is very simple. The more riches one has, the more difficult (not impossible) for them to enter Heaven!

Question 264: Is transgender/sex change surgery sinful? If yes, how does one practice repentance for it?

Answer 264: First, let me state that “sex-change operation” is a misnomer. So far as I can find (and I don’t encourage you to google this by any means) there is actually no way to change the sex of a human. Gender is determined at birth by our chromosome set. If a person has a Y chromosome, they are genetically a male and, barring a harmful mutation, will show the physical characteristics of that gender. Because we cannot (so far as I have found) change our chromosomes, we can never change our gender!

We have two options to consider as we look at whether or not transgenderism is a sin. First, this sin may simply be a choice made by those who willfully reject the commandments of God. Second, this may be a mental illness which should be treated rather than indulged. We would not say to a schizophrenic to “be whoever it is that you want to be”. We would get that person help and if they reject that help, they would be held accountable for their sinful actions! With either option, God has made it clear that transgenderism is sinful (**Deuteronomy 22:5, 1 Corinthians 6:9**). Effeminate literally means “soft to the touch” and describes men who dress up as women to commit lewd acts! In the same way, we should sympathize with these disturbed people and hope they find a way to repent of their sinful choices!

Now let’s get to the second part of our question tonight. How can a person repent of this sin? The first option is that the person has the cosmetic surgery to reverse the cosmetic surgery that made them LOOK like the opposite sex in the first place. I should note that these surgeries are not fully reversible as far as I can tell. Financial costs and health risks may also make this option one that is not feasible. The second option is actually given to us by Jesus (**Matthew 19:10-12**). Because this person has made a drastic change to his biology and castrated himself (most are male), he will live the rest of his life as a eunuch for the sake of God. He will dress as a male and live as a male even while having some physical characteristics of a female because ultimately he is a male! These are the only two options I see for a person repenting of this sinful act.

Question 265: What is meant by “cover his garment with violence” (**Malachi 2:16**)?

Answer 265: This is one of those instances where your Bible should provide you with a footnote. The word translated “violence” here actually has two possible meanings. It can mean either violence or wrong. This helps us understand the idea behind the prophet’s use of this word and the meaning he wants to pass on. It also helps us to understand the prophet is comparing those who divorce their wives and cover their garments in wrong with those who “take heed to their spirit”.

When we put all this together, we see that this phrase simply means one living a life of unrighteousness before God. Malachi’s main objective here is to show God’s eternal disapproval of divorce. He does so by stating the fact that God hates divorce. He then links the sin of divorce with other such sins that cover us with stains of sinful behavior.

Before leaving this passage, I would like to make a comment on the ESV and its handling of Malachi 2:16. The ESV is a very solid translation, but this is one passage that it gets completely wrong. If you use an ESV, I would make a note to check with other translations concerning this verse. The correct rendering should include the idea that God hates divorce and I am not sure that the ESV does this!

Question 266: How can we work out our own salvation (**Philippians 2:12**)?

Answer 266: It is important to note that this book is written to the “saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi”. In other words, these are Christians who have already begun their salvation by obeying the commandments of God. To these Christians, Paul says they are to work out their salvation. We know that Christians must be faithful in order to receive a reward in Heaven (**Revelation 2:10**). We also know that it is impossible to be faithful to God without obedient works (**James 2:24-26**). We also know that as we work to achieve our righteousness, God still has to work in us (**Philippians 2:13**).

With all that we know, the picture is made rather clear here. Christians have a plan that is to be followed. That plan is God’s will and includes all the righteous works included in His Word. When we work to ensure our salvation, God works to ensure our weaknesses are covered. We do our part, and God does His part. When we both do our part, we are ensured salvation!

Question 267: Should we anoint with oil as James describes?

Answer 267: Read James 5:14-15. This passage describes the act of calling upon elders to come to a sick person in order to anoint them with oil and pray. Let’s begin this discussion by noting that oil was a common medicine in New Testament times (**Luke 10:34**). Indeed, even today certain oils are still used as medicinal aids (Essential oils, castor oil). And in Roman times, it was even more common. There was even a saying: “Wine within, oil without”. This referenced the idea that Romans thought you only needed two liquids to survive! With all of that being said, I do not see a miraculous healing taking place through this oil. I see a common practice of the day being used to by God to show His power to heal as He added the requirements that elders should pray and use His Son’s name while anointing with oil. Notice that it is the prayer that will save the man from his sickness, not the oil (**James 5:16**). I also think it worth mentioning before we answer our question that only one other time in the New Testament can I find a reference to oil being used in connection with healing. It is found in **Mark 6:13**. Here again, we notice that they are anointing with oil and then healing the sickness.

Now to our question. Should we follow this process as James describes. I believe that if a person wants to be anointed with oil by the elders of the church they can choose to do so. However, I believe the point of this process was to show God as the great healer. During the times of the miraculous gifts, it would make great sense for God to give to elders the power to perform the miracle of healing. It would also make sense for God to use something already in place in order to help our minds comprehend what was taking place (Consider the temple which was not

needed by God but by man). In these times, under these conditions, God showed His superiority to doctors and medicines by using His name to put power to the remedies of the day. With that said, I do not think it to be a commandment that applies to us any more than I believe other specific commandments regarding the miraculous gifts apply to us.

Question 268: Did Peter grow old or was he killed as a young man (**John 21:18-19**)?

Answer 268: I think that the meaning of this passage comes when we use “younger” and “older” as relative terms. Some of us in here may say “when I was younger” to refer to a time when they were 40 years old. While others may say “when I get older” to mean the same age. Both are true because these are relative terms. Christ was referring to a time when Peter was a child who was led around when He says “younger”. Now let’s see if we can figure out the “older” part.

The simple answer here is that we have absolutely no idea. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside-down during Nero’s reign which was 54-68 A.D. Since we know that Jesus died in approximately 30 A.D., Peter would have lived between 25 and 40 years after Christ. This would be a great help to us if there was any way to identify how old Peter was when he began following Christ! Unfortunately, the Bible is rather silent concerning the Apostles and their ages which makes sense considering they were simply spectators and reporters of Jesus Christ and His life.

Question 269: If faith without works is dead, please explain **Romans 4:1-5**.

Answer 269: This passage is found in the middle of Paul explaining the fact that the Old Testament Law was not required in order to be a New Testament Christian. As he discusses this idea, he points us back to Abraham. Was Abraham justified by works or by faith (**Romans 4:5, James 2:24**)?

The answer to this question is a resounding YES! We can never split these two ideas apart from one another. If Abraham relied on his own circumcision to achieve salvation, he would have been lost because he would have left God’s grace and mercy out of the equation (**Romans 4:4**). On the other hand, if Abraham relied fully on his faith in God without following the commandments of God, he would have never been saved because he would have been disobedient (**Matthew 7:21**).

Faith and works are not polar opposites of one another. Rather, they are compatible units of one’s salvation. Each of these items is required for salvation as it brings both God and man together to achieve the common goal of getting us to Heaven. For those in Rome who were attempting to point to the works of the Old Law for their salvation, Paul’s point was that they were missing one key ingredient...Christ!

Question 270: Does **Mark 4:38-41** allow us to support denominations? What is meant by they shall not lose their reward?

Answer 270: The account in Mark 9 is perhaps one of the most confusing found in the New Testament. Let's read the entire conversation (**Mark 9:38-41**). In this account, we have some of Jesus' Apostles coming back to report of a man who was performing miracles without obedience. Jesus tells His Apostles not to worry about it. How does this fit with other passages we read commanding us to rebuke false teachers?

To solve this puzzle, we need to understand a couple of things from this account. First, John does not mention that this man was not a believer in Jesus. He says he was not following them (i.e.) like the Apostles were following Christ from place to place. Second, no person can invoke the power of God to cast out demons as this man did without Jesus' knowledge and approval (**Matthew 7:15-17**). We may not know who this man was, but we can certainly say that Jesus did. Now we need to bring in **Matthew 12:30**. Here, we are told specifically that there are only two options concerning Jesus. We are with Him or against Him. Because this man was able to perform a miracle in the name of Christ with Christ's approval, we know where this man stood. He stood with Christ, not against Him. While the Apostles had no way to remember each and every person who heard and believed in Christ, Jesus did. This man was one of His followers, even though he did not join the Apostles in following Jesus around.

With that in mind, this passage in no way applies to the denominational world we see around us. The two options are still for Christ (in complete submission) or against Christ (in rebellion). There is no middle ground of kind of following Christ. The New Testament makes it clear that there are to be clear and distinct lines drawn between true teachers and false teachers (**Jude 3, Galatians 1:6-10**). We must never ignore those lines because doing so cheapens the church and all she stands for.

Now for the "losing rewards" part of this discussion. Since we know that this person was indeed a worker for Christ, our answer becomes simple. When a person works in the name of Christ, they are rewarded! Our faithfulness will lead us to a reward some day!

Question 271: When we pray for the sick and include the phrase "if it be Thy will", what exactly do we mean?

Answer 271: I certainly don't pretend to know what is in everyone's mind when they use this phrase in a prayer. With that in mind, I will tell you what I think is meant to be shown when a person says these words in the middle of their prayer.

First, I think it is meant to show a complete submission to God's answers (**Philippians 4:11**). God's will can simply be defined as God's plan. When we go to God and pray for those who are sick, we must be ready to handle it when God's plan does not fit our plans. By saying "if it be your will", I think people are trying to show that God is in control of that situation and we cannot overrule Him. Second, I think it shows humility. We have such narrow understanding when compared with God and His wisdom (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). By saying these words, I think many

simply mean that we are humbling ourselves as the clay and allowing the Potter to make the big decisions.

With this in mind, I think this phrase is one that reflects our standing as we approach the Throne of God. It shows our humble and human understanding to be feeble compared to the Wisdom of God.

Question 272: What is meant by the “washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit” (**Titus 3:5**)?

Answer 272: The simple answer to his question is that the “washing of regeneration” refers to baptism and the “renewal of the Holy Spirit” refers to the preaching of the Gospel which led a person to choose to be baptized. Paul here simply restates Jesus’ Words from **John 3:5**. In order for a person to be saved, they must be immersed for the forgiveness of their sins (**Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21**, etc.). However, that act alone is not enough. In order for our physical act to have any spiritual result, God must put the power of spiritual cleansing into our baptism.

How does God do this? God does this through His Word. How is the Holy Spirit involved? When the Apostles wrote or spoke, they did so with the Holy Spirit as their guide (**1 Peter 1:20, John 16:12**). God’s commandments reveal His will for all mankind. If a sinner wishes to be saved, he must first hear and believe the Word of God (**Romans 10:17, Hebrews 11:6**). Once this faith has been put in place, that person will believe that God “will reward” him for “diligently seeking Him” in the waters of baptism. Only when both these elements are in play can a person cleanse their soul and be forgiven of their sins!

Question 273: Does God still bless and curse nations today as He did in the Old Testament?

Answer 273: As we look at the Bible, we see God blessing and cursing many nations at various times. The blessings usually come in the form of material gain, military victories, and status among other nations. When we think of God punishing nations, we can often see the exact opposite: famines (**2 Samuel 24:13**) crushing military defeats (**Exodus 14:27-28**) becoming a shame amongst nations (**Nehemiah 2:17**). We also see times when God will use other nations to punish certain peoples (**Isaiah 10:5-6**) and at times God will actively remove corrupt leaders from their post (**Acts 12:21-23**).

With all this said, we deal the question at hand: does God still do this today? The only answer I can give to this question is found in **Romans 13:1**. We know for sure that God establishes all governments in today’s world. This means He also keeps those from power when He does not establish them. How He chooses to do this is up to Him, but I personally can see no reason that God could not act in the same way as He has always acted through Old and New testaments to raise or destroy a nation and its power. This means He can deliver natural disasters to hurt a nation (although not all natural disasters were a direct result of God’s Work), He can deliver military defeats to hurt a nation, and He can remove a person from power that He sees as unfit (although this is rare in Biblical times).

Question 274: Who were the Nicolaitans mentioned in **Revelation 2:15-16**?

Answer 274: We have no idea. This is a religious sect which has disappeared from history as far as we know. We know that they existed in the first century and spread from Ephesus (**Revelation 2:6**) to Pergamum. They are also linked here with the false teachers of Balaam. Followers of Balaam apparently practiced sexual immorality and idolatry. This may mean that the Nicolaitans did the same.

The interesting thing to me is that we do not know exactly what the false teachings of the Nicolaitans were. Once a person knows truth, they recognize lies in every form. Whatever form the false teaching of the Nicolaitans took, it was to be treated no differently than all other forms of false teaching. All false teachings and false teachers must be fought and rejected (**Jude 3, 2 John 9-11**).

Question 275: If a couple divorces without adultery being committed and after a time one party remarries, does the other party now have the right to remarry?

Answer 275: As we have noted at various times from this pulpit and in our Bible classes, Jesus gave only two doors leading out of a marriage (**Matthew 19:9, 22:30**). These two reasons are death and adultery. Any other reason given for a divorce places the people involved in a state of perpetual celibacy unless they wish to sacrifice Heaven for the sake of marital relations. Having said all of this, I hate when we get into various scenarios which I think tend to overcomplicate the matter of marriage and divorce. However, we will dive off into scenario-world tonight by answering this question.

We must understand that Jesus is giving the reason for a scriptural divorce in Matthew 19. He is not giving a “gotcha” moment for married people. If a person commits adultery and that is THE reason his or her spouse seeks a divorce, then the spouse is free to remarry whomever they wish. This is true because God is the joiner of married people and He is the only one who can separate them! This plays into our scenario in this way. If two people are married and they mutually decide to divorce just because, neither of them is going to be free to remarry in the future regardless of the actions of the other partner. However, if a person is trying their best to remain faithful to their partner and the partner sues them for divorce, the scenario has changed. That person who chose to stay faithful to their vows to God can stay faithful to his or her spouse. In this case, they hold to God’s truth that a paper divorce in our world means nothing to God in His! God still sees these two people as married and one of them is still living as a married individual before God. After a time, let us say that the party who sought the divorce remarries. I absolutely believe that the innocent party is free to remarry. The reason for this is that God did not divorce this couple until the adultery (remarriage) occurred.

Look how much work we have to put in when we don’t simply follow God’s Commandments concerning marriage! May we all resolve to end the marriage/divorce/remarriage controversy in our own personal lives by following God’s plan for marriage in the first place!

Question 276: Who is the other Mary in **Matthew 28:1** and **Matthew 27:61**?

Answer 276: The other Mary in these two passages has long been associated with the mother of James and Joseph (**Matthew 27:56**). Little is known of this woman and perhaps there is a lesson in this fact. All we know of this lady in this moment was that she was where she needed to be; grieving the loss of the Son of God. She had ministered to Christ during His ministry and had followed Him. Like so many Christians who have come before us, we don't know her past, but we can rest assured at her future!

Question 277: What animals received boils if all the animals in Egypt were killed during the previous plague (**Exodus 9:6, 8-10**)? What livestock did the people bring in from the fields (**Exodus 9:19-20**)?

Answer 277: This is one of the alleged contradictions that is often used in an attempt to destroy the faith of believers. Based on what we have just read, we have a big problem. The Bible specifically says that God destroyed "all the livestock of Egypt" in plague #5. Yet plague #6 and plague #7 clearly tell us that cattle were affected. How can cattle be affected by boils and hail if all the cattle are already dead? For the skeptic, there is simply no answer to this question. Christianity has been fun, but I guess we can all go home!

Or we can just look a few verses above where we started tonight. **Read Exodus 9:2.** The thing that leads to confusion on this passage is that we do not apply God's own limit on the idea of "all the livestock in Egypt". God said that only the livestock in the field would be affected by the pestilence of plague #5. With this limitation in place, we must consider all the livestock that would have been kept in stables and barns. Once the pestilence had run its course, some of the cattle that survived would have been used in the fields since the Egyptians would have had no other options. With this, another attack on the Word of God bites the dust!

P.S. We are right in the middle of the plagues on Egypt in our Tuesday morning class!!!

Question 278: What is specifically prohibited in Paul's instructions to women in **1 Timothy 2:12**?

Answer 278: There are only two restrictions placed upon women in the passage under consideration. First, a woman must not teach over a man. This comes with one note: an assembly is apparently being addressed in this passage (**1 Timothy 2:8** women must pray too unless this is an assembly!). We also see this is the case based on Priscilla and Aquila (**Acts 18:24-26**). Women are not to be the teachers of Christian men. Second, a woman must not exercise authority over a man. Once again, we know that this does not apply outside the church as it does inside (**Acts 16:14-15**). Lydia did not have to sell her business where she would have had authority in order to become a Christian. Women are not to be in charge of men in the church.

As long as a woman does not violate these two things, she is not acting in opposition to God's Word. She can teach so long as men are not present. She can have authority so long as it is not over men. She can serve in any capacity (greeting visitors, preparing for services, visiting others, etc.). In truth, this passage does not limit women very much in the Lord's church. The big deal about this passage in today's world is that neither women nor men like the idea of being told what they can't do.

Question 279: Could Samson reach Heaven since he committed suicide (Judges 16:29-30)?

Answer 279: This is a very interesting question. Samson is one of the greatest Judges we read about during Israel's history immediately preceding the monarchy. He was known for great feats of strength and also for his questionable moral decisions. One of those decisions was to lie with Delilah who was a Philistine. Delilah found out the source of Samson's strength and cut his hair which left him unable to defend himself. The Philistines took Samson, gouged out his eyes, and imprisoned him as a slave. This was not punishment enough for him in their eyes so they brought him out to chain him up and make a spectacle of him before the rulers of the Philistines. It was at this gathering that Samson destroyed the house killing himself and the Philistines who had gathered there. Did this suicide deny Samson entrance into Heaven?

Suicide is certainly a sinful thing. It steals from God the life He has lent to us and is a form of murder (**Revelation 21:8**). However, as we have said before, suicide may also come from severe mental illness which leaves hope for some who take this drastic step. Having said that, Samson's mental capabilities do not seem to be impaired in any way during this event.

There is one more thing we must bring out about this account. Who is the one who decides what is and is not sinful? God is the judge of morality. If God answers a prayer for miraculous strength in order for Samson to bring this house down, was the act sinful? God can have no part in sin. Therefore, I do not believe that Samson committed sin in this account. In fact, I don't believe this to be a suicide at all. Instead, I think we should view this as a servant of God who realizes the only way to bring down the pride of God's enemies is with his life. He even asks God to let him die rather than stealing from God! Samson is God's warrior who died in battle with God's enemies, not a suicide.

Question 280: Are we sinners from the time of our conception (Psalm 51:5)?

Answer 280: From this passage written by David, thousands of infants will be baptized by various groups that allege it teaches that babies are born in sin and in need of salvation. Tonight, I hope we can clear up the confusion of this passage.

The Bible teaches clearly that children are not lost in sin. Jesus makes this clear when He addresses children (**Luke 18:17**). Ezekiel makes this clear when he says we cannot bear the sins of others (**Ezekiel 18:20**). Solomon made this clear when he told us that we are all going to be judged based solely on our actions (**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**). Babies cannot sin, so it is impossible for them to be lost! If a baby cannot be lost, how can they be saved? If they cannot be saved, how can they be sinners?

With this in mind, what in the world did David mean in **Psalm 51:5**? I will give you two options tonight which both receive quite a bit of attention. First, some believe that David meant he was conceived in a sinful world or even in a sinful relationship between his mother and father. For those that hold to this idea, David is simply saying that he is so surrounded with sin that he cannot possibly be pure unless God intervenes (**Psalm 51:5-9**). Another school of thought chalks this passage up to hyperbole and exaggeration. Those who hold to this idea say that David is doing something done by Job (**Job 31:16-18**). Just as Job did not literally hold the hand of widows to offer support when he was a baby, nor did David need forgiveness of sins when he was a baby! Either way, there is no baby that has ever or will ever need salvation from God.

Question 281: How long did God forsake the Christ? He tells Mary He had not yet ascended to the Father so was He still being forsaken (John 20:17).

Answer 281: One of the saddest aspects of the cross of Calvary was the fact that Jesus had to be separated from God as He bore the sins of the world. The loneliness that must have accompanied that horrible pain and agony is something I do not believe we can imagine. Our question tonight asks how long this separation lasted. How long did God forsake the Son?

This question is answered in Jesus' own words on that cross (**Luke 23:42-43**). A person who is forsaken by God cannot enter into Paradise. Jesus' time of separation lasted only as long as He was being sacrificed. Once the sacrifice was complete, the sins of the world were removed from His shoulders and He was once again connected to God. The passage in John which we read simply means that Jesus had not gone on to Heaven yet. However, God alone could raise the dead which shows that Jesus has been reconnected with Him.

Question 282: In the story of Jesus sending the demons into the herd of swine, why did the people want Jesus to leave (**Matthew 8:28-34**)?

Answer 282: This is an interesting account from the life of Christ. Jesus is travelling in a gentile city which is odd in and of itself. He performs a miracle in this city by casting out a group of demons into swine which is also odd. He is then asked to leave the city before He can do anything else which is odd considering the power He just displayed. Our question tonight centers on the townspeople asking Jesus to leave. Why would they do this?

There are two possible answers to this question. First, it could be that the people were acting out of fear. Perhaps they were afraid of this man who could command the demons. This would certainly be reason enough to ask Jesus to leave their city. However, I have trouble seeing this when the miracle performed helped the man who was demon-possessed. For this reason, I think it is more likely that the people told Jesus to leave for the second possible reason.

The second reason I can offer is that the people were instigated by angry pig farmers who had just lost a valuable resource. The destruction of these swine undoubtedly cost the owners a considerable amount. Provoked by this anger, these men rallied the townspeople together. I can almost see them explaining to the citizens that the shortage of pork would result in inflation and possible famine depending on how much other food was available. In response, the people told Jesus to keep moving, which is what He did!

The saddest part of this is to think about all those infirmed in the city that were left without the assistance of Jesus. The power of one bad decision to reject Christ is often far reaching!

Question 283: Could you research and discuss 1 Corinthians 11 as it relates to head coverings? Is the church ignoring these instructions (**1 Corinthians 11:2-16**)?

Answer 283: Are women here commanded to cover themselves with a veil? Since this is the question that comes from this passage, let us go ahead and answer it so that we can come back to see what the true meaning is. From this passage, it is obvious that the head-coverings in Corinth were causing major stress to this church and needed to be addressed by Paul.

Let's deal with three facts to note about veils in Corinth. First, Corinthian men were veiled in public if they were slaves and were left unveiled if they were freemen. Second, Corinthian women wore veils in order to show themselves as subordinate to their husband or fathers. To stop wearing this head covering was a sign that a woman was casting off her submissive role and was often associated with temple prostitutes. Finally, the idea of head covering is linked completely with the idea of length of hair in this passage (11:14-15). This is also important because the same temple prostitutes who went without veils also shaved their heads or wore their hair short in order to distinguish themselves.

With all of this in place, we turn to Paul's final instructions in order to answer our initial question (11:16). Paul says here that if the head covering issue continues to divide the church in Corinth, there is no "such practice" (NASB bad translation footnote) in the church or among the apostles. In other words, this was a cultural issue, not a church issue. We must always be very careful when we make this declaration, but here it is obvious from Paul's words that he is not referring to a church standard in his instructions. Rather, he calls on the Christians in Corinth to follow the social norms of the day (so long as they do not violate God's norms) so that they would not bring shame to the cross.

Question 284: Why did Jesus spend so much time in Capernaum if it was such a bad place (Matthew 11:23)?

Answer 284: Capernaum sat on the Northwest Bank of the Sea of Galilee. It was predominantly a fishing-based community. Based on this passage, we know that Capernaum was an unbelieving city. As we journey through the Gospel, we also see this as a home base for Jesus' ministry (Mark 2:1). Many of the major moments from Jesus' public ministry took place in Capernaum. Our question tonight is why Jesus would choose this unbelieving city to settle in.

As we think about this question, I would point us to another passage that may offer some insight. Read Mark 6:4. As Nazareth was Jesus' hometown when He was a child, Capernaum was His hometown as an adult. I think the disbelief witnessed here resulted from familiarity. I don't believe Capernaum was necessarily more evil than any other city Jesus may have settled in. Rather, I think living day in and day out with Christ made the citizens of Capernaum numb to His uniqueness. Once this happened, Jesus' message fell on deaf ears and Capernaum received the great condemnation of being worse than Sodom!

Just as a note, Capernaum has been lost to the world today. There are a couple of different sites which report to be the original place for the city, but no one is for certain where it was even located.

Question 285: There are congregations that go by the name church of Christ that believe it is sinful to eat in the church building or any adjoining buildings. What is the best way to speak with someone about this subject?

Answer 285: Congregations which hold these doctrines are usually referred to as non-institutional or anti churches. They came about in the sixties and are still alive today. In addition to the restriction on eating, these churches often have a very peculiar view of children's homes and nursing homes arguing that churches cannot support such institutions because doing so violates church autonomy and places the institution in authority over local churches. They will

also usually hold that church funds are not to be used to help those who are not members of the congregation. Individuals may help those who are not saved, but the church benevolence only exists for members. Here are some pointers for dealing with those of this persuasion...

First, as with all those in error, we must teach the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:19**). Now, let's talk specifics. Each of the views I have listed held by those in the non-institutional congregations has a Biblical answer which can be taught. As far as eating in the church building, it would do us well to remember that church buildings in the first century were homes which were eaten in every day (**1 Corinthians 16:19**). Not only this, but meals were common place in the early church, including worship services (**Jude 1:12**). The only way to arrive at this false doctrine is to completely misuse Paul's instructions to the Corinthians involving the Lord's Supper (**1 Corinthians 11:22**). As for the nursing homes and children's homes, there is no loss of autonomous control when we work collectively to fill a duty from God. Christians are supposed to look after widows and orphans. This work is done through these institutions which in turn report back their work to supporting congregations. No loss of power takes place simply because funds are transferred! Finally, the biggest issue I see with this group is the lack of support for the lost of the world from benevolence. This restriction actually violates the Word of God in such a way that they are no longer living up to the example of Jesus or commandment of God (**Galatians 6:10**). If food were the only issue, perhaps we could sit down our forks and join in fellowship for conscience sake, but to violate God's Word to please others is sinful in His sight.

Question 286: Jesus says that we should fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. I though hell was eternal. How can we be destroyed and still be in hell eternally (**Mathew 10:28**)?

Answer 286: This question is a very good one as some in our brotherhood have used this passage and similar ones to insist that hell is a temporary place of punishment (**After Life F**. Lagard Smith). As we begin this discussion, I want to point one thing out about this specific passage. Jesus does not say here that God will destroy both soul and body in hell, only that He can do so. We know for certain that the physical body does not follow us into eternity. The point Jesus made was that an all-powerful God should be more feared than any human on this planet.

Having said this, it does not fully answer the issue. As I said above, other passages are used to tell us that hell is temporary and eventually those in hell will simply cease to be. The key to unlocking this and other passages like it lies in **1 Thessalonians 1:6-10**. Destruction is the process of destroying. In earthly terms, that means that whatever is being destroyed must by definition one day be non-existent. However, the punishment described by God is eternal destruction. This means that a person is eternally in the process of being destroyed. We must remove worldly understanding from view and replace it with spiritual understanding when we are dealing with spiritual eternity! The eternal nature of hell is not in question when looking at the Biblical texts. The severe punishment described here as destruction is not in question either. The only question is whether or not you will choose to endure it.

Question 287: Was Cornelius a saved man before he sent for Peter (**Acts 10**)?

Answer 287: Acts 10 records one of the greatest moments in our lives as Christians. It is in this great chapter that the door to the church was opened wide enough for Gentiles to enter. Since Cornelius is at the center of this account, let's see what the Bible has to say about him (**Acts 10:1-2**). Cornelius was certainly a good man. He prayed often, believed in Jehovah, and helped those in need. By today's standards, most people professing Christianity would say Cornelius was indeed saved.

As the story continues, we see the Holy Spirit descending on Cornelius and his household (**Acts 10:44-46**). Cornelius and his household demonstrate this gift by speaking in tongues! Now even more people professing Christianity would say that Cornelius was saved. After all, for many speaking in tongues is a demonstration of salvation. However, we still have a problem.

Cornelius was baptized at the end of Peter's preaching (**Acts 10:47-48**). Peter orders that Cornelius and his household be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" just as he had done some years earlier on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:38**). Our question tonight is simple: why was Cornelius baptized if he was already saved. Again, most people professing Christianity have no problem with this. They would say as they do for many of their followers that this baptism simply added Cornelius to the church after he was already saved. Of course we know that baptism always takes place as a person is being saved (**1 Peter 3:21, Mark 16:15-16, Romans 6:1-6, Colossians 2:11-14**). It is amazing how this one account from the New Testament completely dismantles so many false doctrines concerning salvation. Cornelius was a good, religious, lost man in need of God's salvation which is why Peter was sent to him in the first place.

Question 288: Read **Genesis 35:22**. Why is this recorded for us?

Answer 288: This is one of the great reasons that students of God's Word must take every care to consider every word recorded for us! On the surface, it appears that this is just some random statement thrown in the midst of a much bigger picture being painted by the author. However, this detail will help explain great things that happen later in the Bible.

As Paul Harvey would do, we need to find out the rest of the story. As Israel nears the end of his life, he calls his children together in order to offer them a prophecy for their future. Being the firstborn, Reuben should have received a great blessing from his father. However, Israel's words bring forth a condemnation rather than a blessing. The reason for this is the immorality demonstrated by Reuben (**1 Chronicles 5:1**). However, if not recorded here, we would be left in the dark as to Reuben's indiscretion. It is important for us to remember that everything God said was said for a purpose. If we do not know its purpose, it is because we have not figured it out yet!

Question 289: Is it sinful to call your Dad by the title Father (**Matthew 23:9-10**)?

Answer 289: It is interesting that this is the only question we usually consider when discussing this passage. In this passage we are told to call no one rabbi (teacher), father, or leader. Does this mean we need to rename our Bible class teachers? Does it mean we need to restrain from saying that someone is a good leader in the Lord's church? I think the **verses 11-12** give us the true

Biblical meaning behind the words of Jesus here. The titles shown here represent the idea of elevating oneself as an authority for the Bible. Only God has the authority and superiority of men to demand their complete allegiance. The idea here strikes a death nail in the heart of the titles we see so often in the denominational world today. Being called brother or sister should suffice for all who submit to Jesus Christ. All other titles (Reverend, Most Holy Father, etc.) are meaningless because they have not the authority of God behind them!

Question 290: I have always thought that one of the worst parts about hell was the fact that the people were completely separated from God. Was I wrong? Is God in hell (**Psalm 139:8**)?

Answer 290: First, let's deal with the text in question. I believe KJV and NKJV are the only two translations that tell us that God can be found in hell. This comes from a bad translation. The word here should be translated as Sheol which simply refers to the land of the dead. Jesus would call this land paradise and torment in the account of the rich man and Lazarus. Psalm 139:8 actually says if a person ascended to Heaven or descended to death, God would still be there. KJV and NKJV will do this often which can lead to some confusion concerning some passages.

Now let's deal with the question as a whole. This question came out of our lesson on the idea that God is omnipresent. If God is truly everywhere at all times, is He also in hell for all eternity? Unrepentant sinners will be separated from God for all eternity (**2 Thessalonians 1:9**). This is a Biblical fact revealed in God's Word. Now let's deal with how God can be omnipresent, but not in Hell. There are two options for this and I will give you both.

First, the word translated presence in **2 Thessalonians 1:9** carries with it two different meanings. The first is the idea that something is set before a person's face. In other words, it is literally in the presence of something or someone. However, the second way this word was used is to describe the idea of being personally known by someone. In other words, it was used to describe people who had some personal relationship. When we go to Walmart, we are "in the presence" of many people, but we may only be personally known by a handful. With this in mind, the door is open for God to be "present" in Hell without taking anything away from the separation between God and those in punishment.

Option two is much simpler. It is the idea that God can cut himself off from some of His attributes in order to achieve His goals. He certainly did this when He took on flesh in the form of Jesus Christ. With this idea, God will simply limit Himself by not being present in Hell in any form.

There are other passages we could consider but ultimately, I don't think Hell is a place we want to be regardless of which of these options is true.

Question 292: How do Esau's wives cause Isaac and Rebekah grief (**Genesis 26:34-35**)?

Answer 292: To answer this question, we must understand a little bit about the Hittites. The Hittites were a large group of people that lived in modern-day Syria. While they are fascinating as a group, the most important aspect for us to consider tonight is their religion. They Syrians practiced a polytheistic pagan religion. Their gods controlled various aspects of nature and life. This type of religion often led to various forms of immorality and sinful living. With that in mind, the wives of Esau were most likely not very moral people.

Compare this to the religious lives of Isaac and Rebekah. While both these individuals made mistakes, they appear to have desired to serve Jehovah. This life would lead to obedience and morality. As is often the case, the lives of the unfaithful wives of Esau could not have been more opposite to the faithful life of Isaac and Rebekah.

There can be no doubt that Isaac and Rebekah were ashamed of their son's choice for wives. Their grief came partially from this shame. However, there is a good chance based on what we see from the life of Esau that he added more grief to this mix. These wives most likely found it very easy to seduce Esau into their pagan lifestyles. This lifestyle would have been shameful to the faithful duo of Isaac and Rebekah. While Esau is responsible for his own actions, how many times do parents blame others (including spouses) for the bad behavior of their children?

Question 293: How do we explain the different skin colors and languages considering we all came from Adam and Eve (and later Noah)?

Answer 293: First, let's deal with the easy part of this question. The languages of the world originated in **Genesis 11:1-9**. As the people attempted to build the tower of Babel, God came down to confuse their languages. This undoubtedly means that God gave the people a variety of languages and those entire groups of people could not communicate with other groups of people. The Bible then states that God scattered the people abroad. It would have been cruel for God to place people in close proximity across the globe without giving them the same language. For this reason, we see certain language trees coming from geographical locations. Add to all this the fact that languages morph, evolve, and travel and we can understand where our languages came from and how they came to the present time. That part is the easy part of this question because the Bible addresses it clearly.

Now let's get to the hard part...Where did the races come from? To understand this, I believe we have to go back to the beginning. What race were Adam and Eve? If we believe that these two individuals spawned the entire planet's population (which the Bible clearly teaches), our answer is all of them. But how is this possible?

Races are made up of certain genetic characteristics found within a group or groups of people. If all races came from Adam and Eve, then these two original people had to carry the genetic pool for all races. **See slide with genetic traits diagram.** This diagram is greatly overemphasized for our question tonight, but it will do to make the point. It shows the dominant and recessive traits of two parents who have four children. In this case, it represents the eye color of the child. Explain the slide. If we were able to take this box and make it big enough to carry all the traits of the earth, we would be able to see the genetic makeup of Adam and Eve...except that we have a problem.

At Genesis 6, the genetic makeup of all people gets reset through the global flood. From the flood forward, we are carrying the genes of Ham, Shem, Japheth, and their wives. In short, we don't know what traits may have been lost at the time of the flood, but we gain an interesting note with this event. Today, we classify races under three main categories: Caucasian, Negroid, and Mongoloid. Under these umbrellas, every group of people on the planet is covered. Isn't it interesting that there were three families coming off the ark to populate the world and today the world is populated with just three races of people?

Question 294: Was the sour wine and gall part of the torture or was it to relieve Christ's pain (Matthew 27:34)?

Answer 294: The pain of the cross is far beyond anything we are capable of understanding. It was designed to inflict the maximum amount of pain before death. It did this very well. From damaging sensitive nerves in the wrists and ankles to pushing open wounds from the beating against the bark of a tree to hanging the weight of a body on the shoulders of an individual, every step of the crucifixion maximized the pain of the victim. Now let us get to the question at hand.

The simple answer to this question is that it was designed to grant mercy to Jesus Christ. The sour wine was a simple drink which was included in the daily rations of the Roman army. The gall however was a bitter substance which acted as a "drug" to alleviate pain by stupefying the one who drank it. In this moment, we see one of the soldiers offering to Jesus a drink for His thirst and a pain reliever. I wonder if perhaps this is the same soldier who would become a believer by the end of the crucifixion.

Question 295: Read Romans 11:11-12. If the Jews would have accepted Christ, would the Gentiles never have received the Gospel?

Answer 295: This is a difficult text in a difficult book. The overall point of Romans is to bring back unity inside of a church divided by the Jewish/Gentile divide. As we get to the passage in question, we see Paul pointing out that it took the Jews falling from their state as God's chosen people for the door to the Gentiles to be opened. In short, Paul reminds the arrogant Jews that their failure is what led to the shared church! If the Jews were still God's chosen people, we would not have the universal church to be a part of.

Now let's get to the question tonight. With all that we have just said, would the Gentiles be able to receive salvation if the Jews had stayed obedient? This question is interesting to wonder, but as is often the case, asking what if of the Bible may leave us more frustrated than satisfied.

First, let's deal with the idea of salvation coming to the Gentiles. Salvation would not have come to the Gentiles until Jesus Christ was rejected by His People and crucified. Having said that, salvation would not have come to anyone unless the Jews rejected Jesus and He went to the cross of Calvary. Second, we need to deal with whether or not the Jews could have remained faithful to God. We know that when God sets a plan in motion, He already knows the end results. We also know that the motion to send Jesus to die for our sins was set in motion in eternity. Add to this the fact that no individual or group of people can remain perfectly committed to Christ and we see that there was never a chance for the Jews to not commit the transgressions that opened the doors of the church!

Question 296: Please explain Luke 1:32-33 as it relates to the kingdom having no end.

Answer 296: As the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, he delivered a prophecy concerning Mary's coming child. One part of this prophecy deals with the kingdom which would be established by Mary's son and would endure forever. This leads us to our question tonight and a discussion on the Kingdom of Christ.

As we look at this topic, we need to first identify the kingdom. The kingdom of Christ was going to be established within the lifetime of those who heard Christ speak (Mark 9:1). We know that

Peter would have the keys which would open the door to the kingdom of Christ (**Matthew 16:19**). We also know that the kingdom was in place by the time John wrote Revelation (**Revelation 1:9**). There is one thing that fits this description. The kingdom of Christ is the church of Christ.

Now let us consider this church and how it relates to Gabriel's prophecy. The church of Christ would be established and would stand on this earth until this earth stands no more (**Matthew 16:18**). When this earth stands no more, it will be transferred to a new home (**1 Corinthians 15:23-24**). It will indeed last for all eternity just as Gabriel said in Luke.

Question 297: What does it mean to “make no provisions for the flesh” (**Romans 13:11-14**).

Answer 297: The context of this passage is preparation for the coming Judgment Day. In order to be ready for this day, we must avoid the sins which can easily ensnare us. However, this is much easier said than done. Satan is a ferocious beast (**1 Peter 5:8**). We are conflicted on this earth as Christians. On the one hand, we seek to please God. On the other hand, we seek to please ourselves (**Romans 7:18-20**). In other words, Satan is good at his job and we make his job easier by our selfishness!

This passage reminds us that we do not need to make it any easier on Satan than it already is. We must be proactive in keeping sin out of our lives. If an alcoholic has finally given up the bottle, he better not keep some in a cabinet “just in case”. If a husband or wife finds themselves being too flirtatious with a coworker, he or she better not go to lunch with that person and open the door for temptation. If we think about it, we could probably come up with thousands of examples where people set themselves up to sin rather than avoid temptation! This passage reminds us how hard it is to stay faithful.

Question 298: Would it be right to send my collection where I think it is needed instead of giving it to the local congregation?

Answer 298: Let us start this discussion with Paul's instructions concerning the collection procedures in the first century church (**1 Corinthians 16:1-4**). These instructions tell us a few things. First, we have the responsibility of putting aside some of our income for the work of Christ. Second, we are to do this on the first day of every week (just like the Lord's Supper). Third, we are to do this at our congregation. This is the only conclusion we can arrive at that fits with Paul's instructions that these funds would be sent to Jerusalem with “whoever” is approved. This would be approved by the church leaders, not each individual Christian. With all of this said, I believe we have to contribute to the work of the local church in our giving.

Now let us turn our attention to the idea of sending these funds elsewhere. The money we have in our control is our money (**Acts 5:3-4**). What portion of that goes into the collection plate is up to us as individuals. After that, we can support any other effort we choose. If we want to contribute to other charitable things or even support other works of the church, we have every right to do so. Having said all of this, I would mention that if we send our funds to other organizations, the total of those funds sent should most likely not go beyond the funds set aside for God's work. After all, what could be more important than the work of the church?

There is also one more thing to mention as we look at this question. What would be the reason to take a person's funds from the local work of the congregation and send it somewhere else? For

me, there must be more to a decision to do this than meets the eye. Perhaps it is a trust issue with how funds are being used or perhaps it is a punishment for a decision that was made. Whatever the reason or reasons, I think they need to be hashed out rather than just treating the symptom of sending money elsewhere. Only by doing this can we hopefully fix things and not even see this occurring.

Question 299: How do you lose your salvation?

Answer 299: On the surface, this is a very simple question to answer. We lose our salvation when we stop being faithful to God (**Revelation 2:10**). However, I do not believe that there are very many people who wake up on Monday as a faithful Christian and walk away Tuesday just because. There are numerous reasons that people walk away from their faith.

Some people walk away because something bad happens and they lose their faith in God. Some people walk away because they grow so apathetic that they easily slip out of the habits of Christianity. Some people get hooked by Satan and are so engrossed in their sin that they find it costs too much to stay faithful. Some people get distracted by the things of the world and lose sight of how important their faith can be in a person's life. Some people stand still in their faith and forget that it takes study and devotion to mature in the faith of Christianity. Indeed, most of these reasons are listed by Christ (**Matthew 13:18-23**). My warning as we end this answer is that if we ignore the problems that take us away from Christ little by little, we will find ourselves so far away from Him that we may not be able to make our way back home.

Question 300: Why did God tell Jacob his name was changed to Israel two times (**Genesis 32:28, 35:10**)?

Answer 300: This was a question that caught my attention while our Tuesday morning class studied through the book of Genesis. I too wondered why the name change from Jacob to Israel was given twice. At first, I thought this was just one of those instances where something happened twice in the Old Testament. There are certainly examples where God had to say the same thing two different times in order to be heard in the Bible!

However, the more I studied through this the more another answer became an option for me. If you take the account from chapter 32–chapter 35, you will see that Jacob is not called Israel a single time. The word Israel is used, but it is not referencing Jacob. However, after chapter 35 takes place, Jacob is called Israel by those around him and the author of Genesis. There is also a slight difference in wording between the two accounts. In chapter 32, God says that Jacob's name would be Israel. In chapter 35, God adds the words "you shall no longer be called Jacob". For me, this points to the idea that Jacob's name change in chapter 32 was just between Jacob and God. Jacob's name change in chapter 35 was the public version of this private change. From that point, the people would refer to Jacob as Israel.

Question 301: Why did God create man? Why did God need man?

Answer 301: Let's start with the second part of this question. Why did God need man? The answer to this question is very simple. God did not and does not need us in any way, shape,

form, or fashion. Paul makes this as clear as he possibly can (**Acts 17:22-25**). This leads us to one simple conclusion.

If God does not need us, He must want us. This is the only explanation for the creation of the world and all things in it. God wanted our love, companionship, devotion, worship, appreciation, etc. While I do not have anything else to add to this answer, I would just remind us never to take the desire of God to know us personally for granted!

Question 302: Please explain the doctrine of original sin.

Answer 302: The doctrine of original sin is most closely associated with John Calvin. In its purest form, original sin is the idea that sin is a genetic defect passed down from our father Adam which results in infants being born contaminated by sin and lost. This doctrine walks hand in hand with infant baptism. Let's take a look at the origin of this false doctrine.

Original sin comes from three basic Scriptures. First, we need to take a look at **Romans 5:12-14**. According to those espousing the doctrine of original sin, the meaning of this passage is that we do not have to sin in order to be affected by Adam's sin. However, the passage itself tells us that death spread to all men "because all men sinned". This passage does not speak to a taking responsibility for another man's sin. In fact, it teaches the exact opposite of this!

The second passage to investigate is **1 Corinthians 15:20-22**. According to those espousing the doctrine of original sin, this passage makes it clear that death came through Adam. According to them, it means that we are born spiritually dead. Once again, the passage itself answers this accusation. If death enters through Adam with no action from us, then we have to say life enters through Christ with no action from us. Of course, we know that neither of these statements is true.

The final passage is **Psalms 51:5**. For those espousing original sin, this is clear evidence that David was born a sinner. It is certainly the most complicated text that we will deal with tonight. The problem with taking this one passage and creating a doctrine from it is that there are multiple ways to understand this passage. The first is the way we have just discussed which upholds the original sin doctrine. The second is that this is David's confession that he was born from an adulterous relationship. While many think this is the case, I doubt he would have done this to his mother or that he would have even known this information. The final way we will discuss is the most likely. In Hebrew poetry (and most all poetry), exaggeration is common place. This seems to be a case where David is speaking of his great sin with Bathsheba and explaining it by exaggerating his own sinful nature. A similar idea is seen when Job testifies that he has raised orphans from youth and helped widows from infancy (**Job 31:17-18**).

Having said all of this, only one passage is needed to refute the idea of original sin (**Matthew 19:14**). If children are innocent enough for Christ, they are innocent enough for me!

Question 303: Please explain 1 Timothy 5:24.

Answer 303: This passage shows two different categories of sin. First, there are some sins that go before men into judgment. These sins are “quite evident” to all men. This describes sins that are openly committed and clearly seen before the Judgment Day comes. These sins are committed by those who have no shame in their hearts concerning their sin. They openly flaunt their rebellion to God before all the world to see. When this person leaves the earth, their eternal situation is known to anyone willing to honestly compare the deceased person’s life with the Word of God.

On the other hand, some sinners are experts at hiding their sins (**Matthew 23:27-28**). If it weren’t for the fact that we will only be concerned about our own eternity, we might be surprised at some people’s eternal destination on Judgment Day. The reason for this is very simple: there are no hidden sins on Judgment Day (**1 Corinthians 4:5**).

In all of this, it is important for us to remember one thing. All sin will be judged by God. If we are sinners in the open, we will not make it to Heaven. If we are sinners in private, we still will not make it to Heaven.

Question 304: What is the time lapse between each plague?

Answer 304: Our Tuesday morning class is working through the book of Exodus and spent some time discussing this question. Usually when we think of the plagues, we think of them happening in rapid succession. After all, that’s how they happened in the movie! However, the more we looked at these plagues, the more I began to think some of them were more drawn out than we normally think.

Let’s start with plague number one. God turns the Nile into blood as He attacks the life-giving waters of Egypt. We know for sure that this plague lasted a week before Moses talks to Pharaoh. As we look at plague eight, we see what would have undoubtedly been a fast-moving swarm of locusts. However, these locusts swept over all of Egypt and devoured all the grains in the field. This would have taken days as opposed to hours. Plague nine consists of three days of darkness and gives us a definite timeline.

More time will also pass that we often don’t think about. As we travel through the plagues, we often see Pharaoh receiving a one-day warning in order to offer him the chance to obey God. We see the magicians in Pharaoh’s court being able to mimic the effects of the plagues or attempting to reason with Pharaoh in order to get him to obey God. Even more time passes when Pharaoh says yes to Moses only to change his mind later on and deny the Israelites the right to worship Jehovah. As we think of all of this, the days begin to add up quickly.

I cannot give a definitive answer to this question. I can say that it looks like these events took place over the course of two or three months rather than a couple of weeks. This only baffles us

all the more when we consider the stubborn pride of Pharaoh as he allowed his people to endure these horrors.

Question 305: Why do some churches take communion only a few times a year? What is the justification?

Question 305: To answer this question, let's consider why members of the Lord's church take communion each week. We know that the Lord's Supper was established and commanded by Jesus on the night He was betrayed (**Matthew 26:26-29**). We know it consisted of eating a piece of unleavened bread and drinking fruit of the vine (**Matthew 26:2, 26, 29**). We know that after the birth of the church, Christians met on the first day of the week to break bread (**Acts 20:7**). Finally, we know that the disciples met on the first day of every week (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). This means that if we want to look at Christians who lived to see Jesus and learned from Peter, Paul, John, and the other Apostles, we will meet on the first day of every week to remember the Son of God through the Lord's Supper.

Now to answer our question tonight. I do not pretend to know the thoughts of every teacher that tells their followers not to follow this example. However, there seems to be one continual argument which is given for why churches do not offer the Lord's Supper each week. The argument says that when you partake each week the Lord's Supper is not as special as it should be. This is the only justification I have heard given. Of course the special nature of the supper is not in frequency; it is in the heart of the partaker. It is also interesting to me that we can sing every week, pray every week, study every week, and give every week, but we cannot take the Lord's Supper every week without losing its meaning. Does this mean that all the other acts are meaningless? I will stand with God and remember His Son each week as He commands.

Question 306: What is the new earth referred to in **2 Peter 3:13**?

Question 306: From this little passage evolved an entire doctrine centered on the idea that God was going to create a place that looks just like this earth after He destroys this earth. According to that doctrine, God is going to take the really good people home to Heaven and those who were kind of good will dwell on this new earth which have no evil. If you weren't good at all, you will simply fade from nonexistence. I do not have time to fully expose the problems that come with this doctrine. Instead, we will simply speak to what this verse actually says.

The beauty of this message is not found in the New Testament. To see the idea Peter is trying to convey, we need to go way back...all the way back to the days of the initial creation of this world. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (**Genesis 1:1**). This passage is the beginning of us. It is the beginning of the story of a God who would create and love us. What did God create when He created the heavens and the earth?

We know that the entire creation account builds to the creation of man and woman. Each step the way is simply a stop in God's plan to create the perfect world for the being in whom He would

place the breath of life (soul). When the Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth, we need to understand that God created a home for us. We are the point of this globe!

Once we understand how that phrase was used in Genesis, we turn back to Peter's words with a beautiful fresh understanding of the new heavens and new earth. After describing the coming day of the Lord in which all that we know will be melted away with intense heat, Peter points us in the direction where our attention should be focused. There is not a new heaven and earth as we understand it coming after judgment, but there is a new heaven and new earth as the Bible understood it coming. We will have a brand-new home after this one is destroyed by Jehovah. That home will be a place where righteousness dwells because God will be there (**Revelation 21:3**). With all this in mind, we look forward to our new home rather than investing in this one!

Question 307: Please explain Proverbs 11:31?

Answer 307: Let us read this passage in its context (**Proverbs 11:23-31**). These passages and chapter twelve do a fantastic job of comparing righteous people with wicked people on this earth. The point is that the unrighteous will get what is coming to them so it is better to be righteous. However, in the midst of all this we get the confusing passage which led to the question we have tonight. I will offer you two ways to look at this passage and let you decide for yourself.

First, you may choose to focus in on the words "in the earth". If you do this, you may say that this passage is simply stating that people who ignore God in this world will often rise to earthly success. Righteousness will often lead to earthly success as well. To use this understanding, we must remember that Proverbs is a book based on generalities. Using this understanding, you will simply say that those ignoring the laws of God can still be blessed "in this earth". This is one option, but I don't think it is a very good one. There are some big holes that I can see, but you may be able to patch them and use this meaning anyway.

Second, I look at this passage as a reminder of two things. First, while being righteous is a part of the path to Heaven, we can never be righteous enough to get there on our own. Second, if we end up in hell, we will get there without any help from anyone else. In other words, the righteous will be rewarded for their deed on the earth through the grace of God. However, the wicked will be given exactly what they have earned for themselves. Going to hell is based solely on our works while going to Heaven requires our obedience and God's grace!

Question 308: Does it cause workers to miss worship when we shop or eat out on Sundays?

Answer 308: We know that God commanded us to attend the assemblies of His Church (**Hebrews 10:25**). We also know that we are sometimes unable to do so due to work or illness. The question tonight asks us whether or not we bear any responsibility when we eat out or shop at retailers that are open on Sundays. Let's dive into this question.

First, there is a very simple answer to this. If you are able to attend services, so is the person who serves you at a restaurant or serves as your clerk at Wal-Mart or Kroger. Second, at the end of the day all of us have a choice as to what job we choose to take or keep. In the end the only people who have to take responsibility for missing a service is the person who misses a service. That person must ask why this occurred and then make a decision going forward. (Does he or she have another option?) Third, if we say that we bear responsibility for the worker at the Steakhouse or Dollar General, do we also bear the blame when we drive a car (Gas and production of these vehicles happens on Sundays), or when we go home to eat a lunch that was packaged in a plant that is open on Sundays?

Ultimately, each of us must examine our lives to make decisions concerning our jobs and how they interfere with our church attendance. In the end, that decision is ours and ours alone.

Question 309: We understand that we are not to use instruments during worship, but what about listening to Gospel music or Contemporary Christian music in our home or car?

Answer 309: Let's start by saying that this question has a lot of layers and a lot of questions within this question. With that said, let's start with the easy part. God does not want musical instruments used in worship to Him. This is proven both by Biblical instruction and Biblical example. We know that we are to worship God in song with the instrument of our heart (**Ephesians 5:19**). We also know that for over 700 years the church (including the Catholic Church after the Great Apostasy) made no attempts at introducing the instruments of music in worship. Even the term acapella means "as the church". Now let's jump into the question at hand tonight.

To answer this question, I am going to go through the pros and cons of listening to Contemporary Christian/Gospel music. Let's first consider the normal reason people give for justifying their choice to listen to this type of music. For the most part, people listen to this music because they argue it is much more positive to listen to than anything else on the radio. Many say they would rather fill their ears and their minds with Christian lyrics than other options we have. The other part of the pros that we need to consider is the fact that many have not really spent much time even thinking about the issues that may come. This is one that many simply don't think about at all.

Now let's consider some of the cons. To do this, I want us to consider a couple of questions. First, is listening to this music worship? If the answer is yes, we have our answer. The commandments for worship with song making melody in our hearts would apply for worship in our car or in our assemblies. Second, if this is not worship, what exactly is it? The answer to this would most likely be that listening to this music is entertainment. If this is the case, we have to wonder why this entertainment would not be considered vain worship rather than entertainment. Finally, we have to ask if listening to this music will help or hinder our evangelistic efforts. Let's create a hypothetical situation. Suppose a visitor that you know comes to our assembly and asks

you in the parking lot why we do not use instrumental music. With such a big question you invite them to lunch so that you can discuss it fully with them. You offer them a ride which they accept. When they sit down in your car, the first thing they hear when you crank the engine is Amazing Grace by a famous bluegrass band. It just so happens that the closing song on that day was also Amazing Grace sung acapella in our assembly. How in the world are you going to explain the difference to a person who does not understand at all why a church would not have a piano or band?

Now we that we have considered both sides of the discussion, let's try to answer the question at hand. I do not believe there is enough here for us to give a Biblical commandment which we could hold others to concerning this issue. On a personal note, I think there is enough against it so that I do not do it. However, if I get in your vehicle and you listen to this type of music, I will not immediately assume you are destined for hell. There is one thing we have mentioned that I think is very dangerous. As I said earlier, many people listen to this type of music don't even put any thought as to whether or not it would please God. Please make sure that you are not guilty of this. Each of us are responsible for making sure that our actions would meet God's approval (**1 Thessalonians 5:21**).

Question 310: Why did the other Apostles not complain that Judas did not pull his weight as an Apostle?

Answer 310: In answering this question, I have two things for us to think about. Both of them center on one basic Biblical fact. First, what makes us think that Judas was not doing all the works which are ascribed to the other Apostles? Second, what makes us think that the other Apostles didn't complain about Judas and his workload? Both of these questions lead us to the fact that Judas is barely a speck on the story of the Gospels. He is mentioned when Jesus chooses him as one of the twelve. He is then mentioned as scolding Jesus for not selling the perfume which anointed Christ before His death. Finally, he is mentioned as betraying the Son of God and feeling the guilt of this betrayal. These are the only times that Judas is mentioned by name in the Gospels.

So here is what we do know for sure. First, Judas was given the power to heal the sick and cast out demons (**Matthew 10:1-8**). There is no reason to believe that Judas did not do the job as Jesus instructed here. Second, we know for sure that the Apostles tried to elevate themselves up consistently (**Luke 22:24**). It is not a very far stretch to think that these men would not compare their numbers and workload as they discussed the greatest. In the end, I think this question is built on two assumptions that are not necessarily proven by the information we have. I think Judas did do works, and I think the Apostles would have complained about each other regardless.

Question 311: In the song “Thank You Lord”, we find the line “Please reveal your will to me so I can serve You for eternity”. Did God not already do this for us in the Bible?

Answer 311: The simple answer to this question is yes. God has indeed revealed His Will for us in the New Testament. God’s Will is that we are faithful to Him in all ways so that we make it home to Heaven. That’s it! That is the totality of God’s Will for our lives. Everything else that we do on this planet is inconsequential to our eternity.

Now let’s turn our attention specifically to this song. There are two ways to view the lyrics we often sing in this song. First, we need wisdom in order for God’s Will to be apparent to us (**James 1:5**). With that in mind, this song may simply be a plea for understanding as we study the Word of God. With this understanding, we see God’s Word as our instruction manual containing Jehovah’s Will for our lives and we humbly seek His Wisdom in understanding that will. This is the way that I understand these lyrics.

There is another option which dives into our world’s twisted understanding of God’s Will. Most of us believe God has our individual decisions mapped out for our lives. When we go with His decisions, we find success because we are following God’s Will. When we go against His decisions (which are not revealed to us in His Word or anywhere else) we find total failure. As a side-note, we also sin considering that going against the Will of God is sinful. With this thought, some may understand this song to say we need God to reveal His Will for us personally. There are many problems with this idea that I simply do not have time to discuss tonight because we are out of time. If you want more on this subject, you will just have to put in another fishbowl question.

Question 312: Please explain the purpose of John’s baptism.

Answer 312: To understand the baptism of John, we must first understand who John was. We know that John is the cousin of Jesus, but his story begins long before he was born. He is mentioned twice in the Old Testament prophets. First, he is called voice of one calling in the wilderness to make the paths of Jesus straight (**Matthew 3:1-3**). Second, he is called Elijah who was a prophet of God (**Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 11:14**). These two descriptions show us that John the Baptist was an inspired prophet of God.

Now that we know that John was an inspired man, we can turn our attention to his message. John the Baptist preached a baptism “for repentance” (**Matthew 3:11**). What does this mean? Under Jewish Law, a person who was keeping the Law of Moses was responsible for repenting of his sins in order to gain forgiveness. In short, this baptism of John was a baptism in water for the forgiveness of the sins of the people abiding by the Law of Moses. John was able to make the way a little bit easier for Christ by introducing the idea of baptism for salvation to the Jewish people.

Before leaving this, it is important that we notice that John's baptism had nothing to do with the blood of Jesus Christ. We know this because once the blood was shed, John's baptism ceased to have its intended affect (**Acts 18:24-26, 19:1-7**). Today, we look for the one that John pointed toward and follow Him into death by being immersed in water.

Question 313: Why did the Apostles think Christ was calling on Elijah (**Matthew 27:46-47**)?

Answer 313: This misunderstanding is very understandable for us when we look at the Hebrew language. The difference between the word "Eli" here and the name of the prophet Elijah is extremely similar. In fact, the only difference is a short a sound at the end of the word. This similarity combined with distance of Jesus from the hearers, the weakness of Jesus after the scourging, and the crowd noise coming from the Pharisees helps us understand why the people standing by misunderstood the words of Jesus.

Question 314: Why would Michal and Satan argue over the body of Moses instead of his soul (**Jude 1:9**)?

Answer 314: This passage is one of the most confusing and interesting passages in the New Testament. It is confusing for a couple of reasons. First, it is confusing because this account is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. Some believe Jude is taking this information from either an apocryphal book or Jewish tradition. As Christians, we understand that Jude is an inspired writer which means that any other source that may mention this incident got the information correct. I personally think this account was a part of Jewish tradition which was incredibly accurate because they were an oral based society.

Second, it is confusing because of what actually occurred. Jude mentions this event in one verse and then moves right along to his point. He leaves a lot to the imagination. Anytime this occurs, people's imaginations run wild. With that said, I could fill quite a bit of time just going through all the explanations that have been given for this passage. Instead, I am going to tell you what makes the most sense to me.

First, the answer to the question tonight is very simple. They did not fight for Moses' soul because it belonged to God and was resting in Paradise. Now why did they fight for the body? I think there is only one reason Satan would want Moses' body: he wanted to use it to steal people from God. In fact, that is the only reason Satan ever does anything. The most likely ways he could have used Moses' body are: 1) He could take possession of it and lead people astray as the resurrected leader of Israel. 2) He could turn the body into a relic in Israel which would have amounted to idolatry. In either case, we can understand why God would prevent Satan from doing this.

Question 315: What's going on with this whole back to church Sunday thing?

Answer 315: I am so glad someone asked me about this topic tonight! Obviously, the person who submitted it to my fishbowl saw that a back to church Sunday is planned for Owl Hollow in just a few weeks. Also, he must be incredibly good-looking. On Sunday July 30th, our Gospel Meeting will kick off with a Back-To-Church-Sunday. We have conducted two of these days in the years that I have been here. Our first one was very successful in bringing lost people into our assemblies and reclaiming some for God. Our second was less successful in achieving this goal. The main difference between the two was the time spent preparing and praying for our efforts.

With that in mind, I want to put this special day in our heads tonight. We have been tasked with something that Paul calls the "ministry of reconciliation" (**2 Corinthians 5:18**). This means two things for us. We have a responsibility to the alien sinner to do all that we can to bring them to obedience to the Gospel of Christ. We also have a responsibility to brothers and sisters who have fallen back into the world to bring these people to repentance and salvation (**Galatians 6:1**). For many, the discomfort that comes from a church building and church service keeps them away from the church. Back to Church Sundays are special days where we focus our attention on the lost (especially those who have fallen away) and make every effort to take away this discomfort on their behalf.

Tonight, I want to ask for your help in making this day a success. I ask that each of you consider those in your life that do not have the Gospel of Christ and the hope of Heaven. To do this, I ask that each person here makes a list of people they would like to see here for our Back to Church event. If you have an address for these people, it will be even better. Every person that makes your list will receive a personal invitation from the church at Owl Hollow if you turn their information in to me. I also ask that you not only rely on the church invitation but that you begin right now finding ways you can invite others to this special day. Insert it into conversations and make your own personal mail-outs to invite those you want to see here. Finally, pray for those who do attend. We desperately want this day to lead others to repentance and a new hope. If you have any questions, see me right after services.

Question 316: Why is it wrong to have a yard-sale/fundraiser as a church for church works?

Answer 316: This is becoming a forgotten issue, but it is one that is very important. In today's world, we see churches selling fish or having yard sales all the time for mission works, youth events, or benevolent works. Most of the time, these events are held with no thought at all to whether or not we should raise funds in such a way. Tonight, let's take a look at this issue so that we make sure we do not forget and stumble in this issue.

We are given clear instructions for raising church funds. Christians are to be doing this on a consistent basis (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). We are to be liberal in our giving (**2 Corinthians 8:2**). We are to be **GIVING** in our giving (**2 Corinthians 8:3-4** Regardless of the translation you will find the words gave or gift). It is this last instruction for our giving that gives us our first concern

in doing fundraising. When people make purchases, they are no longer giving freely of their funds. If we are to say it doesn't matter how we get money, are we willing to say that it doesn't matter how we worship (with or without instrument)? For me, these two issues rest on the exact same principle of silence. Once God tells us how to raise funds, He doesn't have to say not to do it any other way. We just do it the way He says!

Another problem we get into is the idea of fellowship. We are not to be fellowship with the world in the work of the church. However, we find the word translated fellowship (Koinonia) used to describe the collection of church funds (2 Corinthians 8:4 "participation"). If the Bible makes our contribution an act of fellowship, how in the world can we invite the world into that fellowship by asking the world for funds? That kind of partnership with the world is a dangerous one! When we raise our money as the early church raised its money, we will do it through a freewill offering each Sunday.

Question 317: How did Rebekah's nurse (Deborah) come to be with Jacob's clan (**Genesis 35:8**)?

Answer 317: This passage plops us down in the middle of Jacob's story. He has worked seven years for Leah and seven years for Rachel. He has returned home to Canaan and been reunited with his brother Esau. In the midst of all of this, we are told that Deborah has died and been buried under a tree.

Deborah is not mentioned anywhere else in the Old Testament. Some have found this special mention of her to be odd. However, I along with others believe that Deborah had taken on a special role in this family. As we journey with Jacob, we never see him reunite with his mother. For this reason, it was most likely the case that Rebekah was dead by the time that Jacob returned to Canaan. Deborah probably served as a sort of replacement for Rebekah which would explain this special mention and the honor of the burial.

Because Deborah is not mentioned elsewhere, we are not sure how she came to be with Jacob. She may have been in Esau's camp when Jacob and Esau met or she may have been picked up from the family's land after this meeting. We are simply not sure about this particular detail.

Question 318: Why do some churches put steeples on their buildings?

Answer 318: You can look at 10 different sources and find 10 different answers to this question. I say that to say that we honestly don't have a clue what the real answer to this is. However, I will give you a couple of decent answers which make sense to me.

The first option is that Christians wanted their place of worship to be the closest thing to Heaven in any given city. It is hard to imagine this in our current American landscape, but if we travel back to small cities and communities in Europe where steeples originated, we will see that small churches in villages had little competition for highest building (small huts to live in and do

business in) and large churches in cities were often built as huge cathedrals which could dominate the landscape. This makes sense to me.

The second option makes more historical sense. When we look at the design of ancient cathedrals, we see a belief in the superstitions of the day. We see gargoyles posted atop perches on the roofs of these cathedrals. These gargoyles were meant to scare away ancient spirits. We see steep roofs which were meant to keep evil spirits from getting a foothold on the roof of the building. Many believe that steeples grew from the belief that evil spirits wanted to attack the houses of worship in Europe and these steep, pointed steeples would scare the spirits away.

Question 319: Is it Scriptural for two or three men to make decisions for the congregation when there are no elders? Shouldn't everything be decided by a vote from every man in the congregation?

Answer 319: First let me say that the Bible is completely silent on day to day operations of a church with no eldership in place. As such, we operate with various principles such as male leadership within a congregation and sacrificial decision making to guide us in these murky waters. When the Bible is completely silent on an issue, we are given the freedom to operate effectively and efficiently so long as we do not violate a commandment or principle found elsewhere in the New Testament. Since we operate in such a way, I want to take just a moment to share with this congregation how our men's meetings function.

We meet each month to discuss matters concerning the church at Owl Hollow. Any male member who is interested in attending this meeting is welcome. We discuss any topic brought to our attention openly and freely. Everyone has an opportunity to speak their mind and give their reasons for their views. At this point, the men vote on a course of action. Each vote counts exactly the same and everyone is given the opportunity to vote. On issues that are deemed small (budget plans, building decisions, etc.) we require a simple majority vote to move forward. For larger issues that will affect the congregation (time of service, procedures and guidelines, etc.) we require a 2/3 majority vote. From here, each man will follow the decision made at the meeting.

This helps to answer our two questions tonight. First, three or four men should not run a congregation unless they are the only ones interested in doing so. If our men's meeting draws three or four men, then those men are still responsible for conducting the business of the church. We simply cannot wait for or force interest in our men's meetings. In short, if men are involved in this process, each one has their voice heard and their vote counted. If not, the work of the church cannot wait!

Question 320: Is it necessary to place membership at a local congregation?

Answer 320: This question came about after our last round of service sheets we handed out for Owl Hollow. Someone asked why we do this and what Scriptural reason we have for placing

membership within the local congregation. I asked if I could turn this conversation into a fishbowl question and was given permission to do so.

Let me begin by saying there is no Scriptural commandment to place membership at a congregation. The closest we could come to seeing this in the New Testament church would be in the reference letter carried by traveling ministers which identified them as a part of the congregation from which they came (**2 Corinthians 3:1**). However, these letters are a far cry from our modern-day practice of placing membership in order to be associated with a local congregation.

Having said all this, I want to direct our attention to something we use each and every week for our services which do find their origins in the New Testament. Song books are found nowhere in the New Testament. However, every congregation I know uses either songbooks or powerpoint screens to direct our singing. We do this for a simple reason. We have a commandment to sing to one another (**Ephesians 5:19**). We also have a commandment for all things to be done decently and in order (**1 Corinthians 14:40**). In order to achieve this goal, we use an expedient. Expedients are things which are done to accomplish the goals of the New Testament without breaking any part of the New Testament pattern. Planes are expedients to doing mission work. Baskets are an expedient to collecting a contribution. Microphones are expedients to preaching.

With all this in mind, placing membership is an expedient to following a couple of commandments in the Bible. First, it helps our leadership protect the local congregation from false teachers (**Acts 20:28, 2 John 10**). Second, it helps our congregation organize the works which we hope to accomplish. Placing membership creates a workforce within the church. Finally, it protects the reputation of the church and helps to save lost souls. The reputation of a church is an important thing (**1 Corinthians 5:1-2**). Allowing a person to be a part of the church as if they are in a right state with God when they are living a life of sin is dangerous for a church's reputation in the community and dangerous for the soul of the person living in sin (possibly ignorantly so). Placing membership allows a congregation's leadership the opportunity to make sure people are in right standing with God before they are given the indication that they are in right standing with the church.

Is placing membership a commandment from God? No. Is it a good idea for a church? Yes.

Question 321: Can the stone monument Jacob set up for Rachel's grave still be found today (**Genesis 35:19-20**)?

Answer 321: Monuments are repeatedly mentioned in the history of Israel. They are used to memorialize various events with special meaning (**Genesis 28:18, Joshua 4:4-7**). The question under consideration tonight points us to one of these monuments. In this case, it was nothing more than a tombstone marking the place of burial for Jacob's wife Rachel. According to the Genesis account, the people who travelled with Moses out of the land of Egypt could still see this memorial stone. In this world, not only were the Israelites making altars and memorials but the pagans were doing the same. Out of respect to each other, people did not disrupt these monuments. The best way to think of this is to compare it again to tombstones. How many of us would go into a graveyard and destroy the tombstones of people we did not know?

These pillars and monuments may indeed still exist (**See slide of possible pillar stones from Sinai**). If they do, people could be dwelling right beside them without knowing what they are. These artifacts have lost all their meaning to modern day people. Having said all of this, it is fascinating to think about a stone touched by the hands of Jacob as he mourned the loss of his wife lying in the desert somewhere.

Question 322: Should we pray for the kingdom of God to come (**Matthew 6:10**)?

Answer 322: The Lord's Prayer as given in Matthew chapter 6 comes as Jesus explains to His disciples how they should pray. For the most part, Christians today could recite this prayer without hesitation as it covers all the basics any good prayer should have (praise, thanksgiving, repentance). However, there is one part of this prayer that we should not still be reciting.

When Jesus taught His followers how to pray, the Kingdom had not yet arrived on this earth (**Mark 9:1**). The promise of this Kingdom was one of the greatest of the Old Testament (**Daniel 2:44**). This Kingdom was also the main work of Jesus Christ when He came to this earth (**Luke 19:10**). For these two reasons, we can understand that Jesus would instruct His followers to pray for the coming Kingdom.

Having said all this, we must understand that the Kingdom of God arrived before the close of the New Testament (**Mark 9:1, Revelation 1:9**). Acts 2 is one of the great hinge points of the Bible. Before this chapter, the Kingdom of God is seen as a future promise. After this chapter, the Kingdom of God is seen as a present blessing (**Colossians 1:12-14**). The Kingdom of God is here and is functioning just as God promised us it would. For this reason, it would not make any sense for us to pray for God to send us something that He has already given.

Question 323: Is it wrong to make a promise to God and turn against Him when things do not work out in the way we thought they would?

Answer 323: First let me apologize to the person who submitted this question for losing the Scripture reference that was given in connection with it. For that reason, I won't look at a specific instance when this occurred, but will just handle it as a general question.

Man is not in any position to barter with God. In order to make a deal with God, we would have to own something that God desires. Most instances of this bargaining show people offering their souls (service) to God in exchange for some blessing. However, the souls of man do not belong to man. They are either possessed by God (**1 Peter 2:9**) or by Satan (**John 8:34**). Since Satan is the one who possesses the soul of the sinner, we have no bargaining chip with God. In fact, it is God who has to act to purchase our soul from Satan (**Acts 20:28**). I say this to show that we have no business trying to bargain with God in the first place.

The second part of this question asks what happens when things do not work out as God agreed. Once again, this shows a problem with making bargains with God. God does not agree to anything with us outside of His Word. His Promises are true for all people of all times. God has no arrangement to make bargains with us individually. ***If*** God did make these bargains, we should not be surprised at all when we get something God wants us to have rather than something we want ourselves to have. After all, we are not smart enough to know what is best for us (**Jeremiah 10:23, Isaiah 55:8-9**).

Question 324: Is there any historical account of Jesus healing a deaf person outside of the Bible?

Answer 324: Nope.

Question 325: Is it wrong for a church to have a fundraiser for a school or orphanage they sponsor? Can a school or orphanage have a fundraiser for their own support? (Two separate questions).

Answer 325: These two questions came about after our fishbowl question dealing with how a church should raise its funds for various ministries and works. In that answer we noted that the only way for a church to raise funds which is approved by the New Testament is through free will offerings of individuals. If you need a copy of that particular answer, it came from our fishbowl sermon in July which you can get on cd or stream from our website.

Our first question is whether or not we can do a fundraiser as the church to support a school or orphanage. This question only centers on one thing. If a church chooses to support an orphanage or school, is it then a work of that church? For me, this answer is absolutely yes. If we invest funds into an orphanage or school, we are making that institution a part of our work as a church. These institutions minister to the poor and neglected of the world by bringing various congregations together to accomplish larger goals than can be met by one congregation. That means each supporting congregation is using the institution as part of their church work.

Our second question is whether or not institutions such as a school or orphanage can raise money for their work through fundraisers. While an orphanage or school may be supported by a church, they are not churches. They do not operate as the church and cannot be held to the rules of the church. Just as a school or orphanage does not have to organize under deacons and elders or adhere to the rules governing women's authority over a man (a woman could run a school or orphanage), they do not have to abide by the rules for raising funds.

There is one caveat to this question. The funds and identity of orphanages/schools and supporting churches must remain distinct from each other. If a church and institution come to the point of mixing funds, it is no longer an institution...it is a ministry of a congregation.

Question 326: Why would Paul say "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 1:17)? Do the words of Jesus recorded in the Great Commission not apply to Paul as well (Matthew 28:19)? Weren't we all sent to baptize?

Answer 326: This was a brand-new spin on this passage that I have not thought about before. Let's start with the Corinthian passage under question tonight. For years, this passage has been used by those who deny the saving power of baptism to indicate that Paul did not believe baptism was necessary for salvation. However, there a couple of things to notice about this passage...

First, the theme (context) of the first chapter of Corinthians is the division that exists within the church (**1:10-17**). The main example of division on Paul's mind to begin with is the fact that some were dividing over who baptized them into Christ. They lifted up Paul, Apollos, and Peter as if it made a difference. Paul reminds them that none of these men died for them and therefore this should not be an issue at all. Because this church was dividing over this, Paul says that he is glad he did not perform many baptisms. After all, the more people Paul baptized, the more division that would have naturally occurred. To make this clear, Paul says that he was not sent to baptize others but to preach the Gospel. Does this statement violate the Great Commission?

First, let's remember that Paul did indeed baptize some in Corinth. This shows that he did indeed fulfill the Great Commission. Having said that, we must remember that not everyone can baptize a person who is taught the Gospel. **Illustration:** when a teenager comes forward to be baptized, who is the person who taught him first? Hopefully our answer would be his parents, his Bible class teachers, and the minister at the very least (not to mention siblings, friends, other family members, etc.). Now let's assume that the child's father performs the baptism. Does that mean that the other people involved in preaching the Gospel did not fulfill the Great Commission? Of course not. Paul's point here was that he was simply a minister and he did not care if someone else performed the baptism because that was something that anyone could do. He had been specifically chosen by God as a preacher, not a baptizer (**Acts 9:15-16**). While these two things may overlap, they are not the same. And in this case Paul was glad they are not the same because he did not want any part of the division in Corinth.

Question 327: Do we support the message of a denomination if we buy something through a fundraiser for their church?

Answer 327: This question came about after our recent sermon about protecting the fellowship of the church. If you missed that sermon, you may want to get a cd from John or stream it from our website to catch up on the topic. In the course of that sermon, we asked if the church should join with denominations to do works in our community or abroad. The basic conclusion from Scripture is that we must protect the church as the beautiful bride of Christ by not joining her with false doctrines.

Tonight's question sees us as individual members being asked to support a church financially through a fundraiser. To answer this question, we will take a look at two passages from the New Testament. Those who teach false doctrines by twisting the Gospel are to be "accursed" (**Galatians 1:6-10**). The word accursed here comes from the Greek word "anathema" and is one of the most difficult words to fully comprehend. The word was used to describe things that were set apart for destruction because it was an enemy to God. It was considered so unholy that it could only be destroyed and not purified. In other word, this is a big deal!

Because those carrying false gospels are to be accursed, we are not to join with them in any way (**2 John 1:7-11**). Notice that we are not to bring those carrying these false messages into our

homes or give them welcome because we do not want it to appear that we are joining with their evil deeds. If we don't want that kind of misconception, what do you think God would think of His People actually joining in financially supporting false gospels? For these reasons, we must not help with these types of fundraisers.

Question 328: Please explain the third heaven mentioned by Paul (**2 Corinthians 12:1-2**).

Answer 328: This is a confusing text from the New Testament. As you read, you will even see that Paul is confused as to what exactly happened to him during this vision. Tonight, we will deal with one of confusing aspects of this passage that does have an answer. Paul says that he was led up to the third heaven where he received a special message from God.

What in the world is this third heaven? To understand this, we have to know a little bit about the Jewish culture of which Paul was a part. Have you ever noticed that there are actually multiple heavens mentioned in the creation account (**Genesis 1:1**)? The Jewish people did and came to understand two heavens were created by God. First, God created what we see as our skies (**Genesis 1:6-8**). Second, God placed lights in the "heavens" to govern time and seasons (**Genesis 1:14-18**). This led the Jews to see what we now call outer space as a second heaven. There were not different words used for these heavens. Rather, context indicated what was meant. The same is true for the third heaven. This is the spiritual realm of Heaven which is seen as God's throne (**Genesis 24:7**). This is the place that Paul ended up when God caught him up. It is this Heaven that we want to see one day!

Question 329: Will we know each other in Heaven?

Answer 329: Guy N. Woods wrote a sermon on this topic in which he laid out the following five points to answer the question under consideration tonight:

1. On Judgment Day, Paul foresees joy and pride in the form of people he had taught on the earth receiving their reward (**2 Corinthians 1:13-14**, Many other passages given).
2. Christians living today can take comfort from the fact that their loved ones will be restored at the resurrection (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18**).
3. The facts of reward and punishment indicate the idea that we will still be conscious of our past lives after death (Consider Lazarus and the Rich man). If we know ourselves and other family members, we will know each other.
4. Our victory only makes sense if we are able to remember what we have overcome (**1 Corinthians 15:55**). If we remember our victory, we will remember each other.
5. The phrase "gathered with his people" used repeatedly in the Old Testament indicates a reunion in the afterlife. In addition, David informs us that he takes comfort from the fact that he will go to be with a lost child (**2 Samuel 12:23**).

I would love to add more to this discussion but I can't think of a thing to add to Brother Woods.

Question 330: Also, why will it not bother me that my family members are not there?

Answer 330: This is a much more complicated question for us to consider tonight. We know that Heaven has no sadness within its walls (**Revelation 21:1-4**). How in the world can we have no sadness when we realize that our parents, siblings, spouse, or children aren't in eternity with us? Let me first say that I am not sure but I do have three possible answers to this great problem.

First, there is a chance that our understanding of justice will be so complete after our change to the eternal spiritual form that we will understand why God punishes those who do not obey Him in a completely different way. For most, this is a weak explanation for the simple fact that we cannot imagine a way that we would know our loved one is not with us that would not lead us to great sadness.

This takes us to our second option. There is a chance that God will erase from our mind those who are no longer with us in Heaven. This too comes with problems. How could a mother and son stand side by side without realizing the boy's father is not present? You can extend this idea to numerous family situations. However, God does have the power to this in a way that we may not be able to understand at this point.

The final option is the best one for me. God is so far ahead of us in His thinking, He may have an answer to this question that no one in existence has ever thought of offering. With this answer, there is no weakness and no way for us to know until we get there.

Question 331: Could a person baptize themselves if necessary? Could a woman baptize a person under certain circumstances (Such as a women's meeting or Ladies' Day)?

Answer 331: It is hard for me to imagine a moment in a person's life where they would discover their need for baptism without having any other person present to perform the baptism. However, assuming that this were to somehow happen, I do not believe any Scripture would be violated in a person baptizing themselves. The word "baptize" simply means to immerse or submerge. It does not indicate that two people have to be involved. One may wonder then why we don't simply baptize ourselves. This goes to the fact that Christians are commanded to baptize others after teaching them to obey God. This commandment sets up a circumstance where Christians are going to be in the baptizing business.

One can search at length through the New Testament and find no list of qualifications given for a person to be approved by God to baptize others. I say this as way of introducing the second part of this question. Can a woman perform a baptism? Since there are no specific qualifications for a baptizer, we must refer back to our regulations concerning women's roles in the church (**1 Timothy 2:11-12**). A woman is not to teach or have authority over a male within the work and worship of the church. If baptism falls into either of these categories, then a woman would be prevented from performing the act in the church.

Does baptism teach a man? I would say no. Some may say it does by example, but a woman can teach by example in the church if she sings, takes the Lord's Supper, or bows her head to pray in the church! This is not enough to stop a woman from doing these acts. Does baptism place the baptizer in authority in the church? Again, I would have a hard time saying this person is in

authority over the church if they are baptizing someone. If this act does not violate these two things, I do not see it violating Scripture.

Now let's consider one more thing. While this act may be lawful, is it expedient to us (**1 Corinthians 10:23**)? My answer to this is that it would not be expedient to us for this to happen. In fact, as opposed to building us up as a group of Christians, I see it causing division. For this reason, I would be very hesitant if I were a woman to perform a baptism unless it was in private or in a ladies-only setting. I must say this question started out appearing very simple and turned a little more difficult than I expected. With that in mind, I reserve the right to figure this out more in the future!

Question 332: Does it mention anywhere that Mary and Joseph were saved?

Answer 332: Let's start with Joseph. The earthly father of Jesus is rarely mentioned in the New Testament. He apparently did not survive long enough to see Jesus' ministry begin. With this lack of information, it is impossible to know his faithfulness or lack thereof. Having said this, the few times he is mentioned demonstrate him to be a humble servant of God.

On the other hand, Mary is alive to watch her son die on Calvary. She makes appearances throughout the Gospels. For the most part, she is seen as both a believer and faithful follower of Jesus. There is an exception to this mentioned in the Gospels (**Matthew 12:46-50**). However, as we see Jesus on the cross, we find that His mother is there (**John 19:26-27**). From this, we can only assume that Mary was faithful on the last occasion she is mentioned. Once again, we can't know anything for sure, but we have no reason to doubt her salvation.

Question 333: If God's plan was set from the beginning, why was the Old Testament necessary? How do we explain that God did not make a mistake that He corrected with the New Testament?

Answer 333: This is a question that came up from one of our members who was having a conversation about the Bible with someone (third time in the last month that I have been asked a question because someone is doing personal evangelism!). The basic point of this question is why do we have the Old Testament. If God is perfect, why didn't He just start with the perfect plan of the New Testament?

It is usually dangerous for us to try to figure out the why of God's plans. However, this is a time when I think we can make some good educated guesses. First, God was using the time of the Old Testament to prepare people to walk by faith. As you journey through the Old Testament, you find God offering visible demonstrations of His power to His people. He builds a relationship with the Israelites. He shows His nature. I have often used the illustration of God raising a child through the three time periods of the Bible. (Patriarchal=infant, Mosaic=preteen, Christian=young adult). God used the Old Testament period to get us ready for faithfulness in Christ.

Second, God used the time of the Old Testament to get the world ready. The Roman Empire was the culmination of world empires. It created a near universal language. It created a world connected by roads and sea passages. It was a world where literacy was valued. It was a world where Judaism was lifted up as an ancient religion by Roman leaders (which helped Christianity). In short, it was the perfect world to send the Son of God into if God wanted to plant a universal kingdom and have it spread quickly. God would not leave all people before this

time without a chance to know Him, so He used the Patriarchal Age and Jewish People to make Himself known. Ultimately, the simple answer to this question is that God was waiting on us to be ready to follow Christ.

Question 334: How does 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 fit with your response to not financially supporting other religious groups?

Answer 334: Since it has been a while since we saw my response to a question concerning this topic, I want to remind of the question and answer being referenced above. The question saw us as individual members being asked to support a church financially through a fundraiser. To answer this question, we will take a look at two passages from the New Testament. Those who teach false doctrines by twisting the Gospel are to be “accursed” (**Galatians 1:6-10**). The word accursed here comes from the Greek word “anathema” and is one of the most difficult words to fully comprehend. The word was used to describe things that were set apart for destruction because it was an enemy to God. It was considered so unholy that it could only be destroyed and not purified. In other word, this is a big deal!

Because those carrying false gospels are to be accursed, we are not to join with them in any way (**2 John 1:7-11**). Notice that we are not to bring those carrying these false messages into our homes or give them welcome because we do not want it to appear that we are joining with their evil deeds. If we don’t want that kind of misconception, what do you think God would think of His People actually joining in financially supporting false gospels? For these reasons, we must not help with these types of fundraisers.

Now let’s read the passage under consideration tonight (**1 Corinthians 13:23-33**). This passage in Corinthians deals with the idea that people in the New Testament world could buy meat that had been offered to false gods in Pagan temples. In this passage, Paul tells people that when they are eating with others, they should not make an issue out of this. However, if they know the meat being served to them has been offered to idols, they are to avoid eating the meat for everyone’s sake. Our question tonight is how do these two ideas come together.

The main idea we must understand concerning 1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 14 is that they both deal with areas of judgment which have not been addressed by God. God never once gave a commandment concerning eating things offered to idols. However, many new Christians were conscientious objectors to this practice because they thought of it as idolatry. For this reason, God told us all to seek for our neighbor’s best interests as we go through this world. Christians should give up meat in order to maintain a good relationship with brothers and sisters who had a moral problem with eating it.

When considering how we are to interact with those teaching false doctrines, God has not left things up to us. As we have already seen, we are to see those who do this as accursed and refuse to show any sign of cooperation with them. Therefore, we are not left without a law as to how to

behave. In other words, when our feelings/conscience and God's commandment disagree, we must conform to His Word.

Question 335: Read Matthew 23:9-10. Why do we observe verse 9, but not verse 10?

Answer 335: This may be one of the most misunderstood passages of the New Testament. However, the idea contained here is one of the most applicable lessons for our religious world today. For this reason, it is important for us to gain an understanding of what Jesus said. I think the **verses 11-12** give us the true Biblical meaning behind the words of Jesus here. The titles shown here represent the idea of elevating oneself as an authority for the Bible. Only God has the authority and superiority of men to demand their complete allegiance. The idea here strikes a death nail in the heart of the titles we see so often in the denominational world today. Being called brother or sister should suffice for all who submit to Jesus Christ. All other titles (Reverend, Most Holy Father, etc.) are meaningless because they have not the authority of God behind them! When we understand that the name Christian is the greatest title we can receive on this planet, we will use all other titles in the proper way!

Question 336: Christ had foreknowledge of the prophecy concerning being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. Did he deliberately choose Judas knowing he would be the one to betray Him?

Answer 336: I think our answer to this one is going to be we don't know, but I will try to shed as much light on this as I can. First, we need to remember that Jesus cut Himself from some of the knowledge He had as the Son of God (**Mark 13:32**). While Jesus certainly knew the Scriptures, the prophecies did not name the betrayer. Our question would be did Jesus cut Himself off from the knowledge of who would betray Him. As far as I know, God chose not to tell us this, so I don't know.

Having said all of this, we also know that Jesus was able to read the hearts and thoughts of man (**Matthew 9:4**). Once Judas allowed greed and hatred into his heart, Jesus certainly would have known who his betrayer was (**John 13:26**). That leads to an even bigger question: when did Judas decide to be the betrayer of Jesus. Yet another great unknown for us.

Now I will tell you what I think. I think Jesus knew the entire time that Judas would betray Him. I think He chose this man because at the end of the day He had to die to fulfill God's eternal purposes. In the end your opinion is as good as the next person's, but it is interesting to think about.

Question 337: Please explain Hebrews **12:5-11**.

Answer 337: As we begin this explanation, we must notice that God says He chastises His children. These instructions are meant for Christians. God will chastise His children while they are on this planet. We cannot ascribe these verses to those living outside of God. Now let's move on to what it means to be chastised.

The word translated “chastise” or “discipline” carries the idea of some action or process by which a person faces a trial or tribulation in the hopes of removing the impurities from their lives so that they can be better servants for God. It can be done in various ways and can lead us to spiritual maturity if we make it through tribulations with our faith intact.

Next, let’s consider how we should respond to this chastisement. We must not take it lightly when we are chastised by God (vs. 5). We must not lose our faith when we are chastised (vs. 6). We must submit to the chastisement (vs. 9). Finally, we must find peace and growth from our chastisement (vs. 11). When we do these things, we will find ourselves better off in this world because God only seeks to aid us with His chastisement.

Now for the big question from this text: how does God chastise His children? I do not believe that God selects us **individually** to send evil into our lives in order to improve our spiritual state. God is the giver of all good things in our world (**James 1:17**). However, He stated that He does not purposefully send evil upon us (**Lamentations 3:33**). Ironically, God said this as Jerusalem fell doing unimaginable harm to the people living inside the city. How can we possibly reconcile these two things?

I think this comes down to something that often causes confusion in our study of God’s Word. God is all powerful and can do anything He chooses to do (**Job 26:8-14**). Therefore, when He chooses not to intervene, the Bible can speak of God doing the things which He allows to be done. God had to choose not to defend Jerusalem against the attack of the Babylonians. However, as you read verses on this event, it is clear that God takes credit for punishing His People (**Jeremiah 21:3-6**). He does this because He chose not to act! When the Bible says that God does _____, we must understand that God can do things actively or by refusing to act!

Bringing our Hebrew passage back into view, God has set our world up in such a way that bad things happen to us. Sometimes, they happen to us as a result of our sinful actions. Other times, we are faced with bad things because we live in a fallen world where bad things happen to all of us. Chastisement could take the form of physical ailments, guilt, broken relationships, etc. When He allows these bad things to happen to us, we should see a father trying to help his children reach maturity. Unfortunately, many fall beneath this load and lose their faith.

Question 338: How should churches respond when a couple visits our assembly and they do not have the right to be married because of an unscriptural divorce?

Answer 338: We should handle this situation in the exact same manner we would handle anyone living in sin visiting our assemblies. I fear we are making a big mistake when we separate off those who are married unscripturally from anyone else living a life of sin. After all, Jesus says specifically that this is no different than any other form of adultery (**Matthew 19:9**). So how do we handle a sinner making his or her way into our assemblies?

First, we offer them a warm welcome. This follows closely in the steps of Christ as He dealt with those lost in sin (**Luke 15:2**). Next, we make sure that we teach the truth. This is a basic requirement of Christianity in all circumstances so it should come as no surprise that it is listed here (**2 Timothy 4:2**). Next, we make sure that we teach the truth with the simple hope of bringing about repentance (**Ephesians 4:15**). After this, we make every effort to demonstrate to those who do not repent that they are not in a right relationship with God and that we are not going to overlook their sin in order to pacify their conscience. Those who do not choose to repent should not be accepted into our fellowship as those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Over the course of time, this will force the unrepentant sinner to choose between their salvation in Christ's church and their sinful lifestyle. If a person ever visits our assembly lost in sin and leaves believing we condone that sin, we have failed!

Question 339: Why didn't Jacob go to Seir like he told Esau he would (**Genesis 33:12-14**)?

Answer 339: This passage takes place after the long delayed reunion of Jacob and Esau. The brothers have come back together and put their past behind them as they buried the hatchet. Esau even offers to provide an escort for Jacob to Esau's home in Seir. However, Jacob refuses and insists on travelling at his own pace with the promise that he will see his brother in Seir.

Some have argued here that Jacob lied to his brother since he did not follow Esau to Seir as he says. However, there is another way to look at this passage. Esau may have offered Jacob an open invitation to come see him in Seir. In response, Jacob would have agreed to do this "at his leisure" which are the very word he uses to describe his journey. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that Jacob and Esau never saw each other after this account. With this in mind, Jacob would have indeed kept his word, just not on the timetable we expect to see.

In the end, you get to decide how you view this little nugget in Genesis. For me, I give Jacob the benefit of the doubt. In fact, I imagine many of us have left from family get togethers with the invitation given and eventually accepted to visit someone out of town. That appears to be what happened here as well.

Question 340: Is it wrong to defend ourselves, our family, or our property?

Answer 340: Many have tried to portray Jesus as a complete pacifist (**Matthew 5:38-40, 26:52**). For these people, the idea of defending life or property may seem to be completely foreign to Christianity. However, I think we need to consider a couple of other passages.

First, let's look at **John 2:13-15**. In this passage, Jesus acts to physically remove people from the Temple. He does so with brute force. Did Jesus not just defend His property from those who were abusing it? I would be hard pressed to tell others not to defend their homes with physical force when Jesus was willing to do so for His Father's house.

Next, let's look at **Luke 22:36-38**. Here we see the Apostle's being instructed to sell their coat in order to buy a sword if they do not have one. It is impossible for me to remove this passage from the context of the Great Commission which will send these men around the world into perilous situations. Why would Jesus instruct these men to carry a sword unless He also expected them to use it in their defense? In a situation where it was either the Apostle's life or a robber's life, Jesus gave these men permission to defend themselves with this command.

These same two ideas carry themselves down to us today. Do we have the right to defend ourselves? Yes. Do we have the right to defend our property? Yes. Should we ever hope that we get the chance to do this? Absolutely not.

Question 341: Should we baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**) or in the name of Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:38**)?

Answer 341: Yes we should. The passages we have just read were never meant to be a formula or magical incantation that puts power into a person's baptism. If this were the case, we would also have to make a similar statement before every act that we take on this earth (**Colossians 3:17**). The only things that put power into our baptism are the blood of Jesus (**Hebrews 9:13-14**) and the faith of the person being baptized (**Hebrews 11:6**). When these two things come together at a person's baptism, that person is freed from their sin and becomes the child of God.

Since all of this is true, what is the point of the words seen in Matthew and Acts? The key to understanding these passages is to understand the meaning of the words "in the name of". These are not simply words repeated by the baptizer before the baptism. They are a submission of this person to the very idea that God alone has given us the commandment of baptism. It is a statement of belief that all of God's standards are being met and all of God's teachings have been faithfully delivered to the person being baptized. When we say these words, we are beseeching God's approval and authority for the act itself to take place. It is a simple reminder that baptism is not a commandment of man, but rather is a requirement of faithfulness to God.

Question 342: Please explain the baptism for the dead (**1 Corinthians 15:29**).

Answer 342: Without a doubt this passage is one of the most controversial in all of the New Testament. Tonight, we are going to take a quick look at three possible meanings.

First is the idea that this passage teaches us to baptize dead ancestors by proxy. Today, one of the greatest resources for anyone doing genealogical research can be found in Salt Lake City, Utah. It is the sight where the Mormon Church has established a library of genealogical records so that anyone practicing the Mormon faith can be baptized for their dead ancestors. We could spend much time discussing all the problems with this, but we will leave it with two. First, there is no way for a dead person to obey the other commandments connected with salvation. Second, once you are dead, your eternity is set in stone (**Hebrews 9:27**). Now let us move on to Biblical solutions to this text.

The second option is that this is a reference to those who are spiritually dead. In this chapter, Paul is discussing the factual nature of the coming resurrection. The idea with this option is that Paul appeals to the fact that every Christian in Corinth was once dead spiritually and has been resurrected spiritually through the power of Christ. In short, Paul's point would be that if the Corinthians believe in the spiritual resurrection, they should have no problem believing in the physical resurrection. This is certainly a reasonable assumption based on the context of the passage. However, I tend to think our third option is the most appropriate one.

The third option rests on one word in this passage. That word is "they". Paul says "why then are they baptized for them." In the New Testament, there are two groups of people: they and we. They are always those who are outside of Christ and His teachings. We are always Christians who are serving Christ to the best of their ability. Paul here is not saying that Christians baptize for the dead. Rather, he is using a practice (probably pagan or a distorted version of Christianity) which is taking place in Corinth. His point is that even those outside of Christ believe in a resurrection or else they would not baptize for the dead. If non-believers attest to the resurrection, how much trouble should it be for Christians to believe in it?

Both these last options approach the question from a Biblical viewpoint and both present viable options. However, the first viewpoint shows us one of the most dangerous things in Biblical study. To remove a passage not only from its immediate context, but from the context of other clear Scriptures is a dangerous thing. Many have stood in baptisteries being baptized for the dead not realizing that their own souls are in danger because of their religious teachers.

Question 343: Does 1 Peter 3:1-2 teach us that some can be saved without hearing the Word of God? "*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear*" (KJV).

Answer 343: This question only comes from the King James Version of the Bible. Like all translations, there are some occasions where a mistake from translators can make something confusing out of something very simple. This text is making the point that sometimes our lives speak far more than our words can. This can easily prove true for a wife who lives with an unbelieving husband. A husband who sees his wife live faithfully to Christ and be faithfully devoted to her family may be won to God without a single "Bible study". By adding the word "the" to this particular passage, the KJV brings about some confusion. **READ 1 Peter 3:1-2 from NASB "won without a word".**

Before we leave this question, I will mention that this mistranslation will not lead to any confusion based on other texts from the Bible. A small perusal of passages will prove that God's Word is required in order to bring about salvation (**Romans 10:17, Romans 1:17, James 1:21**).

Question 344: What form did Christ take in Mark 16:12 and why?

Answer 344: This passage is usually understood to be another account from the road to Emmaus found in Luke 24. The form taken simply means that Jesus withheld His identity from the two disciples. This would not have been some strange mystical form. It would simply mean that Jesus took the form of a human these men did not recognize.

The why part of this question is a little more complicated. The simple truth is that we do not know for sure why Jesus did this. We can only offer guesses into Christ's motivation. The best guess I have for you is that Jesus wanted these two men to come to certain conclusions for themselves. If we read Luke's account, we see Jesus inquiring of the men about the situation in Jerusalem and about the events that have taken place. These men describe Jesus to Jesus and tell of His Power. After this, Jesus calls them foolish men for not believing the story they have just preached! After all, if Jesus was the Son of God, why would they believe His death ended God's plan? That's the best answer I have seen and I think it make good sense.

Question 345: What is the reason for Jesus mentioning handling serpents and drinking poison (Mark 16:17-18)?

Answer 345: This question is a little bit easier to answer than our last one. The motivation for Jesus's Words at the end of Mark seem to be understandable. Jesus is setting the stage for His departure from this earth. He is leaving instructions for His followers to go into the world and preach the Gospel. It is not too difficult for us to understand the fear and apprehension which must have consumed the Apostles. To counter this fear, Jesus gives these men a boost of courage by showing them that God was going to offer miraculous protection for their travels. These words would also offer an answer to the fear of not being believed that these men may have had. To perform these signs would have been a great display of God's power which would help to prove the truth of their message. In short, these words are nothing more than encouragement for Jesus' followers to do what He has instructed.

Questions 346-347: Does a child below the age of accountability go to Heaven or Paradise? Are souls and bodies separated at death or at the resurrection (**Matthew 27:52**)? In light of the fact that I mess up so often, should I worry that I might mess up in Heaven and be removed from God's presence?

Answer 346-347: I put both of these questions together tonight because they both center on the afterlife. Let's begin with the soul of man. The gift of the soul of man was breathed into Adam and handed down through the generations to his children (**Genesis 2:7**). This soul dwells within the body of man throughout his life (**Psalms 19:7, Hebrews 6:19**). When death comes, soul and body are separated as the body returns to the ground and the soul lives on for eternity (**Genesis 35:18, James 2:26**). Any person who returns to this earth after their death are either restored to their body miraculously or appear as spirits outside the body.

The Biblical account of the afterlife begins in either Paradise or Torment (**Luke 16, 23:43**). Once judgment begins, all souls will be called before God for Judgment (**1 Corinthians 15:52**). Our souls will be judged for the actions of our bodies (**Ecclesiastes 12:14, 2 Corinthians 5:10**). In that moment, our souls will be delivered to Heaven or Hell where we will spend all eternity (**Revelation 20:14-15, 1 Corinthians 15:24**).

Now we turn our attention to eternity in Heaven. The beauty of Heaven is completely beyond our understanding (**Revelation 21:1-4**). In Heaven we never experience death. For most of us we focus on physical death, but we are told there will “not be any” (NASB) or “no more death” (KJV). This includes spiritual death. The reason for this may be found in the fact that we are in complete safety from the enemy in Heaven (**Revelation 21:22-27**). Either way, the word eternity answers the final question on our list tonight. We simply cannot make our way out of Heaven (**Matthew 25:46**).

While there are certainly questions left unanswered concerning the afterlife, we receive a beautiful picture by the words we read. On the other hand, we also receive a horrible picture. Just as we can inherit eternal life with the Father, we can also receive eternal punishment with Satan and his angels.

Question 348: Do children pay the debt for the sins of the father (**2 Samuel 21:1-6**)?

Answer 348: This story is one example of the confusion that arises from two apparently contradicting passages. With that in mind, let’s take a look at both of them. First, we have God saying that children will not bear the sins of the father (**Ezekiel 18:20**). In contrast to this passage, we find God saying that children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren will pay for their fathers’ sins (**Exodus 20:5**). So which is it? Does God punish children for their fathers’ sins or do each of us answer for our own individual sin? The answer to this question will answer our question tonight. As is very often the case, this allegedly difficult alleged contradiction has a fairly easy explanation. The explanation depends completely on what type of punishment is being addressed.

Earthly consequences will often reach through generations to punish children and grandchildren. Perhaps the easiest example of this is found when the Israelites refuse to take the Promised Land and are punished for forty years by being forced to wander in the wilderness. Children born during this forty-year timespan (and their children as well) are forced to wander with the group rather than inhabit the land flowing with milk and honey because of their father’s doubt! In modern day times, we see children born to parents who are career criminals who face poverty, ridicule, and neglect because of their parents’ mistakes. We see children born to teenage mothers who face a life of extreme poverty because of the decisions of their parents. We see children born with birth defects because parents choose to use alcohol or drugs during a pregnancy. We see lots of examples of this principle! In the same way, Saul’s children paid the earthly price for their father’s actions.

Now let's turn to Ezekiel's message. His message is that children will not face the consequences of their fathers' sins. As we have just seen, this does not deal with earthly consequences. Rather, this passage deals with eternal consequences associated with the judgment of God. As you read through this passage, you will see God telling us that those who sin will die and those who obey Him will live. This cannot refer to physical ideas because we will all die regardless of our righteousness and all those who sin do not immediately die physically as a consequence of their sin. Rather, this refers to the eternal rewards and punishments given to us by God. On Judgment Day, you will only be judged based on what you do and how you behave on this earth (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). Saul's sons were killed because of their father's sin, but their eternal soul was judged by God based on their faithfulness.

Question 349: When we pray for God's help to accomplish something, don't we also have to have the faith to do our part?

Answer 349: God's response to prayer has always been conditioned by our faithfulness. God shows favor to the righteous and will offer His ear to them (**James 5:16, 1 Peter 3:12**). It is impossible to be righteous without maintaining our faithfulness to God because it is impossible to be righteous on our own. In the same way, it is impossible to be faithful to God without doing something (**James 2:14-17**). The Christian life is a life filled with actions.

With all this in mind, it should come as no surprise that God expects us to work for what we pray for. Sitting with folded hands while asking God to do all the work for what we want is not God's plan for our prayer life. To illustrate this, let's turn to **Acts 22:12-16**. As we read the account of Saul's conversion, we should note that he is indeed sitting by idly while offering prayers to God for the forgiveness of his sins. Did he receive that forgiveness? Notice the message from Ananias: "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name". In other words, prayer was no enough to accomplish the goals Paul has for his life! He had to do his part. The same is true for every one of us and every situation that arises.

Question 350: Please explain the idea of the poor in spirit (**Matthew 5:3**).

Answer 350: The most important thing to think about as we discuss the idea of poor in spirit is the comparison being made between the spirit and the flesh. When we think on a global scale, our physical condition on this earth is completely out of our control. We do not control where we are born, the financial means of the family we are born into, the physical condition of our body at birth, or the trials and tribulations that may come from our environment. In contrast, the spirit of man is completely within one's control. How I respond to the physical things of this world cannot be blamed on anyone other than me. For Christ, the physical things make no difference, but our spirit towards the world make all the difference in the world.

Let's think about the idea of being poor in spirit. A person who is poor in spirit does regard himself more highly than he should. He is humble enough to realize that he has not chance to defeat Satan on his own (**Acts 4:12**). He listens to the commandments of God and follows them

with all his heart (**James 4:7**). He is willing correct his behavior and admit his mistakes (**1 Kings 21:25-29**). In all things, he will place himself as a servant on this planet...a servant to both God and man. When you think of a person who fits this description, can you think of anything that would keep him or her out of Heaven? This person will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven just as Jesus promises in the beatitudes.

Question 351: Please explain the reference to Titus in **2 Timothy 4:10**.

Answer 351: As we sit down to read some of the final words we possess from the pen of Paul, we find him referencing several people as he pleads for Timothy to come to him. This is truly one of the lowest points of Paul's life. He realizes his time on this earth is coming to an end (**2 Timothy 4:6-8**). In this moment he is undoubtedly thinking back to the people he has come in contact with and his work as a missionary. He longs to have the support of those he has supported throughout his ministry, but he finds few standing with him.

He has lost Demas to the world which has reclaimed his soul (**2 Timothy 4:10a**). He has sacrificed of himself once again to send Crescens and Titus to work with other Christians (**2 Timothy 4:10b**). Our question tonight focuses in on Titus. Titus has been sent to Dalmatia which is in the modern-day country of Croatia. This was a Roman province that sat just across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. It is truly an amazing to think that when Paul needed people most he would send his companions away for work within churches. We say this because he gives no condemnation to Titus or Crescens. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson we can get from this passage.

Question 352: What does "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain" actually mean. What does breaking this commandment entail?

Answer 352: This question ties in closely to our lesson from this morning. There is no doubt that God expects His name to be holy in our lives (**Exodus 20:7, Matthew 12:36-37**). For the Jews, this was an incredibly difficult task. In fact, they decided their best bet was to never use the name of God (Jehovah) at all. They treated the name of Jehovah with the utmost respect. There were even special rules for scribes who copied the Word of God concerning this special name. Our question tonight asks what this commandment looks like in our world today.

The idea of vanity is that something is robbed completely of its worth. It is used to describe the life indulged in sin (Ecclesiastes), preaching without Christ's resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:14**), and the work of a minister whose converts do not finish their race (**1 Thessalonians 3:5**). All these things show the robbery of something very special of all of its value.

Now let's bring this idea to taking the Lord's name in vain. God is the most glorious and valuable thing we could ever imagine. His name should be a reflection of his worth in our lives. For this reason, we should not use this name in a flippant manner, rob His name of its power, or call on His name when we don't need Him. It goes much deeper even than this when we bring

Christ's name into the equation. We do not call Christ Lord without doing what He says. We do not use His name in a promise and bring His holy name into worldly vows (**James 5:12**). In all honesty, this list of examples could go on and on and on. However, with the principle in place in our lives of treating the name of God as holy, I don't think we have to worry about the rest.

Question 353: Were the Apostles rebaptized after Jesus' death?

Answer 353: Read Gospel Minutes Question and Answer. While I normally find myself agreeing with the thoughts of Brother Thurman, I have to disagree with him a little but on this. While it is very true that the Apostles were sanctified by John's baptism as Jesus spoke in John 17, the death of Jesus had yet to take place. This death is the only thing that put power in the water baptism to forgive the sins of the world (**Hebrews 9:22**). When people were baptized with John's baptism, they were acting just as the ancient Jews who offered their animal sacrifices on the altar of Jehovah. They rolled their sins forward, but could not possibly receive forgiveness until Christ died. Those who were baptized by John and died before Christ went to the cross found their forgiveness through this baptism.

Now let's consider those who lived on after Christ's death and were baptized by John. These people are somewhat of a mystery to us as the Bible does not specifically address them. However, I do think we have some clues. First, if the people in this situation wanted to be added to the church, they would have to be baptized (**Acts 2:38, 47**). Second, if the Jews who were practicing the Old Law had to be baptized, so did these people because John's baptism was a part of the Old Law. Third, we know that John's baptism was invalidated as a form of salvation after Christ's death (**Acts 19:1-5**). Fourth, it is unlikely to me that Jesus would submit to John's baptism as an example and the Apostle's would not set the example of baptism into Christ for those on Pentecost.

Having said all of this, I did mention that I only disagree with Brother Thurman a little bit on this. For me, this question is left up in the air. I think it is a question with a lot of things left up in the air and I wouldn't dare to come down with 100% certainty either way. In fact, just to throw in one more wrench, I will mention that as far as I can find, there is no evidence that all the Apostles were baptized into John's baptism at all.

Question 354: Are there Apostles for today?

Answer 354: The word apostle simply means one who is sent by God. It can be used generally or specifically. Generally speaking, we are all apostles as we have all been sent by God to seek and save the lost. However, this question centers on the specific group of men who were chosen by Christ as He walked this earth to reveal God's message to the world and speak with the authority of Christ's message. Does this specific type of Apostle live on today? In other words, was the position of one of the Twelve Apostles as appointed by Christ a position to be handed down throughout the generations?

The simple answer to this question is yes. However, it is not in the way that many believe it to be. The men who were originally chosen by Christ still serve in the role of Apostle to this day with one exception. The position of Apostle was a permanent one (**Luke 22:29-30**). This Kingdom is the same one that every saved person resides in today (**Colossians 1:12-13**). There was never to be any successors to these original twelve men because the Twelve were supposed to stay in their position for all time.

Before leaving this question, we must deal with the exception we mentioned above. If the Twelve were not to be replaced after death, why was Judas replaced by Mathias after his death? To understand this, we must notice that Judas was not removed from his ministry because he died. Rather, he was removed from his ministry because of his sin (**Acts 1:24-26**). This is further shown in the fact that James had no successor after his death (**Acts 12:1-2**). The authority given to the Apostles by Christ in the first century did not leave the men chosen when they died. Rather, their authority was transferred on with their death where they continue to sit at the table of Christ and judge the inhabitants of the world through the message they revealed to the world.

Question 355: If the Priests were necessary to connect men with God, how did people like David and Daniel have such a close relationship with God?

Answer 355: The priesthood of the Old Testament served as a connector between God and the people of Israel (**Numbers 27:21, Leviticus 16:14-15**). In our churches today, Christ has replaced the need for any priesthood to serve in this role (**1 Timothy 2:5**). The question tonight centers on the idea that some men were able to connect with God without the use of this priesthood. How is this possible?

The answer to this question relies on fully understanding how the Priests of the Old Testament were able to serve in their role as mediator between God and man in the first place. The only way for this to take place was for God to set up a system by which He gave permission for these men to approach Him directly (**Leviticus 8:1-5**). Without God's intervention, no man could ever approach Him. In other words, God must choose to make contact with man! We can never force contact with Him!

As we look at the prophets, kings, and others in the Old Testament who were allowed to have a close relationship with God outside of the priesthood, we must understand that God had to take the first step. God has the right to choose any person to contact on this planet in any way He sees fit. When He makes this choice, the priesthood becomes an easily replaceable piece of the puzzle. For this reason, you will see God use angels, prophets, and even physical manifestations of Himself to interact with men on this planet during the times of the Old Testament.

Question 356: Did Samuel imply that Saul would be saved in the afterlife (**1 Samuel 28:16-19**)?

Answer 356: This chapter has an amazing story to tell. King Saul is witnessing a gathering storm in the form of the Philistine army. His time is coming to an end as king in Israel and as we will see his time on this earth is also coming to an end. In a moment of despair, Saul turns to a medium to contact the one man he thinks might be able to help him: Samuel. In a surprising twist, Samuel actually appears before Saul and speaks with him. Unfortunately for Saul, Samuel's words bring only a promise of doom. He promises that the Philistines will defeat Israel and that Saul will be dead by the end of the war. In the course of this discussion, Samuel tells Saul that he will be with him. Our question tonight asks if this statement indicates Saul's salvation.

To understand this, we have to understand the afterlife as the Jews understood it. For the record, this is the same afterlife described for Christians too. First, we have a separation of those who are living and those who are dead. The place of the dead is referred to as Hades, Sheol, the grave, and Hell depending on the translation (**Psalms 6:5, 18:5**). This land simply refers to the place we go after our death. This place is then divided into two parts. Paradise or Abraham's bosom is the waiting place for those who will receive a reward. Torment is the place where those who have not obeyed God await their eternal punishment after death. This rich man and Lazarus is our best description of these two places.

Understanding this, let's try to answer the question. When Samuel tells Saul that they will be together in the same place by the end of the next day, what does he actually mean? He could simply mean that he and Saul will both be in the place called Sheol. The rich man and Lazarus were both in this place together even though they were separated by the great gulf. On the other hand, he could mean that they will be together in Paradise. After all, Jesus used this type of phrase with the thief on the cross (**Luke 23:43**). The simple truth is both are viable options and we have no idea which is correct.

Question 357: What is the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**)?

Answer 357: The gift of the Holy Spirit is the promise given to each and every person that obeys the Gospel of Christ. For this reason, it is vital for us to know exactly what that gift is. First, let's begin by understanding the difference between the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit and the non-miraculous gift mentioned here. The miraculous gifts of the New Testament were indeed a product of the Holy Spirit. However, these gifts were not given in connection with repentance and baptism as seen here. Instead, they were given by the laying on of the Apostle's hands (**Acts 8:13-20**). This type of gift was temporary and was not meant to be a lasting promise from God. However, we see that there was a promise that was meant to last and was connected with the Spirit (**Acts 2:39**). What was that gift?

We find our answer in the description of roles of the trinity as it relates to our salvation. Ephesians chapter 1 shows the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working to save the souls of man.

We will focus our attention on the Holy Spirit and His work to save our souls. Read **Ephesians 1:13-14**. To understand what this passage means, we must do a quick word study of the word “seal”.

The Greek word used here indicates a couple of different things. First, it can refer to the sealing of a thing by the authority of someone. This is the same usage as a king using his signet ring to show his authority over a certain action. Second, this can be used to indicate that the one sealing is confirming the authenticity of a promise being made. This would occur if a king used his signet ring to sign a contract. It would give his word that he will keep the promises he has made in the contract.

For Christians, the Holy Spirit does both of these things. The Holy Spirit marks us as a possession of God. He does this by acting a signet ring on the finger of God to show God’s authority to forgive our sins. He also shows that God will keep all the promises He has made to us. He does this by revealing to us the promises that have already been kept by God in the form of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has worked hard to bring us a message of salvation. When we accept that message, He serves as a pledge or down-payment from God for our future home in Heaven. In other words, He gives us a reason to believe that the things we look forward to will actually happen!

Question 358: Is a marriage ceremony required in the Bible for two people to be married in the sight of God (**Matthew 19:4-6**)?

Answer 358: This was a question which arose out of our teen class. I love when our Bible classes provide fishbowl questions. In the Bible, we see one basic marriage ceremony throughout (**Genesis 29:21-23, John 2:1-2, etc.**). For this culture, the marriage feast was obviously approved by God and resulted in a marriage in the sight of God. However, there were cultures running concurrent with the Jewish world. In Rome, the wedding ceremony was completely different. The bride would have a wedding procession from her family’s house to her husband’s home. She would be carried across the threshold and declare her willingness to be married. She and her husband would then eat a cake together and offer a sacrifice to the god Tellus. Yet, no Roman convert was ever told to be remarried after becoming a Christian.

This fact combined with the fact that God never gave us any specific instructions tells us that God does not care what any individual society holds as its official marriage ceremony. In Japan, the couple is joined in marriage with the first sip of a ceremonial sake drink. Islamic marriages are often done with a simply contract signing. Chinese weddings in the past actually consisted mostly of comparing astrological figures to ensure the husband and wife were compatible. Of course, all of us have heard the phrase “jump the broom”. This ancient custom was used by slaves in America as a formal marriage agreement since they were not allowed to legally marry. Every one of these customs constituted a wedding in the sight of God and bound husband and

wife together in matrimony. While the rules God has set for marriage cannot be overruled, the specific marriage ceremony is not a part of the rules of God.

Question 359: If it was against Roman Law for the Jews to execute Christ, how could Herod kill John the Baptist and how did the High Priest stone Stephen?

Answer 359: Jewish leaders were not legally able to execute individuals without the approval of Roman authority (**John 18:31**). Yet the question tonight shows us two instances where the death penalty was indeed used by Jewish leaders without consent of Roman authority. How do we reconcile these two things?

First, let's deal with the death of John the Baptist. Historically, we know that the Jewish people actually held the power to perform executions at the beginning of the Roman occupation. The date of the loss of this privilege is up for debate, but based on the Biblical account we know it must have been sometime between the death of John the Baptist and the death of Jesus. This one is the easy one for us tonight.

Now let's deal with the death of Stephen (**Acts 7:54-60**). Obviously, this account took place after the law had been enacted that prevented Jewish people from executing others. Some explain this by saying that Stephen's death was acted out in pure rage and therefore cannot be compared to the others under consideration tonight. While this is true, there actually is another explanation. Josephus offers us the best explanation for this account.

He informs us that the Roman prefect of Judea, a man named Porcius Festus, died in office. This being the Ancient Roman Empire, it took a while for word of the death to reach the capital, and an equal amount of time for the new prefect, whose name was Albinus, to arrive in the region. The high priest at the time was Ananus, or Hanan. He had had problems with a few people in Jerusalem, including Jesus' brother, James. Josephus tells us that Ananus now exploited the temporary power vacuum, and had the alleged troublemakers stoned to death. The people of Jerusalem were outraged by this abuse of power, and immediately complained to Albinus, before he had even reached Judea.

In short, Stephen died during a time when no Roman ruler lived in Rome to execute punishment for his death.

Question 360: The people of the Old Testament had to prepare themselves to meet God. Do we need to do this before we come to worship?

Answer 360: In the Old Testament God would often tell Israel to consecrate or cleanse themselves in order to prepare for His arrival in their camp (**Joshua 3:5, 7:13-14**). The holiness of God requires that Israel cleanse itself if He was going to be a part of their lives. However, the word consecrate means to be dedicated. The Israelites had to dedicate themselves to God and His purposes for Him to have a spot in their camp. Our question tonight is whether or not we must

follow in their footsteps as we meet with Christ during our worship assemblies (**Matthew 18:20**).

I think the answer to tonight's question is yes. For one thing, we have to prepare ourselves for our worship assembly. First, we are to dedicate our time if we are going to make a worship service a part of our lives. If we do not consecrate this time, it will most likely be spent on something else. Second, we have to prepare ourselves to give in our assemblies (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). If we do not dedicate funds to the service of God, we cannot say that we are dedicated to His purposes. Third, we have to consecrate our lives in order to take the Lord's Supper in a proper manner (**1 Corinthians 11:27-29**). Finally, all worshippers of God must consecrate their hearts in order to approach God (**John 4:24**). We must absolutely make preparations for worship by consecrating ourselves to approach God in a correct manner.

Question 361: Where do denominations get the idea of the sinner's prayer?

Answer 361: The sinner's prayer became incredibly popular during the Billy Graham crusades and has continued to carry favor as televangelists close most of their shows with this prayer being recited. We have Billy Graham's version on our PowerPoint screen and most follow a very similar formula. The idea is that people can pray their sins away and gain forgiveness from God by saying these words. In this way, baptism becomes nothing more than an institution to enter a church.

Our question tonight is where did those that teach this doctrine find their justification for it. We start with one of the most abused passages in the Bible. **Read John 3:16**. From this passage comes the idea that our belief is the only requirement from God to save our souls. With this passage as the beginning, those who hold the doctrine of the sinner's prayer move on to **Romans 10:9-10**. Here we see that confessing Jesus saves our soul. Granted, this passage does not in any way mention prayer, but it has morphed into the sinner's prayer. With these two passages, the sinner's prayer doctrine is both born and maintained.

Now that we see the source of the sinner's prayer, let's look at the main problems with it. First, we need to look at the idea that belief alone will save our souls. **Read John 3:36**. In the same context at John 3:16, the writer tells us that if we believe without obeying God we are going to be lost and will face the wrath of God. Now let us consider the passage from Romans. Confession is indeed linked with salvation in this passage and no one should attempt to deny it. However, let's take a look at a few other passages. **Read Luke 13:3**. Did you notice that repentance was left out of the Romans passage? How then does it make its way into the sinner's prayer? Obviously, those teaching this doctrine know that confession mixed only with belief is not the only requirements God has for our salvation. **Read 1 Peter 3:21**. Notice that both these passages link specific actions with salvation. Why is the baptism passage left out of salvation discussions given by televangelists? There are many more ways to disprove the false doctrine of the sinner's prayer, but quite frankly I don't think they are needed.

Question 362: Do churches still have angels? Does Owl Hollow have a special angel?

Answer 362: Read Revelation 1:20. There is no more beautiful vision in the New Testament than what we see in this first chapter of Revelation. In it, we see Jesus walking amongst His churches holding them in the palm of His hands. He shows His concern and work amongst churches which certainly still applies to every congregation of faithful Christians in the world today. In the midst of this vision, we see Jesus holding the angels of the seven churches of Asia in His hands as well. How should we understand this part of this vision?

The key to our understanding comes from two passages found in close proximity to the one under consideration tonight. Read **Revelation 2:1 and 2:7**. These two verses follow a formula used by John in each of the seven letters found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. By following this pattern, we can uncover the identities of the mysterious angels of the churches. The fact that God addresses the angels of the churches and yet says that the churches are supposed to listen tells us that the words are being used in an interchangeable fashion. When God addresses the angels, He is simply addressing the church. The angels are a personification of the churches under consideration.

With this understanding in place, we can answer our questions tonight. Do churches today still have angels? Yes! Every congregation has a spirit within itself that lives and dies based on the actions of her members. Does Owl Hollow have one of these angels? We absolutely do! Our angel is the spirit of our congregation which is alive and well as long as we are faithful to Christ!

Question 363: I always understood that Noah took two of every kind of animal on the ark. Is this correct?

Answer 363: Yes, this is a correct statement. However, there is more to this than we normally consider. Two of every kind of land animal were taken on the ark during the flood. However, there were actually seven or fourteen of each kind of clean land animal taken on the ark (**Genesis 7:1-3**). There is confusion here because the original text may indicate seven pairs of clean animals or seven total clean animals. Most believe seven total animals is the best understanding. This question actually leads us to two additional questions.

First, what were clean and unclean animals in Noah's day? For many, we see the words "clean" and "unclean" without giving it much thought. After all, we are used to seeing this concept in the Old Testament Law. However, this account comes long before the days of Moses and the Law delivered to him. It lets us have a glimpse at God's work in the ante-deluvian world. He apparently had in place dietary restrictions even in this world.

Second, why would Noah need extra pairs of clean animals? This answer is a little easier to figure out. Clean animals would be used for food and for sacrifices (**Genesis 9:2-5, Genesis 4:4**). The amount of animals taken on the ark was the perfect amount for starting over and providing for God's crown jewel of creation.

Question 364: Will we be judged as individuals or as a church (**1 Peter 4:17, 2 Corinthians 5:10**)?

Answer 364: There is no doubt that each of us will face judgment for the actions we take on this earth (**2 Corinthians 5:10, Ecclesiastes 12:14**). We will answer for ourselves and we will not have to worry about other people on that day so long as we have obeyed God in all that we do.

The passage under consideration in **1 Peter 4:17** divides the entire human race into the only two groups that God sees on this planet. He sees His children (household of God) and those who refuse to obey Him. It is important based on our question tonight to note that the eternal judgment is not under consideration in this passage. We are told that the time for the judgment was at hand. This passage begins by speaking of the temporary judgment of the church which came in the form of the persecution from Rome. Those who do not taste this judgment should not think that they will not face earthly persecutions themselves. The point here is that if God will not spare His church from earthly trials, He will not spare others either.

Question 365: What are some ways to find God's will when it is not revealed in His Word?

Answer 365: There is no other source for the Will of God than His Word. If there is something in our lives that is not dealt with in the Word of God, it is not important to God (**Deuteronomy 29:29**), or it is not important to us (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). After all, no book could possibly contain the entirety of God's Knowledge! When the Bible does not directly or indirectly address a particular subject, we are left free to use our liberty to the best of our ability on this earth.

Question 366: Why did Jesus cry when He came to Lazarus' funeral?

Answer 366: Read John 11:35. There is no doubt that Jesus had great love for Lazarus and his family. For this reason, many would say that Jesus cried because He saw firsthand what death was doing to this family. However, I think it is important to notice the order of this account from John.

First, Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick and He needs to come heal him (11:1-4). On the way, Jesus informs the disciples that Lazarus has already died (11:5-16). Next, Jesus arrives and is greeted by Martha who is not happy that Jesus delayed His coming to Bethany (11:17-24). Jesus sees the family of Lazarus grieving and is moved in His Spirit to act (11:33). After this, Jesus asks to see the tomb where they have laid Lazarus (11:34). It is at this point that the Bible tells us Jesus began to weep (11:35).

As we look through this account, we have to ask why Jesus does not cry when He is moved in spirit after seeing the family. After all, this would be a clear indication that He was weeping because they were saddened. However, He does not cry until He moves to raise Lazarus from the dead. In truth, I don't think Jesus cries tears of sympathy with this family. Instead, I think Jesus cries tears for Lazarus. Lazarus had run his race. His faithfulness was intact and he had reached

Paradise where he could await his reward with no fear of molestation. Now, Lazarus will be brought back to our world to endure an unknown amount of time as he awaits his second physical death. The tears of Jesus are a reminder that this world is not our home!

Question 367: Where does the Bible speak against animal abuse?

Answer 367: There are two thoughts concerning this question that we will consider. The first is a principle and the second are some specific passages.

First, we cannot discuss animal abuse without mentioning the principle of stewardship. We have been given a great responsibility by God concerning our earth and its resources (**Genesis 1:26**). We have been given dominion over this earth and the animals which live on it. By receiving this gift, we are also given responsibility for maintaining it through good stewardship. We are nothing more than managers watching over the world which is owned by God (**1 Corinthians 4:2**). As such, abusing our power as God's managers would be an abuse of our power given to us by God.

Second, let us consider God's specific instructions concerning animals. First, we notice that God associates righteousness with a person's treatment of their animals (**Proverbs 12:10**). Second, we notice that God commanded us to invest in the well-being of our animals (**Proverbs 27:23-24**). God wants us to handle His property with the proper respect and care while we are given stewardship over them.

Before leaving this question, we need to notice one more thing. Some have taken this stewardship far beyond God's idea. Some have brought animals up to the point of being equal with humans. This is not God's position. However, treating animals as if they are not a gift from God is just as wrong. God sees a world where the middle of these two positions is the place Christians should stand (**Deuteronomy 25:4**).

Question 368: Are the slime pits mentioned in Genesis 14 the same that are mentioned when Noah built the ark?

Answer 368: In **Genesis 14:10**, we read of men who fell into tar pits. Today, we can find these tar pits in various places around the world. They result from natural asphalt seeping to the surface through the ground. California has famous tar pits in which numerous artifacts and animal remains have been found. Our question tonight asks if the tar pits in Genesis 14 were the same source used by Noah to pitch the ark (**Genesis 6:14**).

The simplest answer to this question is we have no idea. I have no idea if there were tar pits that supplied the pitch for Noah or if he went through a process of making a resin to cover the ark. Even if he used tar from these pits, we would have no idea how to tell if the tar pits mentioned here were the same. My understanding of the global flood of Noah's day is that it completely changed the world. It shifted major parts of the world's surface and relocated various natural

formations. For this reason, I do not think we can know what the world looked like before the flood.

Question 369: When did women began to be thought of as second-class citizens and property?

Answer 369: In the beginning, the plan for marriage was that man would leave his father and mother and join his wife (**Genesis 2:23-24**). We know that eventually man would change this plan and turn their daughters into opportunities to obtain money in the form of dowries. They would eventually be used to form political alliances as well (**1 Kings 3:1**). In short, women would be treated as property of their fathers and husbands. Our question tonight is when did this change take place?

My simple answer to this question is I am not sure. I am not even sure that I can point to a place where the Bible shows the change taking place. Perhaps the best I can do with this is to point to Rebekah being chosen for Isaac. This arrangement was made without Isaac's choice (**Genesis 24:1-3**). This arrangement at very least had a financial component to it (**Genesis 24:22**). The arrangement was apparently made without Rebekah's approval as well (**Genesis 24:51**). I should point out that this arranged marriage ended very well (**Genesis 24:67**). As far as I can tell, this would be the first time that a marriage like this took place with God's people. However, other marriages certainly preceded this one and we can't be sure it was the first time.

Before leaving this, I would like to mention two more things. First, the dowry in ancient societies was meant to be a way of proving that a husband could take care of his wife financially. Second, for God's people there was also the idea of preventing the influence of Pagan religions which can easily come through intermarriages from taking place (**Deuteronomy 7:3-4**).

Question 370: Does God take notice of our clothing choices for worship assemblies?

Answer 370: Yes. God absolutely takes notice of our clothing when we come together to worship Him. By the same token, God takes notice of our clothing when we do anything else as well (**1 Timothy 2:9-10**). We are to set ourselves as a standard of modesty for the world around us. However, I think this question aims specifically at what we are allowed or prohibited from wearing in our worship assemblies. Let's discuss that.

The word modestly literally means "with shamefulness" (Thayer's). In other words, you should dress with shamefulness at home so that you will not be ashamed in public. The word discreetly literally means "discreetly, with self-control". I believe the ultimate goal of worship attire should be that it does not draw attention to yourself. This can mean many different things. The example given here is that of dressing to show wealth. With all this said, we live in an interesting time. Our society is changing "dress attire". Our society is also seeking to deformatize worship attire. We are in a transition period (much like we had a few years ago with women wearing pants). What should we do? I think the number one rule we should follow is to think of each other. Young people need to put themselves in their older brother's and sister's shoes. Remember that

with all the poverty that engrossed the lives of those setting beside us in the pews, they still had “Sunday clothes” because they saw it as important to honoring God. They also must understand that God does indeed set standards for worship attire and must dress with self-control to not try to prove points in what they wear. Older Christians must remember that God is not a respecter of the clothes we wear. They must see that the idea of what constitutes “Sunday clothes” is a constantly changing idea. If we remember to do this, we will put other people ahead of ourselves and we will find a happy medium. In addition to this, we must be careful not to put a stumbling block in front of others who want to worship God. For all of us, we must remember not to let clothing divide us unless we are dealing with immodest apparel.

Question 371: Why is the birth of Christ celebrated on December 25th? Was He born at this time?

Answer 371: Let’s start with the idea of Christ’s birthday. The idea of Christ being born in December is refuted by two key passages from the Bible. First is the passage that tells us that a census was taking place in Rome. Romans were master administrators who would not have set the winter time as the scene for a census. Travelling conditions were simply not conducive to getting an accurate count of all people. Since the tax system was reliant upon an accurate count, it makes no sense to think they would have done it in the winter time. The more obvious evidence lies in the passage that tells us that the shepherds were with their sheep in the fields. During the winter months, the area around Jerusalem gets bitterly cold at night. Shepherds did not sleep with their flocks during the months of December-February. Jesus was not born on December 25th.

As we start this question, let us consider the history of Christmas for just a moment. The Christmas Holiday was instituted by the Catholic Church sometime around the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) which made the Christian religion the official state religion of Rome. As this happened, there was pressure for Christian leaders (the beginning of the Catholic hierarchy) to embrace certain elements of the older pagan religions in order to be more appealing to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. One way of doing this was to take the old dates and traditions of Pagan festivals and transform them into Christian holy days. And so, December 25th which had formerly been a day to celebrate the Roman god Saturn became a day to celebrate Christ’s birth. During the week-long festival honoring Saturn, there would be a great feast, parents would give their children toys, and symbols of life such as wreaths and trees would be used as decoration. Sound familiar?

Finally, is it sinful to celebrate this holiday? The answer is absolutely not. **Read Romans 14:5-9.** Each of us has the right as given by God to celebrate any day we see fit. We could celebrate Jesus’ birth on April ninth just because we want to. We could set aside a special day to remember the healings of Jesus, another to remember the teaching of Jesus, and another to remember the Apostles of Jesus. Each individual has this right. However, our rights end where others’ rights not to do so begin. **Read Romans 14:12-13.** Because some may have legitimate

concerns about celebrating a holiday which is not shown in the New Testament and which has its roots in paganism, we should not bring our celebration into our church assemblies. A person should be able to worship God without having to worry that their consciences are violated by the celebration of Christ's birth.

Question 372: If something cannot come from nothing, where did God come from?

Answer 372: This is a common argument when discussing the existence of God with others. When we point to the fact that our earth could not come from nothing, they will immediately counter with "then where did God come from?". This has a very simple answer, but it will often leave Christians at a loss.

The natural world lives by a set of rules given and maintained by God (**Genesis 1:24, Hebrews 1:3**). However, God by very definition is supernatural. He exists outside the laws He has established. It is this nature that allows Him to set the rules that govern our world. There is one eternal person/object in existence: God. He exists without need to be created because His very nature is an eternal one. Illustration: Werewolf cannot exist because there are no shapeshifters in nature. A werewolf by definition would not be a natural being. It would be supernatural and could break the rules.

Question 373: Please explain the possible contradiction between Galatians 6:2 and 6:5.

Answer 373: This alleged contradiction is highlighted in the KJV Bible. In it, the word burden is used in both verses. It says that we are to bear one another's burden in the first verse and that each of us must bear our own burden in the second verse. In most if not all modern translations (NKJV, NASB, NIV, RSV, ESV) the second verse uses the word "load" rather than "burden". These modern versions reveal more of the actual Greek text than the KJV in the fact that two different Greek words are used here. However, they still may not carry the difference between these two words into our language as clearly as we would like. I would encourage you to make some note in your Bibles concerning this passage.

In Galatians 6:2, Paul uses the word "baros". This word always indicates a load that is very heavy and cumbersome. This is why the translators have maintained the use of the word burden in all translations. However, in Galatians 6:5, the word used is "phortion". This word simply means something that must be carried and has no implications on the weight of the load.

The beauty of this passage is seen in the different meanings of these two words. Paul tells us in **Galatians 6:4-5** that we must invest time in examining what we do on this earth because there are consequences to face when we do not bear the load of Christian responsibilities. Before he says this, he points out that we are never supposed to be alone in our darkest moments. When that normal load of Christianity morphs into something too heavy to carry alone (trials, tribulations, and temptations) brothers and sisters are supposed to be there to help bear the load (**Galatians 6:1-2**). May we all live to fulfill the law of Christ in our lives.

Question 374: When did the 400 years of silence end?

Answer 374: The term 400 years of silence refers to a period after the writing of Malachi to the beginning of the New Testament. During these centuries, incredible changes took place in Israel. During this period, the Greeks took control of Israel from the Persians. Greek leadership led to a rebellion called the Maccabean rebellion. For a short time, Israel enjoyed freedom before being annexed by the Roman Empire. Various sects such as the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes either came on the scene or established themselves during this period. The Jewish Old Testament was compiled, translated, and canonized during these years. In short, this was an incredibly active time for the Jewish people.

However, in the midst of all this activity, God went silent as it concerned His People. We find no prophets or inspired writings from these 400 years. Having said this, I would encourage anyone interested in history to find a book with this history in it in order to study. With all this said, our question tonight is when did the 400 years end. Because this phrase is a human invention used to describe this period, we won't find the answer in a straight Biblical passage. However, since the phrase determined a period of time where God went silent, we will place its end when God began to speak once again.

Now that we have that established, we simply have to figure out when God inspired the first people in the Gospels in order to answer the question under consideration. Many would place the end of this period at the time of John the Baptist. He was certainly a prophet and fits the description. However, I would push the time back one more generation (**Luke 1:8-11**). Once an angel appears to Zacharias, I would say God's silence has ended. Others may put a different date here, but that is my answer.

Question 375: How did the dinosaurs die?

Answer 375: I love this question because it allows us an opportunity to bring the worlds of faith and science together in a way that is often impossible to see in our world. Let's start with what our science textbooks have taught us for decades. According to most who consider themselves experts, 65 million years ago a meteor crashed into what is now the Yucatan Peninsula scorching the entire earth and causing massive wildfires across the globe, sending so much debris in to the air that the sun was blocked for months or years (depending on who you ask), temperatures plummeted, and plant-life which supported the dinosaurs were unable to survive. All these factors supposedly led to the mass extinction of dinosaurs on the earth. Weirdly enough, mammals survived all this and eventually gained dominance on our planet. Like all theories, this one has some major problems that have yet to be addressed which is why it is in fact still a theory. For instance, mammals couldn't survive a world with no food anymore than dinosaurs could.

Now let us consider another idea that brings Scripture into the equation. The great flood of Genesis chapter 6 gives Christians a clear alternative to answer the question under consideration

tonight. Christian scientists have put forth a theory that I think is worth examining and considering. The canopy theory suggests that there was at one time a water canopy surrounding the earth (**Genesis 1:6-8**). This canopy would have created a tropical environment on a worldwide scale (which explains palm trees under the ice of Antarctica). It would also be an answer for where some of the water came from that flooded the entire globe. It could even help to answer how the lifespans of the early patriarchs were so lengthy (although not completely). During the flood, this canopy slowly collapsed upon the earth at God's command. This would have resulted in a completely different earth after the flood. This too is simply a theory which does not answer every possible question proposed.

Whatever you decide concerning the canopy theory, when the dinosaurs left the Ark of Noah, they would have faced an environment that was no longer hospitable to them. They would have found it much more difficult to adapt to these changes than warm-blooded mammals. They would have slowly died out due to a combination of changing climate, higher death rates from egg-based offspring, and in some cases, sheer size. Interestingly enough, some of the most modern, convincing evidence that man and dinosaurs lived together on this earth come from right around the equator where the earth maintains a constant tropical environment. In short, in one way or another, the flood got the dinosaurs...except for alligators which are in fact living dinosaurs!!!

Question 376: Does grace cover us when we willfully disobey God?

Answer 376: No. There is no covering for those who willingly disobey God with no repentance (**Luke 13:3**). The entire New Testament is built on the premise of God delivering commandments which when followed will lead a person to an eternal reward through the grace of God. This question should not even be one that needs to be answered. Unfortunately, many in our society have used grace as a license to sin. They have taken the same approach as the Romans in Paul's day (**Romans 6:1**). It is the height of arrogance to think that God needs our sin to be extra gracious!!! Likewise, it is the height of arrogance to believe we can fly in the face of God's commands with no repentance and still receive His grace!!!

Question 377: Why were the Samaritans rejected by other Jews when their captivity was not their choice?

Question 377: The Samaritans have a fascinating history. These people are made up of a conglomeration of Israelis who were left after the deportations under Assyria and Babylon, pagans who were brought in during the occupations Israel by Assyria and Babylon, and Israelis who were brought back after the deportations under the Assyrians and Babylonians. This hodge-podge batch of people were considered nothing more than mutts by the Jewish people. The Jewish people of Jesus' day saw them as dogs who were so unclean that they would literally walk miles out of their way just to avoid their cities! Our question tonight centers on why the Jews felt this way.

The simple answer to this question is that they were seen as a lower class of humans that purebred Jews. They had a mixture of Pagan and Jewish culture, genetics, and religions. For this reason, the Jews hated them. However, I actually think there is a deeper reason for the Jewish hatred of the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a constant reminder that the Jewish people had been conquered in their past because they had rejected God. I think that was more than enough for the Jews to hate the Samaritans.

Question 378: Is there any difference between a Christian and a church member?

Question 378: In a perfect world, the answer to this question is “no”. Every Christian is added to the church the day they become a Christian (**Acts 2:41**). The church is by definition the ones who have answered God’s call to leave the world! When a person leaves the world, they are forced to join the church since there are only two options given to us! At the same time, they are submitting to God and are therefore Christians (followers of Christ). As such, in a perfect world, these terms are interchangeable.

However, we do not live in a perfect world. In today’s world, the term church member describes little more than a person’s connection to one particular group of people they happen to sometimes associate with on Sunday mornings. Following Christ has little to do with church membership as both individuals and churches sacrifice the commandments of God in order to focus on various other things. Unfortunately, our society has completely changed the way these terms are defined and therefore brought about much confusion. However, if we simply go back to what these terms originally meant, we find God removing all that confusion.

Question 379: Does God ever sleep?

Answer 379: This question comes from **Genesis 2:1-3**. Since God “rested” on day seven of creation, does He need to sleep from time to time as we do? Did the work of creation tire Him out to the point of sleep? Does He ever just need a nap to make it through a day?

As we start this answer, I think we need to say first that God is simply too busy to have time for sleep. God is busy holding the world together with His power (**Hebrews 1:1-3**), hearing the prayers of His children (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**), and forgiving the sins of the saved (**1 John 1:7-9**). The gods that men make may have time to sleep, but the God that made man doesn’t (**1 Kings 18:27**)!

Now let’s turn our attention to the passage that brought this question. God did indeed rest after day 6 of creation. He rested because He had finished His job of creation, but rest and sleep are two different words. God rested in the sense that He stopped working because He was finished with His job. This is like getting to watch our favorite television show or getting to go outside and play after we have cleaned our room or finished our homework.

Question 380: Is God the God of those in hell after judgment (**Matthew 22:32**)?

Answer 380: This question came out of our adult Wednesday night class a couple of weeks ago. I have to admit up front that I am not completely clear on what the conversation was concerning this topic, so I may or may not do a good job of answering this question. I am just going to start from the beginning and answer it to the best of my ability and I apologize if we don't get to the heart of the matter. Having said this, I have two completely opposite answers to this question!

First, my answer is that God is absolutely the God of those in hell after judgment if we are looking at things from God's perspective. Jehovah is the God of all things for all time. He is the only God that has or will ever exist. He is completely singular in nature which offers no other option for a true God in anyone's life. Furthermore, Jehovah is God regardless of our belief in Him. We have the choice to believe in Jehovah or reject Him, but our view of God does not change who or what God is! So, from the perspective of God, yes, He is God of Heaven and Hell just as He is God of our world.

Second, my answer is that God is absolutely not the God of those in hell after judgment if we are looking at things from the people's perspective. On this earth, we have the ability to shape anything into our god (idolatry). If we choose to make something or someone other than Jehovah our god, we will be eternally separated from the true God of Heaven in eternity. With God, there is hope. In Hell, there is no hope. Therefore, God cannot be present in the minds of those in Hell! With this in mind, those in Hell have no God because they reject Him during their lives.

Question 381: How can inheriting the earth be considered a good thing (**Matthew 5:5, Psalm 37:11**)?

Answer 381: Based on both of these passages, we see that God rewards the humble of the earth with the earth itself. As we look at our earth, we see that our time spent living in it is filled with labors and sorrows (**Psalm 90:10**). We also know that our earth will eventually be completely destroyed (**2 Peter 3:10-12**). With these two things in mind, our question is how is inheriting the world a good thing?! We will answer this with two possible answers.

First, some believe that this is a reference to the new heavens and new earth which Peter mentioned. In this sense, Jesus would simply be saying that those who are humble on this earth will inherit Heaven. This makes perfect sense in that those who are humble will submit to God and His Will which will indeed lead them to the new home that will be given to the faithful.

Second, some believe that this does refer to our physical world. With this view, the idea is that the meek of this world are the only ones who understand the blessings given to us in the form of the physical things of this world. They realize they are nothing and have nothing without God. The idea of inheriting the earth then becomes nothing more than truly understanding the nature of this earth as a gift from God and truly appreciating it for what it is. I tend to lean toward this understanding of this passage.

Question 383: What happens when my will conflicts with God's Will?

Answer 383: When my will conflicts with God's Will I am being tempted. God's will is that every person live a life of faithfulness that will lead us to His doorstep one day (**2 Peter 3:9**). On occasion, my will agrees with God's Will completely and leads me to act according to the principles of God. Unfortunately, there are times when my will seeks only to please myself. When this happens, my will stands in direct opposition to the will of God (**Romans 14:1-7**). This is the very definition of temptation (**James 1:13-14**).

When we are tempted, we have two very simple options. First, we can keep living by our will and ignore the purposes of God for our lives (**James 1:15**). Second, we can sacrifice of our own desires and follow the will of God by resisting the temptation (**Luke 9:23**). These are the only two options we have when we are tempted. It is the same choice every person has had in their lives (**Deuteronomy 30:15-16, Joshua 24:15**).

Question 384: Does God harden hearts today for His purposes as He did with Pharaoh in Exodus?

Answer 384: To fully understand this topic, we need look at the incidence under consideration in Exodus. As God prepares to reestablish His people in the Promised Land, He sends Moses to speak with Pharaoh. He gives Pharaoh several warnings in the form of the plagues, but after each of these plagues Pharaoh changes his mind concerning letting the Israelites go. Throughout the course of these events, Pharaoh and God are both said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart (**Exodus 7:13, 8:32, 9:12**). This shows us the process of the hardening of a heart. First, God presents us with a choice just as He did with Pharaoh. Second, we can choose to disobey God which is a hardening of our heart against God's Will. At that point, God has the ability to intervene and force His Will into our lives (He could have forced Pharaoh's hand or removed him completely). With these three steps, we see how God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. He did this by allowing Pharaoh to actively reject the Will of Jehovah.

With this understanding in place, we can say that God absolutely hardens hearts for His purposes today. He allows people to choose His Will every single day without supernatural intervention that forces us into submission. A lot of confusion comes from this passage because people see God as actively forcing Pharaoh into disobedience. When we remove this misunderstanding, we find that Pharaoh's story is actually nothing more than a representation of every person's story.

Question 385: Why did God not want the firstborn of the donkeys? Why break its neck (**Exodus 34:20**)?

Answer 385: This passage points us back to the final plague in Egypt in which the firstborn of every creature and person died in order to demonstrate the power of God. The Israelites were protected so long as they followed the commandments of God. As a reminder of this powerful display, God gave commandments to the people to follow once they exited Egypt. We are very

familiar with the institution of the Passover meal which would be remembered all the way to the days of Jesus. However, most of us are less familiar with the fact that God also demanded that the firstborn in Israel be devoted to Him (**Exodus 34:19**). Our question tonight is why did God not want the firstborn of the donkeys.

The simple answer to this is that God absolutely wanted the firstborn of the donkeys in Israel. However, He saw the superior usefulness of the donkey to the Israelites as compared with the lambs of Israel. For this reason, God allowed the Israelites a simple choice. They could redeem the firstborn donkey with a lamb. This would allow the more useful and therefore more valuable animal to remain in service to its owner while still meeting the requirements of God's law. With this choice made available, some would still offer their donkey up to God. God says this is acceptable by telling us to break its neck (i.e. kill it) as an offering to God.

Question 386: Is it wrong to tell a little white lie?

Answer 386: I do not believe that it is wrong to tell a little white lie because I do not believe it is possible to tell a little white lie. Can anyone in this audience tell me the moment when a lie goes from being a little white lie to a regular lie? Merriam Webster defines a little white lie as "a lie about a small or unimportant matter that someone tells to avoid hurting another person". Let's play a little game. Imagine for a minute that a man is cheating on his wife. His wife asks him if he is cheating, and he tells her no. In his mind, he doesn't want to hurt his wife. In his mind, cheating isn't a big matter. After all, he is cheating so it must not be a big deal to him. Once we create this completely made-up idea that some lies are little and white so don't count, we make the honesty of every statement that proceeds from our mouth completely subjective based on the whims of the moment as to what is or is not a big enough deal to tell the truth about.

Compare this shifting sand of honesty to God's standard for His People. Read **Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 4:25, Proverbs 12:17, Proverbs 12:22, Revelation 21:8**). There is truth, and there are lies. There are no little lies. There are no white lies. There are no little white lies. God needs and expects His people to be truthful in every instance. After all, if we lie about the little things, why should someone listen to us when we tell them about the biggest things of all (**2 Timothy 2:15**).

Question 387: How many heard and understood the statement of pride from God to the Son when Jesus was baptized (**Matthew 3:13-17**)?

Answer 387: As we answer this question, we turn first to main characters that we know from the life of Christ. His Apostles have not been called yet, so it is unlikely they were present. He is an adult and it does not appear that any member of his family other than John was present. We know that John was baptizing great numbers of people including Pharisees (**Matthew 3:5-7**). Depending on how you view the scenes of John's preaching there could have been large groups of people standing around listening to John preach or there could have been only a handful of

people who gathered around him. All of this leads us to very little in the way of being able to identify exactly who was present at the time of Jesus' baptism.

I personally believe that John's preaching drew a crowd of people each day. I see his ministry as what amounts to old school extended Gospel meetings where groups of people came to hear John preach, went back to the local areas to spread the word to friends and family, and then the seen would replay on another day. Jesus walked into this setting and interrupted John's work in order to set an example for each of us. I believe there was a group of people gathered that day who were simply random people that got to witness a most amazing thing. However, how many there were and what impact this scene had on their lives is left completely unknown to us.

Question 388: What are the bronze fetters mentioned in **Jeremiah 52:11** and **Judges 16:21**?

Answer 388: The easiest way to answer this question is to take a look at our PowerPoint screen. Bronze fetters were simply chains and loops. They were the equivalent of ancient handcuffs...sort of. The loops were placed around the wrists, ankles, through the nose, or through the lower lip of people who were being humiliated by their conquerors.

Question 389: Explain Lent. Why is it observed today?

Answer 389: Lent is something that began with the Catholic church, but has made its way into some other religious groups as well. Lent is a period of forty days which begins with Ash Wednesday and ends on either Friday or Saturday before Easter. These forty days are meant to connect a person with the forty days Jesus spent in the desert (Catholic Catechism). Part of this is to sacrifice luxurious items in one's life. This tradition was being formed as long ago as the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Fasting is also sometimes included during these forty days.

According to the Catholic church, Lent is a way to prepare a person's mind and soul to be ready for the celebration of Easter. Apparently, the holiness of Easter Sunday requires us to prepare ourselves as the priests of the Old Testament used to do. Ironically, the denial that takes place with Lent has led to the invention of carnival celebrations such as Mardi Gras which takes place just before Ash Wednesday and is a time to fulfill the worldly lusts before entering into the denial of oneself during Lent.

As you might imagine, the concept of Lent is foreign to the New Testament. A Christian's life should be one of complete and total sacrifice (**Romans 12:1, Luke 9:23**). Even special times of physical denial should never be governed by a calendar. Rather, times of fasting from earthly things should be governed by need (**Matthew 6:16-17**). Finally, Easter Sunday is no more special than any other Sunday in the life of a Christian. For this reason, Christians should prepare their minds and spirits each and every day so that they are ready to follow the commandments of God (**1 Corinthians 11:27-28**). We should live every Monday with Sunday in mind!

Question 390: If Jesus is God, how did He not know when He was returning to earth (**Mark 10:31-32**)?

Answer 390: This is a fascinating question that has held our attention for a long time. For many, this passage offers proof that Jesus was not God. There is great evidence to deny this idea. First, Jesus tells the world that He is God (**John 8:58**). Second, the prophets understood Jesus as God (**Isaiah 7:14**). The inspired Apostles demonstrated Jesus was God (**John 1:1-3, 14, 2 Peter 1:1**). To deny the deity of Jesus Christ is to deny the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

Since we know that Jesus is God and that God knows all things (**Daniel 2:22** God knows what is in the light and the darkness), how is it that He would deny knowledge of when He would return? The answer to this lies in one of the most complicated concepts of the Bible: “how does the trinity of God work?”.

To answer this question, let us take a look at **Philippians 2:5-11**. Jesus made the decision to not hold onto the form of God. He emptied Himself of His deity by taking on the flesh and blood of man. Part of this emptying included taking on mortality when Christ was once immortal. Another part of that was allowing Satan the ability to tempt Christ when He was once immune to temptation (**James 1:13**). One more part of this emptying was that He emptied Himself of the knowledge of when He would return (**Mark 10:31-32**). Since we saw Jesus calling Himself God during His time on earth, we know that none of this stopped prevented Him from being God. How all of this works together is far beyond what my feeble mind can fully understand.

Before leaving this question, we must take one more glance at **Philippians 2:9**. Once Jesus was exalted to the Right Hand of God, God refilled Him of all that He sacrificed for our sake.

Question 391: If God forgives our sins and remembers them no more, what are we going to be judged on at the Judgment Day?

Answer 391: We are going to be judged based on our actions on this earth (**2 Corinthians 5:10, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**). However, we know that the blood of Jesus can wipe away our sins to the point that God remembers them no more (**Jeremiah 31:34**). How can we bring these ideas together?

There are a couple of different ways to understand this, but I am going to present you with the one that makes the most sense to me. When we sin, we are stained in our soul (**James 1:27**). These stains can follow us all the way into eternity (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). However, we must remember that we also get credit for what we do on this earth that is good! It is this part of our discussion that answers our question. When we follow Jesus Christ, we have done a good thing. On Judgment Day, this good thing that we do takes away the bad that we have done (**1 John 1:7**). It is not just that we are forgiven for our sins; our sins are treated as if they were never committed! They are erased from our past and will not be taken into account at all on Judgment Day.

Question 392: What baptism is Jesus speaking about in **Mark 10:35-40**?

Answer 392: James and John approach Jesus with a simple request. They wish to sit in places of honor and power within the Kingdom of God. This request reveals multiple character flaws within these two men. First, they treat Jesus as if He could be tricked. Notice they ask Him to agree to do whatever they ask without actually asking anything. Next, they demonstrate total ignorance (which was shared amongst the Apostles) of the true nature of the Kingdom of Heaven and their place within it. Finally, they demonstrate great arrogance in wanting to be placed on the left and right hand of Christ.

In response to this request, Jesus asks if James and John are willing to earn their places of honor by enduring the cup and baptism that Jesus would endure. Tonight's question is what is Jesus talking about. Jesus is speaking here about the shame and pain of the cross that He would endure. The idea of the cup is often used to describe the actions of God towards man whether good or evil (**Psalms 23:5, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15**). The cup of wrath against the sins of the world was going to be poured out upon Jesus at the cross. In short, Jesus is asking James and John if they were willing to die like He was willing to die.

Question 393: In song 384 "Lead Me To Calvary" is there too much emphasis on sight over faith (Show me the tomb)? Likewise, in song 359 "Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross" should we sing a song including "raptured souls" and what is the meaning of "golden strand"?

Answer 393: We are commanded to sing as a church (**Ephesians 5:19**). As we sing, we also teach (**Colossians 3:16**). Because this is true, we must make sure that we sing songs which uphold Biblical teaching (**Galatians 1:6-10**). With this in mind, it is important that we not only sing, but examine the words as we sing (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). As we examine these things, we must understand that some of this comes down to artistic interpretation and one's personal understanding of lyrics. This means that some of these things will be personal decisions and we may simply choose not to sing certain songs during our services. Tonight, we look at two songs.

First, "Lead Me To Calvary". Does this song place too much emphasis on sight over faith? We are commanded to walk by faith, not sight (**2 Corinthians 5:7**). For me, this song offers no emphasis on walking by sight. I say this because the only place for us to see the tomb or the cross is in the Word. Our faith in the Bible allows us to see these places and the things that occurred at the cross and the tomb. This is nothing more than a plea for God to help us be reminded of His works as we go through our lives.

Second, "Jesus, Keep Me Near The Cross". Does this song teach an unbiblical doctrine? I am going to start with the idea of the golden strand. The word strand simply refers to a shore or beach. Even today we use the word stranded when describing being lost on an island. With the imagery of crossing the Jordan in mind, this song simply discusses coming to a crossing point when we die. I am not sure that any other reference is made here. Now we must consider the term rapture as it is used in this song. Rapture today is enjoined with the false doctrine of

premillennialism. However, the word rapture long predates this false doctrine which originated around 1830. The word simply describes the ascension of the saved to meet Christ which is a Biblical doctrine (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**). For this reason, I see no false doctrine with this song and indeed feel we should sing it so that we may reclaim the word rapture and use it in a Biblical way.

Question 394: When considering the powers given in the limited commission, is there a difference between “demons” and “unclean spirits” (**Mark 3:14-15, 6:7**)?

Answer 394: The simple answer to this is no. So far as I can find, these two terms mean the exact same thing. The first word comes from the word that means “messengers or ministers of the devil” (Thayer’s). The second word comes from the idea of impure spirits (Thayer’s). Both of these terms seem to describe the same group of beings.

These beings are called both unclean spirits and demons in the New Testament. They are the angels who rebelled against God with the Devil long ago (**Revelation 12:7-9**). These beings have been held in check by the power of God since their fall. They were allowed more freedom during the time of miracles only because humanity had a way to fight the power of the Devil with the power of God. Once the age of miracles ended, they were returned to their place as beings who can only influence us, not overpower our free will.

Question 395: Is it possible that a person can violate the Word of God and not be accountable because of a medical problem?

Answer 395: The simple answer to this is yes. We will consider a couple of examples of this idea. We all know that children are exempt from being held accountable for breaking the Law of God. This is not because of their age, but because of their mental capabilities. A person who is mentally challenged to the point of being a child in mental capabilities will never reach the age of accountability. A person who has Tourette’s will often scream obscenities without any ability to control themselves. A schizophrenic may commit various sins before being diagnosed with their disease. A person battling major depression may take their own life based largely on the chemical makeup of their brains. In all of these things we see physical diseases causing sinful behavior that will not result in punishment.

Having said this, we are seeing some extending this idea to cover a wide variety of sins and circumstances which do not excuse behavior. We are seeing some refer to alcoholism as a disease like cancer or the flu. Alcoholism is the result of a sinful, willful choice to drink. Others say that homosexuality is a genetic trait and that homosexuals have no control over their sin. Participating in homosexual activity is a choice just as participating in heterosexual activity is a choice!

Where do we draw the line? When a person becomes mentally capable of understanding the Gospel in its entirety, they are accountable for their sins. Earthly circumstances will not change

our accountability (**1 Corinthians 10:13**). However, physical diseases can absolutely affect the judgment of God (consider the demonic possessions of Jesus' time). Lucky for us that we do not have to make this call! God will gladly handle that for us!

Question 396: In the song "Thank You Lord", we find the line "Please reveal your will to me so I can serve You for eternity". Did God not already do this for us in the Bible?

Answer 396: Last week we looked at the idea that we are to sing with understanding and make sure that our songs teach Biblical ideas (**1 Corinthians 14:15**). The simple answer to this question is yes. God has indeed revealed His Will for us in the New Testament. God's Will is that we are faithful to Him in all ways so that we make it home to Heaven. That's it! That is the totality of God's Will for our lives. Everything else that we do on this planet is inconsequential to our eternity.

Now let's turn our attention specifically to this song. There are two ways to view the lyrics we often sing in this song. First, we need wisdom in order for God's Will to be apparent to us (**James 1:5**). With that in mind, this song may simply be a plea for understanding as we study the Word of God. With this understanding, we see God's Word as our instruction manual containing Jehovah's Will for our lives and we humbly seek His Wisdom in understanding that will. This is the way that I understand these lyrics.

There is another option which dives into our world's twisted understanding of God's Will. Most of us believe God has our individual decisions mapped out for our lives. When we go with His decisions, we find success because we are following God's Will. When we go against His decisions (which are not revealed to us in His Word or anywhere else) we find total failure. As a side-note, we also sin considering that going against the Will of God is sinful. With this thought, some may understand this song to say we need God to reveal His Will for us personally. There are many problems with this idea that I simply do not have time to discuss tonight because we are out of time. If you want more on this subject, you will just have to put in another fishbowl question.

Question 397: Please discuss the instructions to widows in **1 Timothy 5:9-14**.

Answer 397: The first two verses of this passage leave us with lots of unanswered questions concerning the day to day administration of benevolence in the first century church. There were women who were allowed to be placed on a "list" which indicates that the church was supporting their day to day lives. These women were provided with necessities, but I do not think that included housing based on the fact that they were expected to have raised a family before being put on the list. Because this would be ongoing support, there were certain requirements in place before a widow could be placed on this list.

"Younger" widows are not to be placed on this list. This does not mean that younger widows could not receive help from the church, but they were not to receive ongoing support from the

church. Instead, Paul expects these women to remarry and devote themselves to their family. The reason for this is very simple. Paul believes that the immaturity and lack of control found in these women would lead them to give in to temptation and lead them to turn to Satan if they were fully supported by the church. Idle hands are the devil's playground!

Question 398: Please reconcile **1 John 1:8** and **1 John 3:9**.

Answer 398: These passages may appear to offer us a contradiction. On one hand, John tells us that Christian who act as if they never sin are liars. On the other hand, John tells us that Christians cannot sin. How can we reconcile these two passages?

First, let's consider the idea that no Christian should deny the fact that they commit sin. Read **1 John 1:5-8**. Christians are to live lives which "walk in the light". This means we are to seek each day to do the Will of God and avoid selfish desires (**Matthew 7:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**). Even with the greatest of efforts put forth by Christians, we will never be able to live a life completely free from sinful activities. It is for this reason that we need the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us on a consistent basis (**1 John 1:7**).

Now let's consider the idea that Christians should not commit sin. Read **1 John 3:9**. The most important thing to note in this passage as it relates to our question is that the terms "practices sin" and "cannot sin" are in the present tense. This passage shows us that a person that follows Christ will find it completely impossible to live a habitual life of sin (**Luke 13:3**). Trying to do this has eternal consequences that must be considered (**Hebrews 10:26-27**). This passage shows us the complete impossibility of being a Christian that never repents!

Reconciling these two passages comes down to understanding that God knows we will fail in our attempt to serve Him. Because of this, He gives provisions to make sure we can find forgiveness through the blood of His Son. However, the blood of Jesus does not cover those who will not fight against sin. For those who will not try, there will never be a sacrifice that will cover their debt.

Question 399: Are there different levels of reward and punishment in eternity?

Answer 399: The idea of varying degrees of punishment is found throughout the New Testament. First, Jesus stated that based on what we see, our punishments may be different (**Matthew 11:23-24**). Second, He pointed out within a parable that some owe more punishment to God than others based on what they know (**Luke 12:47-48**). Finally, Peter makes it clear that there are different degrees of punishment (**2 Peter 2:20-21**). There are actually other passages that deal with this idea, but I think these will suffice. The biggest argument I hear for believing all punishment is the same is the idea that "hell is hell and God can't make one spot in hell better than another". My answer to this is two-fold. First, according to God He can indeed make one spot better than another. Second, since when did we decide God's power was limited to our understanding of the place He created?

Now, on to the other side of this question. If there are degrees of punishment, are there also degrees of reward? This idea doesn't get nearly the same attention as the first we have discussed. This is probably due to the fact that none of us want to feel cheated by not getting the very best Heaven has to offer. However, this too is a concept that makes sense Biblically and logically.

First, let us turn to the Biblical answer. Jesus spoke of varying rewards in **Matthew 10:40-42**. In speaking of the rewards for service, Christ says there are at least two different kinds: a prophet's reward and a righteous man's reward. Paul lays this out for us much more clearly (**1 Corinthians 3:10-15**). This passage speaks to the work of a preacher. In it, we see the souls of the ones he has worked to save. In judgment, these souls (work) will be seen as either adding to his reward or taking away from it. Notice that in either case, he is still saved, but his reward changes. How can this be if there are not degrees of reward? The main argument against this idea is the parable in which multiple workers work for varying amounts of time and receive the same reward. However, we must note that the work was the exact same and all other things were equal when it came to the workers in the parable. The only difference was the amount of time of service. Indeed, this does not affect one's reward which is the entire point of the parable in question.

Next, let's look at this logically. The very idea of justice prohibits me from believing that I will stand before God and receive the exact same reward as the great men and women who have literally given their lives for the cause of Christ. Also, the very idea of personalities takes away the fact that we will all enjoy Heaven in the same way. Some of us like church more than others. Will God miraculously change us on Judgment Day so that we all appreciate Heaven in the exact same way? Of course not. There are indeed degrees of reward and punishment. And for me, I will take any degree of reward from God so long as I avoid any degree of punishment from Him!

Question 400: Song question: In the song "I Stand Amazed" we sing the line "He had no tears for His own grief, but sweat drops of blood for mine". Is this a Biblical idea?

Answer 400: Absolutely not. This is one of my most hated songs because of this line. Jesus most certainly had tears for His own grief. Read **Hebrews 5:7-8** and **Matthew 26:38-39**. Both these passages clearly indicate that Jesus was concerned about the death He was about to endure on the cross. Common sense also tells us that any human who was about to endure death by crucifixion would have great stress and grief for Himself. To deny this idea is to deny the humanity of Jesus Christ.

We also need to consider the other side of verse as well. I think the writer of this song was trying to indicate that Jesus was thinking of us as He endured the cross. I completely agree with this idea. However, Jesus was not sad at the thought of us during this time. He was about to give us the opportunity for forgiveness through His sacrifice. Indeed, this was His motivation for choosing to endure the cross! Why would this idea bring Him grief? This would be equivalent to a doctor crying because you have a disease as he delivers the news that there is a cure! Jesus'

grief came not from opening the doors of salvation, but from the pain He would have to endure in order to open those doors!

Question 401: Is there a contradiction between Paul's instructions found in **1 Timothy 4:11-12** and **1 Timothy 4:14**?

Answer 401: The answer to this question is no. Both these passages deal with the idea that there are women who become widows at a young age. Paul's instructions here are for these women. Paul tells the church not to add these women to the list of those supported by the church. The reason for this is because they are young enough to eventually move past their grief enough to desire a relationship in the future. This becomes a problem because those placed on the list of support have given a pledge to God which most likely involved serving on a consistent basis within the church. If they leave this obligation to raise a family, they have broken their pledge to God. This leads us to the second passage.

Instead of putting these women on the list of support, Paul wants them to go ahead and get married. This prevents them from being put in the position of maintaining their pledge to God or getting married again. In this passage, Paul does not contradict himself. Rather, He gives a hypothetical situation that would place a young widow in a very bad spot and then gives the commandment which would prevent this from happening!

Question 402: Why did Jesus cry when He came to Lazarus' funeral?

Answer 402: Read John 11:35. There is no doubt that Jesus had great love for Lazarus and his family. For this reason, many would say that Jesus cried because He saw firsthand what death was doing to this family. However, I think it is important to notice the order of this account from John.

First, Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick and He needs to come heal him (11:1-4). On the way, Jesus informs the disciples that Lazarus has already died (11:5-16). Next, Jesus arrives and is greeted by Martha who is not happy that Jesus delayed His coming to Bethany (11:17-24). Jesus sees the family of Lazarus grieving and is moved in His Spirit to act (11:33). After this, Jesus asks to see the tomb where they have laid Lazarus (11:34). It is at this point that the Bible tells us Jesus began to weep (11:35).

As we look through this account, we have to ask why Jesus does not cry when He is moved in spirit after seeing the family. After all, this would be a clear indication that He was weeping because they were saddened. However, He does not cry until He moves to raise Lazarus from the dead. In truth, I don't think Jesus cries tears of sympathy with this family. Instead, I think Jesus cries tears for Lazarus. Lazarus had run his race. His faithfulness was intact and he had reached Paradise where he could await his reward with no fear of molestation. Now, Lazarus will be brought back to our world to endure an unknown amount of time as he awaits his second physical death. The tears of Jesus are a reminder that this world is not our home!

Question 403: Please explain all the benefits of baptism.

Answer 403: The first and greatest benefit of baptism is forgiveness of the sins of our past (**1 Peter 3:21, Mark 16:16**). In the waters of baptism, we contact the blood of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice which was made on the cross of Calvary. This act forgives our sins. Other acts are involved in this process (Repentance, confession), but none can replace the act of baptism in the plan of God to save our souls.

Second, baptism makes us the spiritual children of God. Read **Galatians 4:4-9**. We are adopted by God when we “become known by God”. When does this happen? This happens at the point of baptism when we call on God (**Acts 22:16**). We call on God and God chooses us in adoption. From that moment on, we are God’s children which give us blessings only given to children, including the ability to call on Him through prayer without the need of baptism.

Third, baptism makes us a part of the spiritual family called the church. When we are baptized, we are added to the saved of the world (**Acts 2:38, 47**). With God as our Father, we gain brothers and sisters who can understand our struggles and encourage us day after day.

Finally, it gives us a marker to remember the day we became a forgiven child of God. Baptism is a memorial for us. It stands in our past like a tombstone stands over a grave (**Romans 6:1-6**). It is a marker for us that we have followed God. It gives us confidence as God’s children and offers us a simple reminder that we are forgiven.

Question 404: In Acts 16:16, we find a slave girl who is possessed. She is making money for her masters by telling fortunes. If this spirit is from Satan, does he have the ability to see the future and give the gift of seeing the future?

Answer 404: This is one of the most fascinating accounts found in the book of Acts. We find Paul traveling on a missionary journey. He has converted a woman named Lydia and has decided to stay on in the city of Thyatira in order to preach. As he does this work, he comes across a young woman who is said to “have the power of divination”. As the story unfolds, we see Paul rebuking the spirit and facing severe punishment for doing so (**Acts 16:16-21**). Our question tonight centers our attention on the spirit that inhabits this young woman.

First, we need to establish what sort of spirit had taken over this woman. It is obvious that this young woman was possessed by a demon just like many others we find in the New Testament. This demon recognized Paul and Jehovah. It was also cast out by the power of Christ. Indeed, this story sounds very familiar to us because it shares so many similarities with various accounts we find in the Gospels. This means that this demon would have been able to take control of this young woman.

Second, we need to ask whether or not this woman could truly see the future. The original words used in this passage help us answer this question. The word used is “pneuma puython”. The

words literally mean spirit of the python (serpent). This was a phrase used by the ancient fortune tellers who were supposedly inspired by Apollos. The most famous of these soothsayers were the oracles at Delphi. Luke uses a phrase which describes this woman's position in life, not her ability to tell the future. This demon was able to use this woman as a false psychic for her world. Like so many of these people today, this woman's con was extremely successful for her masters.

Finally, I do not want to leave this passage without answering the last part of the question. Does Satan know the future? I believe this question is best answered by considering the betrayal of Jesus and the cross of Calvary. We know that Satan had a key role in these two events (**John 13:27**). If Satan knew the future, he would have known that Jesus would be resurrected and would claim the ultimate victory over death and Satan. In addition to this, there is no indication that angels have any special ability to see into the future. With both these things in mind, I do not believe the devil has the power to see into the future.

Question 405: Why does Paul use different titles to introduce himself in his letters (Apostle of Christ, fellow worker, fellow prisoner)?

Answer 405: There are three basic reasons for Paul to use different titles for himself at different times. First, he uses different titles depending on the audience he is writing. Some of Paul's letters are written to churches or individuals he knew very well. Others were established quickly by Paul on his missionary journeys and simply did not share the same level of friendship. We would not use the same titles for ourselves when writing to our close relative as we would use when writing to a stranger.

The second reason centers us in on the letters themselves. Paul uses different titles because the specific circumstances he is dealing with changes. There are times when Paul feels the need to express his authority as he writes these letters. He often does this when he is dealing with major issues inside a church.

The final reason is a change in Paul's personal circumstances. He introduces himself as a prisoner of the Lord in the book of Philemon because he is imprisoned at the time of the writing. He wouldn't have been able to use this title when writing other letters because he wasn't imprisoned.

Question 406: What sins keep God from hearing our prayers? How do we pray to ask forgiveness?

Answer 406: Sin places a wall between God and us (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). We know that God can still hear us in the sense of being able to hear the words we speak. After all, He is omnipresent and omniscient so we know that He still knows the words of our prayers. This passage tells us that He does not hear us in the sense of paying any heed to our petitions.

When we allow sin to become a normal part of our lives, we separate ourselves from God. All sins can do this to us. However, no sin has to do this to us. When we are striving to serve Christ to the best of our ability, sin does not stick to us or cause us spiritual consequences (**1 John 1:5-7**). These sins do not separate us from God because Christ's blood is constantly working to cleanse us. In addition to this, sins that are repented of do not cause us spiritual consequences (**1 John 5:16-17, Jeremiah 31:34**). Once we repent of our sins, the blood of Jesus takes away all the consequences those sins.

To answer the second part of this question, when we choose to repent and come back to God, He forgives us. He is the Father of the prodigal just waiting to hear our call. When He hears that call, He responds by wiping our sins away.

Question 407: Do our loved ones who have died know what their family members are doing on earth?

Answer 407: The only source for information concerning the afterlife before judgment that I know of is found in Luke 16. In this passage, we read the story of the rich man and Lazarus. After the deaths of these two men, we get a glimpse into the afterlife. I think the words of the rich man may help us with our question tonight (**Luke 16:27-31**). From this we know a few things. First, we know that we will still be "us" in Heaven. We will know who we are and where we came from. Second, we will still remember our family members on earth. We will remember those we have left behind and be aware of them in the afterlife. Third, we will still be interested in our families. The rich man wanted good things for his family members. However, the fact that the rich man cannot contact his brothers and only seems to know the status of his brothers at the time of his death leads me to believe there is no connection between our world and the world of the dead. I don't believe the two worlds meet or that anyone can see from one world to the other. In other words, I do not believe that people in the world of the dead can keep up with people in the world of the living. However, that's only part of the answer tonight.

As we think about the rich man, we must understand that every person will have the same memories in the afterlife. Something that brings a smile to my face is the idea that in the afterlife we will be able to catch our ancestors up on the lives of their family members. Grandparents will get to hear about grandchildren they never met in this world. Family stories will be told as family members are reunited in Paradise. So, my answer to tonight's question is yes. I do believe that people will know about their family members in the afterlife. However, I don't think they will get the information as eyewitnesses to the events of our lives.

Question 408: Why did God wait three days to send Ananias to Saul?

Answer 408: Saul of Tarsus is traveling to Damascus in order to arrest Christians in his attempt to destroy the church. On the road to Damascus, he is confronted by Jesus Christ. He is fully convinced that he is listening to the voice of one who should be the Lord of his life. He is told to go inside the city walls and wait for further instructions. After three days, Ananias was told to go

to Saul and tell him how to cleanse his soul from the stains of sin. Our question tonight is why was there a delay in sending Ananias.

To answer this question, I want us to consider a couple of other times when people were made to wait for three days. First, let's journey back to the days leading up to the invasion of Canaan by Joshua and his forces. Before crossing the Jordan, the Israelites were forced to watch the waters for three days (**Joshua 1:11**). Next, let us journey back to the days of Jonah when the prophet was swallowed by the great fish. For three days, he sat in the belly of that great beast (**Jonah 1:17**). Finally, the most important three days this planet has ever seen. After the death of Christ, He sat for three days before He arose. We see a recurring theme that I believe carries a great lesson for us.

As you look at each of these four stories which contain a three-day delay, we could ask the same question: why did God make the people wait. Why could the Israelites not march immediately across the Jordan? Why did Jonah need three days in the fish? Why did the world have to wait three days to see the risen savior? Why did Saul have to wait three days in his sins? The answer to these questions leads me to one simple conclusion. Each of these delays was meant to remind those involved that without God, they were absolutely helpless. At the end of these three-day delays, God intervened to demonstrate His ultimate power! Until that moment, everything came to a standstill!

Question 409: What was happening in **Exodus 24:9-11**? Did these people actually see God?

Answer 409: As we arrive at this passage, we find ourselves in the middle of God delivering the commandments to Israel that will make them His chosen nation. Moses has spent time on Mt. Sinai and God has been working with him. In the midst of all of this, God calls Moses and some of the leaders of Israel to have a feast on the side of the mountain. The reason for this feast is to solidify the covenant relationship being established by God with Israel. It was often the case that a covenant relationship was established with a feast, and this one was no different.

No on to the bigger question from this passage. Did the people actually see God? Yes, they did. We know that it is impossible for man to see God and live (**Exodus 33:17-20**). We also know that God works around this and makes appearances before man throughout the Bible. How does He do this? He hides His glory behind a disguise of some sort. He hides within a burning bush, a cloud, and human flesh. In this passage, the Israelites absolutely saw God, but they saw a version of God that He wanted them to see!

Question 410: In the song, "Come Share The Lord" is it appropriate to sing "No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs"? Does this verse send the wrong message?

Answer 410: This question comes from one verse concerning the Lord's Supper (**1 Corinthians 11:27**). From this passage, we understand that only those living the lives of true Christians should partake in the Lord's Supper. This idea has led some churches to go so far as to have

closed communions where only members are allowed to partake of the communion on Sunday mornings. With all this in mind, we turn our attention to song #916. Should we sing the line “No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs” when we could have non-Christians in our assemblies?

My answer is that this song is absolutely appropriate to sing before our communion. First, I think we put too much emphasis the lost when we consider the Corinthians passage. The Corinthian letter was written to Christians. When Paul wrote concerning the Lord’s Supper, he was addressing the Christians that were gathering together who were allowing sin to rule in their lives. To these people, Paul warns that partaking of the Lord’s Supper while living a life of willful disobedience would be destructive to the soul (**1 Corinthians 11:28-30**). While it is true that the Lord’s Supper is meant only for those who have formed the correct connection with Christ by obeying Him, the real danger in partaking in an unworthy manner is to Christians, not non-Christians. After all, does taking the Lord’s Supper make a lost person more lost?

Next, when we consider this song, I think we need to remember to allow the context to clarify any verse. In this song, we start with people who are gathering in the name of Christ. This is by definition those who are gathering in the right way and for the right reasons. In addition, the writer tells us that this song is meant to be sung by those who are one in Christ. This is an obvious reference to Christians. Finally, the writer tells us that we find our forgiveness as we partake of the communion. Again, this is an obvious reference to the fact that the Lord’s Supper is meant for those who are forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Is it possible these lyrics could be misunderstood? Certainly, but that will then become our responsibility as members to teach in order to clear the confusion.

Question 411: Please address the statement we often hear “I can live the Christian life without having any part of the church of the assembly of the church”.

Answer 411: There are two very simple answers to this problem which has become more and more common in our world today. People will say cute phrases like “I want Jesus, but not the church” or “I want Christianity, not churchianity”. In doing so, they believe they have solved the great problem of religion in our world...In reality, they have simply removed every possibility of begin held to the standard of God. Let’s answer this faulty thinking.

First, we need to understand what it means to be a Christian (**Acts 11:26**). A person who wants to live a “Christian” life wants to be a disciple of Christ. A disciple is a person who is a pupil or learner of someone. To be a Christian means that a person has devoted their lives to being a student of Christ. This takes more than just words (**Matthew 7:21**). This means that if I want to be a Christian and the New Testament gives a commandment to attend the gatherings of the church, I have to attend the gatherings of the church. Do we find that commandment (**Hebrews 10:24-25**)? A person cannot be a Christian and be willfully disobedient to the commandments of God!

Next, we need to understand the importance of the church within the schemes of God. The church was eternally in the mind of God (**Ephesians 3:8-12**). After she was established, the church became the most prized possession of God (**Ephesians 5:25-27**). Christ Himself has a vested interest in the assemblies of the church (**Matthew 18:20, Revelation 1:12-13**). Can you imagine how insulted our God feels when He hears people make cute sayings the treat His most valuable possession as if it is worthless?

Question 412: Does song #417 bring God down to a level that is beneath Him?

Answer 412: I have heard this question concerning this song a few times. My answer is no, this song does not bring God down to a level that is beneath Him. First, we need to understand that God has brought Himself down to our level on multiple occasions (Burning bush, pillar of fire, Jesus (**Philippians 2:5-7**), etc.). Second, I don't believe this writer was trying to make God more human to us. Rather, I think this writer was trying to use poetic language to describe the relationship he has with God. He sees God as walking with him and giving him understanding in this world. Finally, if we say that this song brings God down to our level and therefore should not be sung, we would have to do the same each time we give God human characteristics. For instance, we could no longer pray that God wrap His arms of comfort around a family that is grieving, we could not sing lean on his arm or precious lord take my hand, and we couldn't read passages like "The Lord is my Shepherd" or passages that use the idea of God's hands, eyes, ears, hands, etc.

Question 413: Do we have to forgive people when they do not ask us? If so, why do we have to do this when God doesn't?

Answer 413: I think to answer this question we must figure out exactly what we mean by the word forgive. On a certain level, we must forgive all people for the wrongs they commit against us (**Matthew 6:12, Romans 12:14**). Christians must not carry rage, malice, slanderous speech, etc. in their hearts towards other people. If someone does something wrong to us and we find ourselves holding onto these things, we are in violation of God's commandments.

With all this in mind, we must remember that we have every freedom when it comes to our relationships with other people. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean that a relationship goes back to the way it once was. If your friend does something to you that harms you, you must forgive them in the since that you do not want bad things for that person. However, God does not require you to maintain that friendship in your life. If a husband cheats on his spouse, the wife cannot live her life with rage in her heart, but she doesn't have to keep him as her husband. If a person sins against God, God will not wish harm on that person or hope for their demise (**Matthew 5:45**). However, He also will not restore His relationship with that person until they repent and ask. With this understanding in place, I think God has simply held us to the same standard He holds Himself to.

Question 414: Should Christians protest?

Answer 414: In our country today, it appears that protesting has become a favorite past time for many people. Every day we can turn on our television and see large groups of people protesting everything from climate change to the current president to racial issues to income issues. As Christians living in this world, we need to consider the issue of protesting and how to go about it if we are allowed. I want to note that this issue will interact with the government and therefore, we will limit our answer to our country and the rules we live by.

The first issue here is whether or not a Christian can protest our government. We are commanded to be obedient to our government unless said government violates God (**Romans 13:1-2**). However, built into our government is the ability for its citizens to peacefully protest all things...including the government itself. In our nation, a Christian would have the ability to protest its government and still live in subjection to that government!

The second issue then is how can we protest and still remain a Christian. The simple rule for a Christian is that circumstances do not change the standards of God (**Luke 9:23**). If a Christian cannot use foul and abusive language in their everyday life, they can't use it in a protest (**Colossians 3:8**). If a Christian can't join hands with evil in their everyday life, they can't do it in a protest (**2 Corinthians 6:14**). If a Christian has to work to eat in everyday life, they can't be professional protestors (**2 Thessalonians 3:10**). If a Christian has to treat others they way they want to be treated in everyday life, they have to do the same in protests (**Matthew 7:12**). If a Christian has to live in peace with all men in everyday life, they have to do the same in a protest (**Hebrews 12:14**). If a Christian has to avoid the appearance of evil in everyday life, they have to do so in protest (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**).

The third issue then is not if a Christian has the right to protest in our world, but rather it is wise for a Christian join in the protests of the world (**1 Corinthians 10:23**). I would say two things about this. One: considering all that could go wrong (see above) I consider the protests we see in our nation to be a dangerous spot filled with temptations for Christians. Second: I truly believe that a person who would spend hours of time organizing, traveling, and participating in a protest would be better off spending all that effort trying to convert those in their world to the cause of Christ.

Question 415: Does Satan know our thoughts? If not, how is it that he attacks our weaknesses and uses them against us?

Answer 415: In one sense, the answer to this question is no. There is no indication in the Bible that angels (of which the devil was one) have the ability to read the minds of men. As you see angels appearing on this earth, they never give any indication of having this power. In the same way, Satan does not appear to show any evidence that he can read our thoughts either. It is possible that God has given Satan this power in some form or another while he serves as the god of this earth (**2 Corinthians 4:4**), but there is simply no evidence that proves this to us.

Now for the second part of this question. How does Satan attack us personally if he cannot read our thoughts? First, he can do this because he has been watching us since the very beginning! He knows how people think and he has watched us and individuals as well! Second, Satan has a way of planting thoughts into our minds in one way or another (**2 Corinthians 11:3, Acts 5:3, Genesis 3:1-5, 1 Chronicles 21:1-2**). When we accept the thought of the Devil, he knows what they are! Finally, its important for us to remember that most sins seem to fit large numbers of people. How many marriages have ended because of the one sin of adultery? How many struggle with sins of speech? How many have lost their way because of greed and materialism? It turns out that Satan doesn't have to throw too many temptations at us to figure out exactly which ones will work!

Question 416: What is the point of Song of Solomon?

INTERPRETATIONS:

1. ALLEGORICAL

- a. The bridegroom is God and Israel is the bride (Jewish Talmud).
- b. The bridegroom is Christ and the bride is man's soul created in the image of Christ.
- c. The bridegroom is God and the bride is Mary (Catholic).
- d. The bridegroom is God and the bride is wisdom.

2. LITERAL: A love song about the love of Solomon and the Shulamite maiden.

As I consider these basic understandings for this book, I focus in on two. The first one reaches back to the Jewish understanding of this book and pictures the husband as God and the bride as physical and spiritual Israel. With this understanding, we see God's undying love poured out upon His faithful servants of all time.

The second is that this book is a commentary on marriage from a husband's perspective as inspired by God. With this, it is a simple reminder that a husband should be devoted to his spouse and only her. He should find fulfillment with his wife and be satisfied with her. Isn't it ironic that Solomon who was noted for his wives and concubines would be used by God to show husbands how to treat their wives?

Question 417: Why did God put the tree in the garden when He knew Adam and Eve would eat?

Answer 417: I would say this question is an oldie but a goodie. It pops up from time to time and has been around for a very long time. The idea is that if God knew that Adam and Eve would sin, why give them the option to sin in the first place. The easiest answer to this is that God desires us

to love Him. Love can only be achieved when there is a choice involved. If God removes our ability to choose sin, He also removes our ability to choose Him!

As we consider this question, I would also notice one more thing. I have never heard this same logic used when it comes to Noah's ark. Nobody asks why God would put a huge boat on this planet knowing that Noah and his family would be saved. Yet, as we consider both these accounts, the answer is the same. All of God's interactions with mankind center on the idea that He wants to provide us with the option to both choose and reject Him! His desire is for us to choose Him!

Question 418: How will our works be tried by fire (**1 Corinthians 3:13**)?

Answer 418: Let's start by reading the context of this passage. Read **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**. The context of this passage is dealing directly with the building up of the church through the salvation of men's souls. Every Christian has a responsibility to be a part of this process (**Matthew 28:18-20**). In order for a Christian to do this correctly, we must build on the foundation laid by Christ (**Ephesians 2:19-21**). If we as Christians use God's Word to save the souls of man, we are building upon a wonderful foundation and building up the church! Now let's answer our question tonight.

As we build the church, we save some who are described here as "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw". This describes the souls we work with on a day in and day out basis. This is just Paul's way of saying something that Jesus has already told us (**Matthew 13:8**). We never know the impact that a person we help lead to Christ will have on the church. Every soul working for God is doing a good work, but some will have more talents and more impact on eternity! In this way, we separate out the gold, silver, and precious stones from our list. However, what about the wood, hay, and straw?

As Paul continues this idea he points to the fact that our work will be tested. This world tests the faith of every person who has been saved by God. Unfortunately, there are going to be some who find salvation, but are burned up by the pressures of this world and will not reach Heaven. These are described as the wood, hay, and straw. For those of us working to save the souls of man, we see some of our work being done in vain as people sometimes walk away from the faith. Paul reminds us that God rewards us for our efforts, not our results. We lose because we are not joined by all that we could be joined by in Heaven, but we will make it to our eternal home if we do what we are asked to do.

Question 419: Please explain the doctrine of original sin.

Answer 419: The doctrine of original sin is most closely associated with John Calvin and the Catholic church. In its purest form, original sin is the idea that sin is a genetic defect passed down from our father Adam which results in infants being born contaminated by sin and lost.

This doctrine walks hand in hand with infant baptism. Let's take a look at the origin of this false doctrine.

Original sin comes from three basic Scriptures. First, we need to take a look at **Romans 5:12-14**. According to those espousing the doctrine of original sin, the meaning of this passage is that we do not have to sin in order to be affected by Adam's sin. However, the passage itself tells us that death spread to all men "because all men sinned". This passage does not speak to a taking responsibility for another man's sin. In fact, it teaches the exact opposite of this!

The second passage to investigate is **1 Corinthians 15:20-22**. According to those espousing the doctrine of original sin, this passage makes it clear that death came through Adam. According to them, it means that we are born spiritually dead. Once again, the passage itself answers this accusation. If death enters through Adam with no action from us, then we have to say life enters through Christ with no action from us. Of course, we know that neither of these statements is true.

The final passage is **Psalms 51:5**. For those espousing original sin, this is clear evidence that David was born a sinner. It is certainly the most complicated text that we will deal with tonight. The problem with taking this one passage and creating a doctrine from it is that there are multiple ways to understand this passage. The first is the way we have just discussed which upholds the original sin doctrine. The second is that this is David's confession that he was born from an adulterous relationship. While many think this is the case, I doubt he would have done this to his mother or that he would have even known this information. The final way we will discuss is the most likely. In Hebrew poetry (and most all poetry), exaggeration is common place. This seems to be a case where David is speaking of his great sin with Bathsheba and explaining it by exaggerating his own sinful nature. A similar idea is seen when Job testifies that he has raised orphans from youth and helped widows from infancy (**Job 31:17-18**).

Having said all of this, only one passage is needed to refute the idea of original sin (**Matthew 19:14**). If children are innocent enough for Christ, they are innocent enough for me!

Question 420: When a church practices disfellowshipping and it involves physical family members, what should the family do?

Answer 420: First, let us make it very clear that if a choice is ever to be made between our physical family and God, we must choose God every time (**Matthew 10:34-38**). We need to also remember that love of family should never lead us to acceptance of sin! Jesus loved the world, but hated the sin He saw in it. With these two ideas in place, let us turn our attention to the question at hand.

I think the best way to do this is to set up a hypothetical situation to consider. Let us assume that a family of four attend a congregation. There is a mother, father, son, and daughter. When the son becomes a teenager, he is baptized and begins serving as a member of the congregation. At

the age of twenty, the son is introduced to alcohol at a party and is immediately consumed by it. He quickly becomes an alcoholic. His actions begin bringing shame upon himself, his physical family, and his spiritual family. After several months of efforts, the church moves to disfellowship the young man. How should the family behave?

First, this family has a responsibility to realize that their child is not above the rules and standards set by God. Their anger should not be directed at their church family, but rather at the sin that has destroyed their son's life. Second, they should let their child know that they agree with the church and its actions. If a church stands with God on a moral issue, no Christian should disagree with the church because they are connected to the person committing the sin. Finally, the family should be the link that helps guide a person back to God. I don't believe that a father or mother stops being a father or mother to their child who has been disfellowshipped by the church. I do not believe a child stops loving, respecting, and caring for a parent who has been disfellowshipped. If these relationships survive the first and second steps, they may be the road that leads a person back to God.

Question 421: Is it wrong to bring up our past sins after we are forgiven?

Answer 421: The answer to this question is yes and no. If a person brings up their past for the right reason, then it is not wrong to do it. The Bible shows us how to use our past sins correctly. Consider Paul's words (**Galatians 1:13-17**). Consider the words of David (**Psalms 32:1-7**). Consider the example of Zaccheus (**Luke 19:8-10**). In all of these instances we see men who had sinned and were forgiven by God. They used their pasts for one simple reason: they wanted to point to the change in their lives which were brought on by God! To do this brings honor and glory to God and shows people the positive change He can have in their lives. If you have overcome a past sin, you are in a unique place to help others overcome that sin in their lives. Now let's consider a couple of ways we shouldn't use mention our pasts.

First, we shouldn't use past sins to be a victim and have a pity party. We have overcome our sins as Christians. With that in mind, we should never find ourselves using our past to complain about how things were. Second, we shouldn't long after our past sins. When Christians speak of their former manner of life, it should be done with regret, not longing. We should still be ashamed of our sins even when they have been forgiven.

Question 422: Did God kill Ezekiel's wife just to make a point (**Ezekiel 24:15-27**)?

Answer 422: The simple answer to this question is yes. The prophets of God were often called to perform various tasks as living illustrations of God's message. Often times, this meant going to extreme physical actions or making extreme life decisions (consider Hosea). As you look at the prophet Ezekiel, it is easy to say that the requirements God placed upon him were some of the direst for any prophet. For instance, in chapter 4 Ezekiel is instructed to lay on his side for 180 days in a state of near fasting. The food he was to eat was specified as a stew which was to be

cooked over human dung. When Ezekiel protests, God allows him to swap to cow dung instead! We must not overlook the great faith of Ezekiel.

Why were the instructions to Ezekiel so extreme? To answer that question, we need to understand that Ezekiel was writing in one of the darkest periods of Israel's history. Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon where he had been taken during one of the many invasions of Judah. Within a couple of years of the prophecy concerning Ezekiel's wife, Jerusalem would fall completely to Babylon and the full period of captivity would begin. All of this was the result of the evil deeds that had been committed by the kings of Judah and the people who often followed their lead. It was indeed desperate times in Judah...and as the old saying goes, desperate times call for desperate measures.

In the midst of all of this, Ezekiel's wife dies. This could have been by the direct actions of God or by God allowing nature to take its course. A great deal of confusion comes when we forget that the Bible can speak of the passive inactivity of God as the actions of God. In other words, the Bible can say God acts when He simply allows things to happen. The blow spoken of here that would take Ezekiel's wife may have simply been an illness which God would not heal. Or God may have stricken the blow that led to her death. In any event, the point of all of this was to show the people that they were about to lose something precious. Jerusalem was about to fall and their response to this great event would have a direct impact on their eternity. Before we leave this passage, we need to ask one more question. Would God sacrifice one person in order to save the souls of many? For an answer, read the crucifixion account!

Question 423: When an idol was made by man, did God give that idol actual power so that man would have a choice to believe in its power?

Answer 423: No idol is ever seen doing ANYTHING in the Word of God. An idol never answers a prayer, performs a miracle, or speaks to humanity at any point in the Bible. We do see times when idols are called upon to do various things and fail to answer (Consider Mt. Carmel). The reason for this is very simple...there was/is no power in any idol (**Isaiah 44:9-18**).

The truth of this actually makes idolatry far sillier than if God had given power to idols. It didn't take any power for man to make false gods in his own image. Throughout the ages, man has created gods of wood, stone, and precious metals. Throughout the ages man has fallen before these idols to beg for their help and salvation. Throughout the ages, these gods have failed to answer these calls. Throughout the ages, this has not stopped the sin of idolatry. Man doesn't need an excuse to do this or a reason to keep doing this. We are simply that gullible.

Question 424: Does Psalm 150 mean that we should use instruments in our worship to God?

Answer 424: Many of us have been asked why churches of Christ do not use instruments in their worship. Some of you watching from home may have asked yourself the same question as you have joined our worship services. If you have ever gotten into this discussion you have probably either thought or been asked to explain why the Old Testament worship allowed flutes, lyres, horns, etc. This question strikes at the heart of that discussion so let's dive in.

First, let's get a general understanding of the question of musical instruments in New Testament worship. To do this, we will talk about two basic things. The first one is the most important as we will ask the question what does the New Testament have to say about musical instruments in worship. To do this, we need to look at two passages in the New Testament. Read Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. For many people these passages do not mention instruments at all. But in fact they do. As you read Ephesians, you can see that Christians are to "make melody" in their heart while they sing. This word literally means to "pluck" the strings of the heart. There is a very clear instrument that is to be used when we worship God...the instrument of the heart. Once God tells us what we are supposed to use, He then does not have the need to tell us all the things we are not to use. For instance, when God told us to be born of water (John 3), He didn't have to say that we shouldn't add milk or coffee in our baptisms. To worship God in Spirit and truth, we worship Him with our voices, not our pianos or guitars.

Now let's look at the second aspect which takes a distant second place to the authority of Scripture. Most people in today's world simply accept that musical instruments are a part of their worship and don't even give it a second thought. However, this has not always been the case. In the history of Christianity, we see that instruments had to force their way in the door. For over 700 years after Christ walked the earth, musical instruments are simply not present in the worship of the church. Eventually, the Catholic church would take the step to add instruments which would lead in part to the division of the Eastern and Western Catholic churches. In addition to this, countless historical religious leaders from across the denominational spectrum have spoken out against its use. Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, and Charles Spurgeon are amongst those who have made it a point to disavow the use of instruments in worship. Considering the history of this issue, I believe it is worth our time to consider today.

Finally, let us consider the question at hand. Does the use of instruments in the Book of Psalms authorize us to use instruments today? The simple answer to this is no. In order for us to use the Old Testament as our standard of authority for one issue, we must use it as our standard for every issue (James 2:10-12). This means that we must keep the Sabbath, establish a priesthood from the tribe of Levi, build the Temple, and reinstitute the sacrifices of the Old Testament as well. We cannot pick the parts of the Old Testament we like and leave the rest behind...However, there is another warning we should consider about the Old Testament. Even if we do keep the Old Testament law perfectly and completely, we will still be lost (Hebrews 8:13, 10:4). We are saved by Christ, named as Christians, and worship Christ His way rather than ours.

Question 425: What does providence mean? Where did the word come from?

Answer 425: Webster's defines this word as divine guidance or care. Interestingly enough, the word only appears once in the Bible. Yet today, we use this word often as we describe the interaction of God with the world to care for His People. So what does the word really mean?

Well let's start with that use of the word in the Bible. Read Acts 24:1-4. Did you notice this passage doesn't even deal with God? In this passage, Tertullus uses this word to kiss up to Felix as he attempts to get Paul found guilty in his trial. He describes the governor Felix's work as providence. This gives us some idea of how providence should be viewed. The government stands at a distance and institutes various programs and employs various people in order to care for the needs of the people. At least that's what the government in Rome set about to do. I think this can help us understand the providential care of God, but let's dive a little deeper.

The best understanding I have concerning providence comes from a book Brother Dan chose for our adult Wednesday night class a few years ago. In this book, I was assigned a chapter entitled providence perhaps. The main idea was very simple: when God uses providence to care for His people, we won't even know for sure that God has intervened. Let us take a look at one more passage as it relates to this topic and see if we can make sense of it. Read Matthew 5:45. Is rain a natural part of the processes of our earth or does God intervene to make it rain? The simple truth is we will never know. When rain falls, it is certainly a part of the natural systems God has put into place. However, if an area were dealing with a great drought and people prayed for rain, can we be sure God does not send rain specifically to answer the prayers of those people. This would still be well within the realm of the natural world and no one would be able to know that God intervened. This would be providential care. We have no way of knowing for sure.

With all this in mind, I want us to look at a passage I use often when discussing God's interaction with man in today's world. Read 1 Kings 19:11-14. People often look for God in the big events and expect Him to do huge things...we must remember that providential care which is vital to our spiritual survival is often as gentle as a blowing breeze in our lives. Don't miss Him!

Question 426: Can Satan take the form of a human? Has he done this in the past?

Answer 426: After thinking about this, I could not think of a time when the Bible specifically says that the devil took human form. We do have a couple of instances when the Devil makes an appearance and we don't know what form he actually takes (Luke 4, Job 1:7). There is however something that happens in the New Testament I believe indicates the possibility of this (Mark 5:1-13). With demonic possession in essence being a demon taking control of a human body, we can certainly use this as a form of the devil and his angels taking human form. With that in mind, does demonic possession still occur today?

During the times of miracles, things were happening on this earth which are simply not seen today. Things such as the dead being raised, sickness being healed through the laying on of

hands, speaking in foreign languages without studying them, and exorcisms were commonplace in the work of the first century church. The reason for this is very clearly explained (John 20:30-31). These miracles were meant to be used by true Christians in order to prove they were on the side of God. With this faith in place, they were able to spread the message of Christ throughout the world. You see this quite literally taking place over and over again in Jesus' life and in the early days of the church recorded in the Book of Acts. This explains a lot about then, but what about today? Do these things still take place?

The simple answer to this is no. We know this because we see the promise that the miraculous times of the New Testament would come to an end (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Now we just need to know what the perfect is and when it arrived on this earth. At that moment, the miraculous events of God and the miraculous events of the Devil came to a close. Paul reveals to us exactly what the perfect is when he refers to looking in the mirror and seeing all things fully and clearly. That is a clear reference to the New Testament in its written form (James 1:22-25, Jude 1:3). Once that arrived which was within a couple of hundred years, we no longer needed miracles to prove one's allegiance with God. Once God removed this, He also removed the advantage the Devil had to act miraculously in this world as well. Today, both God and Satan have a message, but are acting in a very providential way!

Question 427: Which is more important in worship: our actions or our attitude?

Answer 427: The simple answer to this question is yes! Let's start by stating that worship is one of the most important things in the life of a Christian. It cannot be avoided and should be considered a blessing. The word worship means to kiss toward or more literally to blow a kiss toward (Thayer's). Worship is a sign of our affection and devotion towards God. We must never take it for granted.

Now let us understand the importance of the actions of worship. First, just as faith without works is dead, so too is saying we can worship without works (**James 2:26**). It is simply impossible to truly love someone on a deep level without showing that love in words and actions. Second, not only are actions required in our worship, but the commanded actions are required in our worship (**John 4:24, 1 Samuel 15:13-16**). We did not create worship, God did. We do not control worship, God does. We do not define worship, God does! You simply cannot remove actions from the definition of worship.

Now let us turn our attention to the importance of attitudes in worship. Those who worship God must worship in complete humility (**Isaiah 6:5**). Those who worship God must involve their heart/spirit/emotions (**John 4:24, Ephesians 5:19**). Those who worship God must worship in harmony with those of the household of faith (**Proverbs 6:16-19**). To ignore the correct attitudes in worship is to ignore the basic idea of showing affection through our worship. In truth, action and attitude are simply two sides of the worship coin!

Question 428: Why does the church of Christ not have priests?

Answer 428: In order to answer this question, we must first understand exactly what a priest is and what role they fill. I think the simplest understanding of a priest is to see him as a bridge between God and man. In the Old Testament Law, they filled this role by offering constant worship to Jehovah, offering sacrifices on behalf of the people, delivering the messages of God to the people, etc. This priesthood was seen as the bridge between Heaven and Earth. Now that we understand this concept, let's look at this question.

In one sense, I have to agree with the statement found in this question. Within the churches of Christ, we do not have priests (plural). Instead, we have one Priest that bridges our hearts with the mind of God (**1 Timothy 2:5**). Jesus Christ is the only being that can bring Christians to the Father in Heaven (**John 14:6**). To put oneself in place of Christ by insisting that God's people use you in order to reach God is the height of human arrogance and should be rejected by all people.

Having said all of this, there is another angle that we must examine as we look at this question. While it is true that no human can take the place of Jesus as a priest between Christians and the Father, the Bible is clear that the church is quite literally filled with priests (**1 Peter 2:9**). How do we reconcile these two ideas? The simple answer is that every Christian serves as a priest between the lost world and Jesus Christ. We are the keepers of the Word which is why our role in this world is so important (**Matthew 28:19-20**). As we live our lives showing an example of Christianity through our actions and spreading the message of Christ through our words, we become the bridge to bring the lost world to Jesus who then becomes the priest for the saved by linking us to Jehovah through His blood.

Question 429: Why did the crowd tell Jesus to leave the area (Matthew 8:28-34)?

Answer 429: In this account, we see Jesus exercising His authority over demons. To do this, He sends a group of demons into a herd of swine. The swine then run off a cliff which of course kills the swine. After doing this, the local people insist that Jesus leave immediately. The question under consideration is why the people would do this after seeing this amazing event.

The answer to this question lies in the heart of every single person that has ever been offered the opportunity to follow Christ. Every single Christian was at one point in their lives offered Christ. They had the choice to make between following Christ and following the world. All of us whether we remember it or not weighed out the cost in our minds before we decided to follow Christ. After deciding to follow Christ, all of us must weigh the cost each and every day of following Christ and deciding whether or not we are willing to pay the cost.

Let's compare this even with a couple of other examples from the New Testament. A rich young man who asked Jesus a question did not consider the gain worth the cost (**Mark 10:17-21**). A Pharisee named Saul decided it worth everything to follow Christ (**Philippians 3:8**). A group of

magicians would consider Jesus worth great monetary sacrifice (**Acts 19:19-20**). However, a group of silversmiths tried to destroy Christianity just to save their jobs (**Acts 19:23-26**). Throughout the Bible, we see people offered the mercy of God. Some of them accept the cost and follow God in order to reach Heaven. Others count the cost and reject God's offer of salvation. As we finish up this morning, we ask a simple question. To which group will your name be added? What is your answer when you count the costs of following Christ.

Question 430: What did Paul mean when he said we will judge the angels (**1 Corinthians 6:3**)?

Answer 430: The judgment of the world including the angels which fell from Heaven during the rebellion against God will take place with Christ alone executing judgment (**2 Timothy 4:1**). All of us will then be judged based on our deeds (**2 Corinthians 5:10**). The question this morning is what role will we play in judging the angels? To answer this, I will give the answer I found and then I will give you the answer I came up with.

The answer that many give is that we will judge the angels because we are mystically joined to Christ through the church. The idea here is that since the church is the body of Christ (**Ephesians 1:22-23**) and we are added or joined to the body at baptism (**Acts 2:47**) we are with Christ as He executes His judgment. In other words, this judgment is nothing but symbolic in nature and this passage shows our unity with Christ. While this unity cannot be denied, I do not see anything to point to this understanding within the text.

I believe there is another way for us to see view this passage. In a sense, Christ's life judged every Jewish person that had lived from the deliverance of the Law of Moses until the days of Christ. He did this because He removed any excuse they could have offered to the breaking of the Law (**Hebrews 4:15**). In a similar way, every Christian who survives this world with their faith intact and gains the victory we are promised judges everyone in the world and every fallen angel by removing their excuses for disobedience. In other words, no Jewish person can stand before God on judgment day and say it was impossible to live the Law perfectly because Jesus did it, and no person or angel can stand before God on judgment day and say it was impossible to live the law of liberty because Christians are doing it every single day!

Question 431: Could **Romans 5:13** excuse the sins of those who do not know the Gospel?

Answer 431: There are simply too many passages that tell us that those who do not hear the Gospel are not in a saved state with God. First, we know that ALL people sin and fall short of the glory of God (**Romans 3:23**). Second, we know that all people will be held accountable for their sins which they commit in ignorance (**Acts 17:30-31**). Third, we know that forgiveness and salvation can only be found in Jesus Christ (**Acts 4:12**). Fourth, we know that God has instructed His people to preach to all creation which would make no sense if those who have not heard are saved (**Matthew 28:18**). Finally, God makes it clear that those who do not know of Him are destined for destruction (**2 Thessalonians 1:6-9**). So, our answer to this question is no I do not think we find an excuse for ignorance in this passage.

What does this passage actually mean? Chapter five of Romans deals with the idea of justification and the severe consequences of sin which have spread since the days of Adam. In the middle of it, Paul makes a statement with the purpose of showing us that sin existed from the time of Adam to the time of to the time of Moses on Sinai (The Patriarchal Age). The comparison here is life under the patriarchal age versus life under the Law of Moses. Even before the Law of Moses was put into place, God was working with men and revealing His commandments to them. Notice the precise language here...Paul says when there is no law, there are no consequences. He does not say that when a person does not know the law there is no imputation. Ignorance is simply not an excuse to commit sin.

Question 432: Please explain **Luke 4:6**. What authority did Satan have? Where did he get it?

Answer 432: The simple answer to this question is that there is no simple answer to this question. There are two very real and Biblically sound answers to this question. The first focuses on the nature of the Devil. In short, this option says that Satan is lying to Jesus when he promises Him the kingdoms of earth. This is certainly possible considering the nature of the Devil (**John 8:44, Genesis 3:4**). Under this possibility, Satan offers Jesus something he cannot deliver just as he does to every single one of us today (pleasure, peace, happiness, etc.).

The second option for us is that Satan was telling the truth. In this scenario, God is the one who would have given Satan the power to tempt Jesus in this way (**Job 1:8-12**). Since we know this has happened in the past, we can assume it is possible to have happened in this scenario as well. As I said, both these options are possible and both fit with the nature of the Devil. The most important thing for us to learn is that the Devil always makes promises that we should reject!

Question 433: Why did Jesus weep with Lazarus' family (**John 11:35**)?

Answer 433: There is no doubt that Jesus had great love for Lazarus and his family. For this reason, many would say that Jesus cried because He saw firsthand what death was doing to this family. However, I think it is important to notice the order of this account from John.

First, Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick and He needs to come heal him (**11:1-4**). On the way, Jesus informs the disciples that Lazarus has already died (**11:5-16**). Next, Jesus arrives and is greeted by Martha who is not happy that Jesus delayed His coming to Bethany (**11:17-24**). Jesus sees the family of Lazarus grieving and is moved in His Spirit to act (**11:33**). After this, Jesus asks to see the tomb where they have laid Lazarus (**11:34**). It is at this point that the Bible tells us Jesus began to weep (**11:35**).

As we look through this account, we have to ask why Jesus does not cry when He is moved in spirit after seeing the family. After all, this would be a clear indication that He was weeping because they were saddened. However, He does not cry until He moves to raise Lazarus from the dead. In truth, I don't think Jesus cries tears of sympathy with this family. Instead, I think Jesus cries tears for Lazarus. Lazarus had run his race. His faithfulness was intact and he had reached

Paradise where he could await his reward with no fear of molestation. Now, Lazarus will be brought back to our world to endure an unknown amount of time as he awaits his second physical death. The tears of Jesus are a reminder that this world is not our home!

Question 434: Should we call on the elders to anoint with oil when we are sick (**James 5:14**)?

Answer 434: Read James 5:14-15. This passage describes the act of calling upon elders to come to a sick person in order to anoint them with oil and pray. Let's begin this discussion by noting that oil was a common medicine in New Testament times (**Luke 10:34**). Indeed, even today certain oils are still used as medicinal aids (Essential oils, castor oil). And in Roman times, it was even more common. There was even a saying: "Wine within, oil without". This referenced the idea that Romans thought you only needed two liquids to survive! With all of that being said, I do not see a miraculous healing taking place through this oil. I see a common practice of the day being used to by God to show His power to heal as He added the requirements that elders should pray and use His Son's name while anointing with oil. Notice that it is the prayer that will save the man from his sickness, not the oil (**James 5:16**). I also think it worth mentioning before we answer our question that only one other time in the New Testament can I find a reference to oil being used in connection with healing. It is found in **Mark 6:13**. Here again, we notice that they are anointing with oil and then healing the sickness.

Now to our question. Should we follow this process as James describes. I believe that if a person wants to be anointed with oil by the elders of the church they can choose to do so. However, I believe the point of this process was to show God as the great healer. During the times of the miraculous gifts, it would make great sense for God to give to elders the power to perform the miracle of healing. It would also make sense for God to use something already in place in order to help our minds comprehend what was taking place (Consider the temple which was not needed by God but by man). In these times, under these conditions, God showed His superiority to doctors and medicines by using His name to put power to the remedies of the day. With that said, I do not think it to be a commandment that applies to us any more than I believe other specific commandments regarding the miraculous gifts apply to us.

Question 435: Does the song "Why Do You Wait?" mislead people into thinking they have to feel the spirit outside of the Word?

Answer 435: This question comes from the line "Do you feel dear brother His Spirit now striving within?". Let's begin by asking how the Spirit of God leads us in our world today. God's Word is the soul connection we have to the mind and will of God. While God has used visions, prophets, direct communication, etc., He now uses His Son who is the incarnate Word (**Hebrews 1:1-2, John 1:14**). Morality in our world today is not controlled by our feelings or opinions...It is controlled by the Word of God!

Having said this, I don't believe this song violates this idea. This question really centers on a much bigger idea in my opinion. We must never remove our intellectual understanding of the

Bible as the driving force of our commitment to God. We must study the Word and learn from it so that we can please God. This must never be done in an emotional way because our understanding might be polluted with our emotions. However, when one truly understands the message of God, it leads to emotions. Learning of our sin leads to our guilt and shame. Receiving salvation leads to our joy. Seeing brothers and sisters suffer leads to sadness. **NOTE:** A person touched by emotions is not necessarily emotional (crying, smiling, etc.).

How do we make sense of all of this? It all depends on where you start! If we start with the message of God and it leads us to emotional responses, we have done it right. When we seek to be guided by our feelings, we taint the message of God and destroy its influence on our lives.

Question 436: What is the fullness of time (**Galatians 4:4**)?

Answer 436: This phrase is actually used two times by the Apostle Paul. The second use of this phrase helps us understand what is being discussed (**Ephesians 1:9-10**). This is a phrase used to describe the perfect timing of God. God sent His Son at the exact moment He was needed to be sent. We must remember that all the plans of God culminate with Jesus. Every promise of salvation from God came to fruition in the form of Christ. For this reason, Jesus said it was finished on the cross. Everything comes together when Jesus comes to this world!

Question 437: What is the plan for Sunday Nights?

Answer 437: This is an exciting question for us to consider tonight! Over the last few months, we have been putting thought into the best possible use of our time as we gather on Sunday nights. Obviously, there is a great need for us to sing together and study God's Word together as a church. We have three opportunities for this with our Bible classes and worship service. With this in mind, the men have looked into other requirements for our church in an effort to find anything that was lacking. Based on this, we have a plan for Sunday nights that will hopefully help meet those requirements in a fruitful way.

First, we will have a fishbowl night once a month. If you are unfamiliar with this, you have just seen one!

Second, we will have a singing night once a month. This will follow the schedule we used to follow which allows us the opportunity to allow men to train in song leading, learn new songs we can sing in our services, and gain better insight to the songs we sing in our services.

Third, we are going to have a night of prayer and fellowship. Once a month, we will begin our time together with a prayer meeting service. This will be a time where we can present names of friends and family before God and lift them up in prayer. Each of these services will also have a special focus on one of our church works or something that might affect our community. After this time of prayer, we will have a time devoted to fellowship. This will take different forms

from month to month, but the overall goal is to spend time together and grow our relationships with one another.

Fourth, we will have a night focused on service, evangelism, and encouragement. This is perhaps the most important change we are making. We want to put our resources as a church together to make an impact on our community. For the first couple of months, we are going to be gearing up for a back to church Sunday which will occur in the spring. There are going to be various things you can be involved with on that night. We will have a card ministry going, deliver food to people, make visits, conduct work with correspondence courses, organize and perform work projects, and anything else we can think of! We need and want your help with this!!! Put your mind to thinking about what works we can be involved with! Come ready to work! Hopefully, this time next year we will have reached souls with the seeds we plant on these Sunday nights!

Question 438: Why do churches of Christ not celebrate sunrise services on Easter?

Answer 438: Historical records indicate that the Moravian church in German created the first sunrise services in 1732. It spread to America with its first recorded practice being in 1773. A sunrise service is simply a change in time of a worship assembly on Easter morning. Christians will gather at dawn to remember this day in honor of those who came to find the empty tomb before sunrise so many years ago. Why do you not see this in most churches of Christ?

One answer to this lies in the fact that many of us have a hard enough time making it to church on time at 10:00!!! But on a more theological level, the simple answer to this is the fact that Easter has no meaning for the Lord's church! Easter Sunday is one of 52 Sundays that take place during a year. There is not a single difference in our celebration of any of these Sundays as the Lord's church! We truly do celebrate the Lord's death every single Sunday as we gather to remember Him during the Lord's Supper (**Acts 20:7**). Easter Sunday does not need to have special songs, special sermons, or special times to make it special! Each time we can gather as the family of God we should understand that it is already special!

Question 439: How far is a Sabbath's Day journey?

Answer 439: This is a phrase that pops up numerous times in the Bible. Before we get to how far it would be and how it worked in the lives of the Jewish people, lets understand where this idea came from. It did not come from God! This was the result of men like the Pharisees striving to implement rules concerning God's Law that He never intended. God's Law concerning the Sabbath Day was very clear and easy to understand (**Exodus 20:8-11**). However, this was not enough for the religious leaders in Israel. Instead, they began adding and commenting on the commandments of God to the point that their commentary ended up being longer than the Word! They decided that people could travel on the Sabbath, but they had to set the distance that would be permissible. After this distance was met, any further steps would be considered work and would therefore violate the Sabbath. This is what it truly means to be Pharisaical.

So how far was the Sabbath's journey? This was about 1,000 yards. The way this works is that you can travel 1,000 yards away from your home or dwelling place. As time went on, other additions were made to this rule. For instance, if you took a bit of food, you could place it on the ground this turning that spot into a temporary dwelling place which would give you another 1,000 yards. In addition, this eventually evolved to the point that you could name a large stone or tree as a temporary dwelling place and travel 1,000 more yards without placing food. After even more evolution, it was decided that one's entire city was considered your dwelling place so you could walk as far as you like so long as you stayed within the confines of your city. All this shows the complete hypocrisy and disregard both for the letter and intent of the Law of God!

Question 440: When God says He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how is it possible for Him to be the God of dead men (**Mark 12:26-27**)?

Answer 440: This question was finished with the word "help". However, I think the writer of this question actually has everything already figured out! This statement comes in Jesus' discussion with a group of Sadducees (**Read Mark 12:18-26**). These men held the belief that there was simply no afterlife and no resurrection. While this view is clearly incorrect (**2 Samuel 12:23, 1 Samuel 28:13-15**), these men give a preposterous example to try and prove their view is right. Jesus answers these men by quoting a passage from the Torah because it is the only accepted part of the Scriptures for the Sadducees. When God spoke to Moses, He referred to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All these men had long been dead, but that is precisely Jesus' points. While their physical bodies were dead, their immortal souls lived on! God is the God of the living and these three men were alive and well in Hades proving that the afterlife was real!

Question 441: Does 1 John 3:9 teach us that Christians cannot sin?

Answer 441: Read 1 John 3:9. This passage is one that has caused great confusion for many people. However, as we look at this passage in the context of John's letter, we find it becoming very clear. Let's take this step by step.

First, we need to understand that John is speaking to Christians when he wrote his letter (**1 John 2:1** "my little children"). Second, he tells us that Christians do commit sin (**1 John 1:10**). Third, he insists that we should strive against sin (**1 John 2:1**). Fourth, he makes it clear that all those who claim Christianity must follow the commandments of God (**1 John 2:4**). Finally, we get to our passage. What is John's message here? His message is the simple fact that one cannot be a Christian who lives a life of sin! We must make a choice to live a life in obedience to the Word of God if we want to be a child of God!

Question 442: What is the significance of Paul being both a Jew and a Roman? How did he use his status as a Roman Citizen?

Answer 442: In ancient Rome there was three basic ways to become a citizen. A person could buy their citizenship. A person could be rewarded with citizenship. Or a person could be born a natural citizen. Paul was a Roman citizen by birth (**Acts 21:39**). This would provide Paul with great advantages as a minister of the Gospel (**Galatians 1:15**).

First, Paul was able to use his citizenship to travel freely around the Roman Empire. He could do so easily and could also do so with relatively little fear of Roman authorities (**Acts 22:22-29**). Second, being a Roman citizen also brought some level of respect from other Romans. A non-citizen was basically seen as an uncivilized, ignorant barbarian by the Roman world. Third, the upbringing Paul had as both a Jew and a Roman citizen would have made him the perfect type of person to go into the Gentile world on behalf of Jesus Christ. Finally, being a Roman citizen also allowed Paul the opportunity to appeal directly to Caesar which would lead him to Rome (**Acts 25:10-11**).

Question 443: Where was Jesus' spirit while His body was in the grave?

Answer 443: For the short answer to this question, we will turn our attention to the words of Jesus (**Luke 23:42-46**). Jesus was about to die when He said these words, and He makes it clear that His destination after His death was Paradise. Paradise is the name given to a temporary waiting place where the faithful gather after death to await the final judgment (**Luke 16:22**). It sits opposite a horrible place called torment (**Luke 16:23**). When Jesus was murdered, He went to the grave and the afterlife just as the rest of us will do. We also need to remember that like we will follow Jesus into Paradise, we can also follow Jesus out of the grave (**Romans 8:29-30**).

Question 444: Did Jesus have all of His powers before the Spirit descended on Him at His baptism?

Answer 444: There are two simple ways to view this question. First, some argue that Jesus was fully God when He dwelled on earth and therefore could do all the miracles of God from birth until death. Second, some argue that Jesus was able to perform miracles after His baptism with the power of the Holy Spirit which descended upon Him at His baptism (**Matthew 3:16-17**). Based on what I see in Scripture, I tend to believe the second option makes the most sense. Let's examine the evidence for you to consider.

First, we need to think about the implications of Jesus being born with the power to perform miracles. We know that Jesus grew as a normal child would (**Luke 2:52**). To imagine this child having the power of Jehovah at His fingertips simply does not make sense. While it is true that Jesus was fully God, we must remember He was wrapped in a human body with some human limitations (**Philippians 2:5-7**).

Second, we can notice that there is not a single miracle performed by Jesus before His baptism. While it is true that He demonstrated unbelievable knowledge in the Temple as a child, this knowledge was miraculous only in the sense that Jesus knew things beyond His age as a member of the godhead. Of course, just because the Bible does not record something does not necessarily mean it didn't happen, but the ministry of Jesus certainly began after His baptism.

This issue comes down to just an opinion. Both opinions are valid and fit with the Biblical narrative. In other words, it is completely up to you which option you choose.

Question 445: Were James and Matthew brothers? Both were called the son of Alphaeus.

Answer 445: So far as I can tell, there is no evidence at all that supports the idea that James and Matthew were earthly brothers. While it was certainly not unheard of for the Apostles of Jesus to be related (**Matthew 4:18, Matthew 20:20**), it does not appear that this is the case for the two men in question tonight. This is a good reminder for us that some of the names we read in the New Testament were fairly common. Sometimes, this can lead to confusion for us as we study the lives of these men and their interactions with the church.

Question 446: If there is no sin in Heaven, how did the Devil and his angels rebel against God? Did they partake of the tree of knowledge?

Answer 446: To fully think about this question, we must venture into a realm that we know relatively little about. Angels are a law unto themselves. They are spiritual beings who have dwelled in the very presence of God which means they live by a higher standard than we do. We are simply not privy to the specifics of this standard. So, let's take a look at what we do know...

First, we know that the angels dwell in Heaven (**Isaiah 6:1-2**). Second, we know that the Devil and his angels had the power to choose to do right or wrong (**Revelation 12:7-9**). Third, we know that the Devil and his angels did choose to do evil in the sight of God. Finally, we know that when the Devil rebelled, he was immediately punished and cast out of Heaven.

To go back and answer the question under consideration, we need to notice a promise that is made from God (**Matthew 25:46**). Eternal life means just that! Once we arrive in Heaven, we cannot lose our place which means we can never commit sin. In addition, Heaven is seen as a place of complete safety for us (**Revelation 21:25**). This indicates that we do not have to worry about the temptations of the world (**Revelation 21:4**). With these two promises in place, we are guaranteed a home without sin in Heaven.

Having said all of this, we can rest assured that no sin will enter Heaven. On the one occasion when sin was allowed to enter Heaven, God's forces immediately removed it. Perhaps a better way to understand this concept is not to say sin cannot enter Heaven but rather to say sin cannot dwell in Heaven.

Question 447: Please explain **Luke 16:16**. Why were the Law and Prophets only preached until John?

Answer 447: Let's begin with the question tonight, and then we also expand this to explain the second part of the passage. As we look at this passage, we need to understand that the Law and the Prophets were a common phrase that simply encompassed the entirety of the Old Testament. Jesus says here that up until the time of John the Baptist God relied on the Old Testament to convey His message to the world. However, once John came, the message of salvation arriving quickly in Jerusalem began to replace the message of the prophets. We must understand that this is a bridge period between Old and New Testament. It will not be until the Day of Pentecost that the Gospel of salvation would be delivered and the message of Christ would become the power of salvation for the world (**Hebrews 1:1**). This passage simply gives a rundown for how He has conveyed His message to the world through the ages.

Now let's consider the second part...how do people "force" (NASB) their way into the Kingdom or "pressing" their way into the kingdom? The best way to understand this is the simple fact that it was impossible for John the Baptist to open the doors of the kingdom. This job was given only to Peter and would not take place until the Day of Pentecost (**Matthew 16:18-19, Acts 2**). However, as people heard John the Baptist preach about the kingdom, they wanted to force the doors of the kingdom open. The people made every effort to place themselves into the kingdom by any means necessary, but only God can do this!

Question 448: What should the church provide its members?

Answer 448: This is an important question because so many look for what the church can do for them. However, as we look at this question, we need to clearly define the word church. The church is the members of God's spiritual family. With that in mind, we need to ask what do we as Christians owe each other. The answer to this question is that we owe each other quite a bit! We owe each other fellowship (**1 John 1:7**), love (**1 Peter 1:22**), physical assistance (**Galatians 6:10**), encouragement (**Hebrews 10:24**), admonition (**Colossians 3:16**), correction/restoration (**Galatians 6:1**), and more!

Now let's think about what this means in real life terms. As we look at our list, it is obvious that we owe each other quite a bit. However, we must never forget the fact that we owe them to EACH OTHER! We must never become selfish as we view the church. When we all look at what we can do for each other to meet these requirements of the church, no one will be left behind! In addition, we won't get sidetracked by what the church was never meant to be in the first place! When we focus on what God wants us to be in each other's lives, we will be much better off for it!

Question 449: How does God discipline His children (**Hebrews 12:1-11**)?

Answer 449: As we begin this explanation, we must notice that God says He chastises His children. These instructions are meant for Christians. God will chastise His children while they are on this planet. We cannot ascribe these verses to those living outside of God. Now let's move on to what it means to be chastised.

The word translated "chastise" or "discipline" carries the idea of some action or process by which a person faces a trial or tribulation in the hopes of removing the impurities from their lives so that they can be better servants for God. It can be done in various ways and can lead us to spiritual maturity if we make it through tribulations with our faith intact. In fact, one of the meanings of this word is simply to verbally teach in order to correct. Let us consider this with a wide range of understanding!

Next, let's consider how we should respond to this chastisement. We must not take it lightly when we are chastised by God (vs. 5). We must not lose our faith when we are chastised (vs. 6). We must submit to the chastisement (vs. 9). Finally, we must find peace and growth from our chastisement (vs. 11). When we do these things, we will find ourselves better off in this world because God only seeks to aid us with His chastisement.

Now for the big question from this text: how does God chastise His children? I do not believe that God selects us **individually** to send evil into our lives in order to improve our spiritual state. God is the giver of all good things in our world (**James 1:17**). However, He stated that He does not purposefully send evil upon us (**Lamentations 3:33**). Ironically, God said this as Jerusalem fell doing unimaginable harm to the people living inside the city. How can we possibly reconcile these two things?

I think this comes down to something that often causes confusion in our study of God's Word. God is all powerful and can do anything He chooses to do (**Job 26:8-14**). Therefore, when He chooses not to intervene, the Bible can speak of God doing the things which He allows to be done. God had to choose not to defend Jerusalem against the attack of the Babylonians. However, as you read verses on this event, it is clear that God takes credit for punishing His People (**Jeremiah 21:3-6**). He does this because He chose not to act! When the Bible says that God does _____, we must understand that God can do things actively or by refusing to act!

Bringing our Hebrew passage back into view, God has set our world up in such a way that bad things happen to us. Sometimes, they happen to us as a result of our sinful actions. Other times, we are faced with bad things because we live in a fallen world where bad things happen to all of us. Chastisement could take the form of physical ailments, guilt, broken relationships, etc. In addition, as we noted above, God delivering His message and instructions is a form of discipline. When He allows these bad things to happen to us, we should see a father trying to help his children reach maturity. Unfortunately, many fall beneath this load and lose their faith.

Question 450: What can I do to follow up on our back to church Sunday?

Answer 450: I am sure glad someone asked this question! The handwriting looked very familiar too!

First, we can all reach out to those who came to our assemblies over the last couple of weeks. Reach out in any way you feel comfortable to whoever you feel comfortable talking to! If you want to write letters, do it! If you want to send a Facebook message, do it! If you want to visit with a batch of brownies, do it! If you want to text or call, do it! We need to let people know how happy we were that they came!

Second, we can all keep our zeal for evangelism up and running! So many people in our congregation did so much to reach out to their family, friends, and neighbors over the last few weeks! But we need to remember that we don't need a special day to ask folks to join us for worship! I know it helps because it breaks the ice, but we need to hold onto to the zeal we have had recently to invite people, pray for the lost, and do so many little things to share the Gospel! Continuing with that zeal is one of the major keys to saving the lost!

Finally, we can all continue to work on those who didn't come. We do not need to become discouraged by those who did not respond to our invitations. Instead, we need to continue to do the work in the hope that something we say or the perseverance we show will have a positive impact on those we care about. If an excuse is given for why someone couldn't be here last week, tell them we will be here again every week! If a person just seems hesitant, try to ask in a gentle way what is holding them back and relieve their fear. If a person just refuses to do anything at all, maybe give it a break and come back at another time. Whatever we need to do, we need to do!!!!

Question 451: According to Matthew 19, if a man puts his wife away and there has been no infidelity, is it possible with repentance to marry again?

Answer 451: Read Matthew 19:3-12. One of the great controversies in the church today is the marriage, divorce and re-marriage. The controversy comes not from confusion about the text, but from a society that is literally filled with the victims of divorce. For many, this passage becomes difficult because it has become so personal. However, we must never let our society change what Jesus had to say about marriage in this passage.

Let us learn the lessons. First, God joins two people together and we do not have the power to separate them. Second, a person who divorces for ANY reason other than adultery and marries someone else becomes guilty of adultery with that person.

Now to the question: Can repentance allow a person to remarry? The answer to this is actually an easy one. If a person is living in marriage with someone after divorcing for an unscriptural reason, they live in adultery. The only sin to repent of is that adultery and it must be repented of

by ending the relationship. We cannot repent of a marriage. If a marriage is approved of by God in the first place, it is accepted by Him and is not a sin. If it is not a sin, it cannot be repented of to allow a person the right to remarry. When a person divorces when no adultery has been committed, they have three options. They can remain single (a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom). They can return to their spouse. They can rebel against God and live in sin by marrying another.

Questions 452: Does the Bible speak of dead spirits returning to this earth? If so, is it possible that spirits can still do this?

Answer 452: I can only think of two cases where most believe that spirits returned to walk on this earth in the form of spirits. One of them is found in **Matthew 27:52-53**. A careful examination of this text reveals that actually these were not spirits which exited the graves as many have in their minds. Rather, the resurrected corpses of the faithful returned to this earth at the time of Jesus' death.

The other is found in **1 Samuel 28:8-15**. In this case, the spirit of Samuel does indeed come back to speak to King Saul. However, there are two things which we need to note. First, it is obvious that this woman was not used to having her powers actually work (**28:12**). Second, it was a nuisance for Samuel to be called back to this world (**28:15**). On this very RARE occasion, we can say that a spirit arose to speak to a living human.

The final thing for us to consider in answering this question is **Luke 16:19-31**. This is the account of a man who wished to return from the grave to visit this world. When he asks, the answer to his question, as well as ours is given (**16:27-31**). Once this life is over, our time on earth is over. We are "asleep" in this world. Our spirit is either in torment or paradise and awaits judgment. It cannot return to our bodies or to this world.

Question 453: Read **1 Corinthians 15:29**. Why would someone be baptized for the dead? What good does it do?

Answer 453: Without a doubt this passage is one of the most controversial in all of the New Testament. Tonight, we are going to take a quick look at three possible meanings.

First is the idea that this passage teaches us to baptize dead ancestors by proxy. Today, one of the greatest resources for anyone doing genealogical research can be found in Salt Lake City, Utah. It is the sight where the Mormon Church has established a library of genealogical records so that anyone practicing the Mormon faith can be baptized for their dead ancestors. We could spend much time discussing all the problems with this, but we will leave it with two. First, there is no way for a dead person to obey the other commandments connected with salvation. Second, once you are dead, your eternity is set in stone (**Hebrews 9:27**). Now let us move on to Biblical solutions to this text.

The second option is that this is a reference to those who are spiritually dead. In this chapter, Paul is discussing the factual nature of the coming resurrection. The idea with this option is that Paul appeals to the fact that every Christian in Corinth was once dead spiritually and has been resurrected spiritually through the power of Christ. In short, Paul's point would be that if the Corinthians believe in the spiritual resurrection, they should have no problem believing in the physical resurrection. This is certainly a reasonable assumption based on the context of the passage. However, I tend to think our third option is the most appropriate one.

The third option rests on one word in this passage. That word is "they". Paul says "why then are they baptized for them." In the New Testament, there are two groups of people: they and we. They are always those who are outside of Christ and His teachings. We are always Christians who are serving Christ to the best of their ability. Paul here is not saying that Christians baptize for the dead. Rather, he is using a practice (probably pagan or a distorted version of Christianity) which is taking place in Corinth. His point is that even those outside of Christ believe in a resurrection or else they would not baptize for the dead. If non-believers attest to the resurrection, how much trouble should it be for Christians to believe in it?

Both these last options approach the question from a Biblical viewpoint and both present viable options. However, the first viewpoint shows us one of the most dangerous things in Biblical study. To remove a passage not only from its immediate context, but from the context of other clear Scriptures is a dangerous thing. Many have stood in baptisteries being baptized for the dead not realizing that their own souls are in danger because of their religious teachers.

Question 454: What will happen to Christians who are alive when Christ returns?

Answer 454: The first thing we need to note is that we will in a sense die. Death is defined by the New Testament as the body being separated from the spirit (**James 2:26**). Paul tells us that this will indeed happen on Judgment Day (**1 Corinthians 15:50-53**). In an instant, we will be changed from the physical body into a spiritual creature. We will become the type of creature who can inhabit Heaven which is a spiritual place. Our earthly tent will be cast aside and we will become an eternal version of ourselves.

After this, we will be judged (**Matthew 25:31-33**). As Paul says in Corinthians, each of us must die and then appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here, we will be judged for our deeds on this earth. We will found innocent only if we have become covered in the blood of Christ through baptism and remained covered through faithful obedience.

After Judgment, we only have one place to go (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**). We will rise with Christ from the fiery furnace that engulfs and destroys this world. We will enter Heaven and will dwell there for all eternity. All temptations and trials will be behind us and we will begin anew in our new home.

Question 455: Please discuss the idea of lines of fellowship. Should Christians participate in the National Day of Prayer, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, prayers at sporting events, etc.?

Answer 455: The Lord's church is not a denomination. She is the beautiful bride of Christ. All denominations are by definition cheap imitations of that beautiful bride. Once a group leaves the teachings of Christ to the point that they are a distinct denomination, they are no longer a part of the New Testament church (**Matthew 16:18**).

The question before us tonight is what is our relationship with those who claim Christ under the banner of these denominations. First, we must understand that the Lord's church must be protected from false teaching (**Galatians 1:6-10**). Second, we must understand that joint participation with denominations is sinful (**2 John 1:9-11**). Third, we must understand that worship which does not maintain the Scriptural guidelines given by God is sinful, not just a personal preference (**Leviticus 10:1-2**).

With all of this said, Christ has given us clear lines of fellowship which must not be crossed if we are going to protect the church from the sinful practices of denominationalism (**2 Corinthians 6:14, Ephesians 5:6-13**). When we blur the lines between truth and a lie, between the church and denominations, between the light and the darkness, we do a great disservice to the world, harm our influence to win the lost, and put our souls in jeopardy.

Question 456: Based on **Proverbs 9:7-9**, are there people we should not try to reach?

Answer 456: Christians have a responsibility to go into all the world and teach the Gospel to all of God's creation (**Matthew 28:18-20**). However, there are some people who simply refuse to be taught. As we look at this passage from Proverbs, we see God removing our responsibility from those who fit this description.

Christians do not have to teach and continue to reach out to scoffers and wicked men. What does this mean? First, it means that we have to initially offer instruction and salvation to all men. After all, how can we know foolish from wise without first offering God's Word. Second, it means Second, it means that we do not have to suffer the abuse of a fool or wicked man who rejects God's Word (**Matthew 7:6**). After all, doing so is a futile endeavor. Finally, it means that we have to make return offers from time to time (**2 Timothy 4:2**). After all, how many of us would once have foolishly obeyed God's Word before deciding to obey?

When we put all this together, I think the idea is that Christ does not want us to submit ourselves to ridicule and abuse when we reach out to those around us. We must make sure that this is the case before we shut down, but once we are sure we must wipe the dust off our feet and look to the next person in order to find fertile soil.

Question 457: Please discuss **Luke 7:19**. Did John display doubt about the Christ?

Answer 457: As we look at this account, we are struck by the change that has taken place in the life of John. He has moved from boldly declaring that Jesus is the promised Messiah (**Matthew 3**) to sending disciples to ask if he should look for someone else to fill the role of Messiah. What could possibly explain this transformation?

To fully understand this, we need to look deep into the life of John the Baptist. He was a man who lived in poverty. He was a man who understood his role in the ministry of Christ. He was a Jewish man who understood the Messiah the way Jewish men did. He was a prophet of God. He was a man who was persecuted for his teachings. All of this help us understand his actions in Luke 7. John was a man who boldly proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah who was to come, yet Jesus would often keep this fact a secret from others (**Matthew 16:20**). John was a man who expected the Messiah to lead a great military rebellion to overthrow the evil earthly rulers in Israel. Could all of this have led John to have doubts in Christ?

That is certainly one option. There is no doubt that earthly circumstances can and do shake even the strongest faiths. However, I would point out another option for the source of his actions. John may not have been experiencing doubts so much as he was experiencing frustration. John may have simply wanted his idea of the Kingdom to move quickly. We see this frustration in the Apostles as they waited for Jesus to overthrow the Romans. There is little reason to doubt that John could have experienced the same. I could easily see John experiencing either of these two sensations and both explain his actions very well. In this instance, all we can do is guess.

Question 458: If you are baptized at a young age and later learn that you did not fully understand what you were doing, do you need to be baptized again?

Answer 458: We know that we are saved by faith and not by works (**Ephesians 2:8**). However, we also know that obedient works are an integral part of our salvation (**James 2:17, Ephesians 2:10**). In answering our question tonight, we need to truly examine these two ideas and how they join together in the act of baptism.

Baptism is one of the actions required by God to be saved from our sin (**Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21**). What puts the power into baptism? There is nothing special about the water. There is nothing special about the person that performs the baptism. There is no magical incantation to recite. We know that the blood of Jesus is the only thing that can offer us the forgiveness of sins (**Ephesians 1:7, Romans 5:9**). However, I have never once seen the waters of a baptism turn to the blood of Jesus. What then brings the power of Christ's blood into our baptism? Our faith is the final piece of the puzzle of our salvation. When we enter the waters of baptism, we do so because our God in whom we trust has commanded it and connected a promise with it (**Hebrews 11:6**). Our faith is what brings God's blood into our baptism (**Romans 3:24-26**). In short, God put His son's blood into baptism...our faith put God's Son's blood into OUR baptism!

How does this help us answer our question tonight? Faith is based and rooted in our knowledge of God and His Word (**Romans 10:17**). If a person's knowledge is lacking to the point that he or she did not know the fundamental basics of baptism, I would strongly encourage them to be baptized later in life. If a person isn't sure, I would strongly encourage them to be baptized later in life. If ever there was a time to follow the principle of better safe than sorry, it is in the realm of our eternal soul!