

Questions and Answers 2006, Part 2

Jack Hughes

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Well, this morning we're going to be doing just one more [sermon] of questions and answers. We're going to try and see how many we can get through—there are a whole bunch of questions. [This is] not the normal thing we do, but we [try to] answer a bunch of questions for two or three weeks in August. We do this because so many people are gone on vacation, we have visitors, [and] people traveling around, that this is a good time to let you ask the questions and then I try and answer as many as I can.

Now, if you're out there and I get to the end [of this sermon] and you realize, "Oh! He didn't answer my question," then just ask one of the elders or pastors and get your question answered. Another thing you can do is log on to the Web site, go under "Sermons" and you'll see [a link for the] question and answer sermons and you'll be able to [download and] listen to all of them.¹ A lot of the questions come up year after year, [so] I purposely try not to answer ones I've answered before. The reason yours may be left out is that you may have already had it answered.

OK, we're just going to jump in. The first question is: "What does the 'binding' and 'loosing' referred to in Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18 [mean]?" Turn to Matthew 16:19. Jesus has just responded to Peter's confession that [Jesus] is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus has ex-

¹<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/Series/QuestionsrandAnswers>

plained to Peter in Matthew 16:17 that this information was given to him by divine revelation. Then Jesus says in verses 18–19 these words:

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

Turn over to Matthew 18:18, which is probably just a page or two over. This is the classic text on church discipline. Jesus is speaking about those who have decided to discipline somebody publicly because they have not repented after private and multiple confrontations. He says this in verse 18: “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” The New American Standard [19]95 update edition does the best job [of] translating this particular section of Scripture. Virtually all other translations, like the New King James, the English Standard version, the New International version—all the popular, more literal versions—read something like this: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven,” [which] is the common way this [verse] has been translated. The problem is [that] it doesn’t really represent what’s here. When you translate it that way, it sounds like heaven is following Peter or the Church. In other words, Peter confesses Christ in the future and then heaven follows Peter and binds whatever he does. Or, the Church decides to do church discipline and then heaven goes, “Oh, yeah, that’s a good idea. Let’s do it.” It sounds like heaven is following what men on earth are doing.

Both texts use what is called the “future tense” when it says “will be” so both texts are speaking about acts done in the future, but they also use what is called a “perfect passive participle.” I know that some of you are probably thinking, “Oh, no. I forgot all of that in eighth grade,” or “I never

even learned it in eighth grade,” but let me just explain [it] to you. You have what they call moods, tenses, or verb tenses, [and] there are active and passive [versions of these tenses]. Active is when the subject is the doer of the action: “The boy hits the ball.” The boy is actively hitting the ball—that would be active tense. There is passive tense: “The boy is hit by the ball.” That is, somebody does something to you. That is passive.

Well, a “perfect tense” describes something that has happened in the past and the results of that action continue to the present. Let me give you a classic text on this, which probably most of you know if you’ve been a Christian for a while, and that is Ephesians 2:8, which says, “For by grace you *have been saved* through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” [emphasis added]. Now, the words “you have been saved” are one word in the Greek, and it is a, guess what? a perfect passive participle. That is, you were saved in the past, and the results of your salvation continue to be here to the present.

So, the same exact tense is used in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. Paul is not saying in Ephesians 2 [that] you’re *going* to be saved in the future, but [that] you are *already* saved in the past and you’re just enjoying the consequences of it now. Well, when you understand that, then you understand why the NASB—the New American Standard [19]95 updated edition—decided to translate this in a somewhat awkward way, but [in] a way that matches more literally what the Greek says, when it says, “Whatever you bind on earth *shall have been* bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth *shall have been* loosed in heaven” [emphasis added], which is kind of a weird way to say it, but it’s an accurate way to say it.

In other words, when Peter in the future, for instance, would confess Jesus as the Son of the Living God, or the Church in the future would perform public discipline on an unrepentant person, they would be following the pattern already prescribed and established in heaven. It’s not like they would be doing something and heaven would go, “Good idea,” and follow them. No, when we do church discipline, we are following what heaven has already prescribed. The words “binding” and “loosing” are figures of

speech [that] describe things that are either “established, bound, fixed, [or] determined,” or things that are “set free, loosed, or allowed to go free.” When someone continues in unrepentant sin and we have to put them under church discipline, we have followed the instructions of heaven and have obeyed. That person is no longer willing to fellowship until they repent, [and] when they do repent, then we “loose” them [from] the discipline, following the heavenly pattern that has already been established. That is what those words mean.

Question 2: “How can there be no sin in heaven if we are going to rule over angels and why is there a need for rulers if there is no sin?” Well, this question reveals a misconception that the only reason we need rulers, and authorities, and people in submission to other people is because of sin. That is not the case. You *especially* need it when there is sin, but after Satan, demons, and all unrepentant sinners are judged and cast into the lake of fire, there will still be order, rule, submission, and authority. Jesus Christ will be on the throne calling the shots, and redeemed men and holy angels will be doing His bidding. Some will be rulers, some will be submitters, but all will submit to Christ and will submit to the structure that He has established. Though heaven is a perfect place, with a perfect God and a perfect Savior, without any sin, it is still a place of order, hierarchy, submission, and authority and will always be that way.

If you want to know what determines your position in heaven, it’s what you do on earth. Remember the parable of the talents? The person who was good and labored to invest his money was given many cities in the kingdom. The person who did OK was given a few [cities], and the person who buried his [talents] didn’t get [to heaven at all].

Question 3: “The Apostles’ Creed states that Jesus spent some time in hell. Where is that in the Bible?” I want you to know, I answered a similar question to this on August 17, 2003. So if you go to the Web site and you look up “sermons” or you call the office, you want the questions

and answers sermon [from] August 17, 2003.² I go into it in some detail there also.

Two texts are commonly cited [in reference to the statement made in the Apostles' Creed]. One is Ephesians 4. Turn there. I don't think this text works, but it's commonly used so we'll just look at [it] first. Ephesians 4:7[-10], where Paul says:

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Now, some believe that the phrase "descended into the lower parts of the earth" is talking about Christ descending into hell. I don't [believe] that for this reason: the context [of these verses] is about Christ becoming a man and giving gifts to men. He did that, first of all, by giving Himself—"For God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son" [John 3:16]. Jesus came to earth, He died on the cross for our sins, He promised the Holy Spirit, gave the Holy Spirit as a gift, who in turn gave spiritual gifts to those who had placed their faith in Jesus Christ. So in that way, Jesus "descended into the lower parts of the earth," that is, He descended from heaven to earth to live, and die, and give those gifts to us that we now enjoy.

The second text is 1 Peter 3:18, and this one I do believe speaks of Jesus' descent into hell, or Hades, or the place of the dead. [In] 1 Peter 3:18–20, Peter's theme is suffering. He refers to Christ and in verse 18, he says: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but

²<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20030817>

made alive in the spirit.” Now just stop there for a moment. Jesus here is “put to death in the flesh,” that is, He dies physically, but when He dies physically, He is “made alive in the spirit.” So, notice [that] we are talking about what happened to Jesus after physically dying, when He was a spirit after death.

Notice what the text continues to say in verse 19: “in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison.” Stop there. This word “proclamation” is important because [it] is a word that is often used in Greek literature. For instance, [when] a king goes out to battle, conquers another king, takes captives, and [then] brings them in and parades them through his city, [it’s like he’s saying], “Look what I did. I conquered this guy. I overcame this kingdom, or this king, or this army, and I am making a victory proclamation.” So, you might say, “in which He [Jesus] also made a *victory* proclamation to the spirits now in prison.” “Spirits” here refers to angels. The fact that they’re in prison tells us that they are demons. They aren’t holy angels because they’re rebellious.

This brings up another subject, which we are not going to address, and that is the identity of the spirits being referred to here. I believe they are the “sons of God” mentioned in Genesis 6, and if you want to hear more about this, you can listen to the questions and answers sermon [from] August 17, 2003, where I address that.³

Regardless of who they are, one thing is certain: they are incarcerated demons—incarcerated spirits. The point that the context is talking about is that Jesus, after dying physically, went to speak to spirits in prison, to make this victory proclamation. We know from other texts, such as 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, that God imprisoned especially wicked demons who disobeyed and did what these authors call “left their proper domain.” Peter tells us that God has incarcerated them in “pits of darkness, reserved for judgment” [2 Peter 2:4]. The phrase “pits of darkness” in the Greek is “Tartarus.” If you’ve read any Greek mythology, you probably know about Tartarus—it

³<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20030817>

is the place of the dead. Biblically speaking, it is the holding place where especially wicked demons are held captive until the judgment of the great day.

If you've been here a while and you were here when we taught through the Gerasene demoniac, then you know what happened when Jesus approached: the Gerasene demoniac cried out, and said, "Son of God, have you come here to torment us before our time?" [see Luke 8:28]. They implored him not to command them to go into the abyss, or Tartarus, the place of incarceration [see Luke 8:31]. Instead He sent them into the pigs and they made deviled ham.

We're just going to leave that there. You can get more information on all of that in [the] August 17, 2003, sermon.

Moving on. Question 4: "Israel currently occupies only a fraction of the land God promised [the Israelites] in Genesis 15:18 and Joshua 1:4. [In current times], Israel says they are pushing the Hezbollah back to the Litani River, an area that was conquered by Joshua about 1406 B.C. Question: What significance, if any, does this have and what priority should knowing the end times events in the Bible have in our daily times with the Lord?"

First of all, you have to be very careful not to interpret prophecy by the morning newspaper. I know it's tempting. I want you to know, it's tempting for me, too. Every time I [hear] about some sort of computer chip being inserted in someone's hand, I kind of [think], "Ooo, Ooo."

Yesterday, I was buying some electrical parts and this guy said, "Yeah, pretty soon they're going to be doing implants in us."

I said, "They aren't to me."

He said, "No, no. Really. They have the technology."

I said, "I know they have the technology, but they're not putting one in me."

Anyway, when you look at that, you can see how you can just immediately run over to this portion of Revelation and go, "Oh, cool! [It's] right there, 'that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name,' which is in

his hand or forehead [see Revelation 13:16–17],” and you get all excited. I know there’s a temptation to do that and that’s fine to do that, but the fact is [that] Israel may not possess all of the land promised to Abraham, Moses, and Joshua until the millennial kingdom. Or, it could be [that] they could possess all of it and lose it ten times before Jesus comes back. The important thing is that eventually they *will* possess it because it is promised to them as an everlasting possession [see Genesis 17:8; 48:4] and part of what is called the “unilateral covenant” that God made with Abraham.

Now, for the part of “How does this relate to our normal lives? How does prophecy relate to Christians today?” You need to come to the Daniel class. That’s all I’m going to say. Somebody came up to me and said, “Well, what if I come in in the middle.” Great. It’s not like you won’t be able to follow along. Daniel is very segmented and we’re just finishing up the first six chapters, which are the narrative section, and we’re going to be getting into the section on prophecies in chapter 7 and following. I’m going to try to stretch that out until the building comes down, so we’re going slowly, and we try [to] get a lot of application in there. So, if you want to know how prophecy applies, come to that class.⁴

Question 5: “Someone refers to ‘bearing fruit in season.’ Paul exhorts Timothy to preach the Word ‘in season and out of season.’ To what does ‘season’ refer to?” Well, if you weren’t here, Tim Carns just preached on this.⁵ To answer the question, [however], a “season” is a specific time. Fruit trees usually bear fruit [in] a certain season. There’s a certain time when you can go out and look for fruit on different kinds of trees.

In Deuteronomy 11:14, God promises rain in its season. Job 5:[26] speaks of stacking grain in its season. Job 38:32 speaks of God’s moving the constellations across the night sky in their seasons. Hosea 2:9 speaks of making new wine in its season. So, a season is just a normal time for something to happen—a normal, expected time. In Psalm 1, it is used as

⁴You can download the recordings and handouts for the Daniel classes at:
<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/daniel>

⁵<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20060730>

a figure of speech to describe one who trusts in, delights in, and walks in the counsel of the Lord. Healthy plants, for instance, produce fruit in their season. Christians who delight in, meditate on, and walk in the counsel of the Lord produce fruit. That's what it's saying. Every season is the season to produce fruit for those who trust [in], delight in, and walk in the counsel of the Lord. That is why [the end of] Psalm 1:3 says, "And in whatever he does, he prospers."

In [2] Timothy 4:2, Paul says, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season." That's my favorite verse. Let's just camp here for a second. [In] 2 Timothy 4:2, [Paul] talks about this giant, five-fold command: "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word," and he says, "be ready in season and out of season." He says, "I want you to be reproving, and rebuking, and exhorting with great patience and instruction" [see 2 Timothy 4:1–2]. Why? [It is] because the times are going to come [when people are] not going to endure sound doctrine. They're going to want to have their ears tickled, they're going to seek out teachers in accordance with their own lusts [see 2 Timothy 4:3]—their own "epithumias."

Today in our world, we are in an "out of season" time for preaching. As a matter of fact, most people have no idea what preaching is. They have no idea. They don't realize that preaching is to be reproving, rebuking, exhorting, admonishing, correcting, [and] teaching with all authority. In a lot of churches, their goal is not to preach, it's to entertain people or make them feel good. People leave [those churches] going, "Well, that was kind of fun [and] humorous. That was great." Then they come to a church that confronts them [and they're shocked].

When [Paul tells Titus], "these things teach with authority. Let no one disregard you" [see Titus 2:15], that word "disregard" means "step around you." It means preach in such a way that every single person feels cornered and spoken to directly so they can't get away. Have you ever felt that way when I preach? Praise God! That's what I'm trying to do. Some people

go, “I feel convicted when you preach.” Bingo! Good, thank you for that compliment. That’s what preaching is about. And so, what Paul is talking about here is you need to be willing to preach “in season and out of season.”

If you’ve gone to this church for a long time and you’re kind of used to confrontative preaching, you may think this is what’s going on in all churches. Well, it’s not. It’s going on in very, very, very few churches. Almost every week, somebody comments [to me], “You preach [for] an hour!?” Yeah, and I have to stop because the sound people up there make me stop. But most churches get ten minutes, fifteen minutes [of preaching]. The [pastors] don’t explain the text, they don’t explain the context, they don’t interpret it, they don’t help you apply it, they just have a thought. That’s not preaching; that’s talking. We live in a day when preaching is out of season. If you were to send a good, biblical preacher [into most churches], they would only barely endure him [for] one sermon and they would make sure that person did not come back.

What Paul is saying is [that] you need to preach the word in season and out of season. That is, preach when everybody wants it and expects it, and preach when they don’t want it and they don’t expect it. That is why it’s so fun to preach when somebody asks me. I think, “They have no idea what they’re getting.” I preached to a whole bunch of church leaders one time, and as I preached, their eyes were [wide open in shock]. They weren’t ready for it. I begged them for thirty minutes and I preached on a text that had six commands. And, man, it was like six blows with a hammer. [When I was done], everybody kind of got up and they all left—they ran away from me.

One guy said, “Well, don’t you think that was a little . . . forceful?”

I said, “I hope so. It’s the Word of God.”

He said, “Yeah, I felt like you were just exhorting us.”

I said, “Well, there were six commands in three verses, so I did. I was trying to. I was preaching.” Believe me, they won’t ask me back after that one time.

Question 6: “We’ve heard different things about salvation. Some say that once we believe in Jesus and confess with our mouths He is Lord we

will be saved. Others say that unless we show all the fruit of the spirit and serve faithfully in a local church, we will go to hell. Which view is correct?" It sounds like somebody's conscience is bothering him from the sermons on serving. Good. I just want you to know, I answered this question also [on] July 22, 2001. You can listen to it on the Web if you want.⁶ But it's worth answering again since it's important and a lot of people get confused. A lot of times, when I'm up here preaching I'm talking about obeying, obeying, obeying, and if you don't want to obey the Lord, and if you don't love the Lord, and if you don't follow the Lord, don't think you're saved. [People] think, "Are you trying to tell me I'm saved by *works*?" No.

So, this [question] has a couple [of] parts: "Some say that once we believe in Jesus and confess with our mouths that He is Lord, we will be saved." Well, "some" don't say that, *God* says that—in part. That is a fraction of a verse, a fraction of a sentence. It's actually a sentence [that is] three verses long and you can find it in Romans 10:8–10. Turn there. Paul is speaking of his desire to see the Jews saved, and he says this, starting in verse 8: "But what does it say?" "it" being the Word of God. "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord," notice [that] the sentence doesn't stop there, "and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

Now, it would be so great to preach the whole rest of the time on this, but I'm not going to. [I]ll just point out a few things. First, there is a gospel message that must be heard—somebody needs to preach. [Paul] goes on to talk about that later—"How will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" [10:14–15]. There is a gospel message that must be proclaimed. Second, there is a confession. That is, you proclaim Jesus as a resurrected Lord in response to hearing this gospel—

⁶<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20010722>

“confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord.” Third, you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead after [He was] crucified for your sins—not just with your mind, but with your heart. You actually believe it so as to act upon it.

Salvation, we all know, is by grace through faith. We already quoted Ephesians 2:8[-9]: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” If that isn’t clear, I don’t know what is: “by grace,” “faith,” “not of yourselves,” “gift,” “not as a result of works.” I mean, that’s pretty clear. You can look at Titus 3:5, 2 Timothy 1:9, you can look at Romans 3:23[-24] and 6:23—there are lots of verses [that talk about] being justified as a gift by His grace, [and] there are tons of verses that talk about being saved by grace through faith alone. No one is saved by works to *any* amount or *any* degree ever or ever will be. [We are saved] only by the work and person of Christ.

Question 6, Part B: “Others say that unless we show *all* the fruit of the spirit and serve faithfully in the local church, we will go to hell.” Again, the issue is not what others say, but what does God say? Now, write this down if you want to know more about this question. Listen to the sermon on Luke 6:46–49 entitled “The Foundation of Your Life.”⁷ It is the text where Jesus says, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” I went after this very question in great detail in that sermon. You can get it from the office, [or] you can download it from the Web site.

Paul mentions the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. [Our] question says, “Others say unless we show *all* the fruit of the Spirit and serve faithfully [we will go to hell].” Just so you know, the fruit of the Spirit is singular. It is a singular fruit, which is composed of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, [faithfulness], gentleness, self-control.” So when you’re talking about “*the* fruit,” you’re talking about all the pieces. It’s like soup—you have to put in all the ingredients and then you have

⁷<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20050724>

“the soup.” [If] you take out an ingredient it’s not a certain kind of soup [anymore]. It’s called a “composite singular.” [It’s] like an orange, which has many segments, but all of them together make the orange. [Similarly,] the fruit of the Spirit [is made up of] all [of] these aspects. In other words, you can’t have “love, joy, peace, *hatred*, gentleness, kindness, self-control.” See, that doesn’t work. You don’t have the singular fruit—you either get them all or you don’t. You don’t just get to have part.

So, having said that, just to make it clear, you need to display the fruit of the Spirit because the Spirit of God is in every believer, [as it says in] Romans 8[:9]: “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” If you have the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will produce that fruit in your life. It also must be clear that I don’t know anyone who teaches that Christians don’t have to display the fruit of the Spirit. I’ve never read that.

Secondly, I also don’t know of anyone who says Christians perfectly have to always be displaying the Spirit. I’ve never read that either. We’ve already agreed that salvation is by grace—God’s undeserved favor—through faith—believing in the person and work of Christ. The question is, the issue is: What does saving faith look like? Or, what does it produce in the life of a believer? That is the issue. What is the external evidence that true saving faith is present?

Again, if you want to study this, and I would strongly encourage you [to do so]—I would strongly encourage anyone to study this, even if they don’t want to—go on to the Web site under “Classes, Basic Bible Doctrine.” Print off three lessons—the lesson on man and sin, the lesson on salvation, and the lesson on the relationship between faith and works—work through those [lessons], answer the questions, and listen to the fourteen audio messages that go with those three lessons.⁸ They will thoroughly answer this question. You’re thinking, “Why do I have to do the man and

⁸You can find the handouts and audio messages at:

http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/teaching.aspx/basic_bible_doctrine_2003_2004

sin [lesson]?” The man and sin [lesson] is the most important lesson because that’s what we’re saved from. You have to understand sin and how it has affected you. So do that.

Having established that salvation is not of works, but by believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, His person, [and] His work, turn to James 2 and let’s look at the nature of saving faith, or what saving faith looks like in the life of a believer. Again, no one continually displays [the fruit of the Spirit] or [continually] walks in the Spirit because Christians are sinners. [For instance], not all people [who are truly saved] are serving in the church, but those who are truly saved and not serving are sinning if they’re doing it as a regular habit. The person whose life is not transformed by the faith they have in Jesus Christ evidences, by his lack of transformed life, that he isn’t born again, he isn’t a new creature, he hasn’t regenerated.

Let’s look at James 2:14: “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works?” Just stop there. In the Greek, they have certain rhetorical questions with implied answers. The two implied answers [in this are]: What use is it? Implied answer: It is no use. And then, “If someone says he has faith but he has no works,” what use is that? It’s no [use], it’s nothing. It does nothing.

Now, I know what some of you may be thinking. Remember, James is not telling us *how* to be saved. That is not his emphasis here. His emphasis is: What does saving faith look like? [If] you want to find out *how* to be saved, go to Romans 3 and 4, where Paul tells us how to get saved and justified before God. Here James is telling us what saving faith *does* after a person is saved. Look at the end of James 2:14: “Can that faith save him?” [The] implied answer [is]: No. [James] is saying, “Listen, you have this faith, it has no works, what use is it? It is of no use.” Can that faith save him? The implied answer is: No.

Look at James 2:15[-16]: “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?” The implied answer is: It’s of no use. What good is it to

have some faith that's dead and doesn't do anything? [For] the conclusion, look at verse 17: "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." In other words, if you *think* you have saving faith but it isn't producing obedience to God, it's not saving faith. James anticipates that there will be people in the church, though, who call themselves Christians but don't want to obey the Lord—don't want to read their Bibles, don't want to walk in the Spirit, don't want to serve, don't want to give, and these people want to think, "Well, I'm saved." He's answering [the] question [of whether they are truly saved or not].

Look at verse 18: "But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'" James is saying, "Listen, I don't know how else you can demonstrate your faith if it's not by works. It surely isn't by mere profession."

Look at verse 19—here's another argument: "You believe that God is one." There are always people who say, "I believe in God. I believe in God. I'm a Christian, I believe in God." [James says,] "You believe that God is one. You do well." Guess what? "The demons also believe, and shudder." Think about that. There are no atheist demons. Not only do they believe [that] God exists, but they know that Jesus is Lord, they know He was born of a virgin, that He lived a perfect life, that He died a substitutionary death on the cross, was buried, and resurrected on the third day, and now sits at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high. They know all of that. They know it's true. [James] says they "shudder" [at that knowledge]. The Greek literally means "their hair stands on end." They're terrified of Christ. [The] point being: Intellectual faith is necessary but not sufficient to save by itself. Saving faith desires to obey the Lord, [which is] something the demons do not want to do.

Look at verse 20: "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow..." Why are they foolish fellows? Because they think that mere profession [of faith] is enough. Do you notice how many times he's saying this? I mean, it's hard to get away from this one. I don't see how he could

say it any clearer: faith without works is useless. Useless for what? [Useless] for anything—especially salvation. It brings no glory to God to say you believe in something, to say, “Oh, I’m a follower of Christ. I live for Satan, but I follow Christ.” See, that doesn’t work. That’s not saving faith.

Look at verse 21: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?” Now some, when you read that, go, “What? Abraham our father was justified by works?” Immediately your mind goes to Romans 4, where Paul says, “Was not Abraham, our father, justified by faith apart from works?” You’re going, “That’s a contradiction!” No, it’s not. Paul is talking about how to be saved. James is talking about what saving faith looks like. There is a difference. The context is different. What’s going on? Well, they have a whole different context.

James explains—look at verses 22–23: “You see that faith was working with his works,” that is, Abraham’s works, “and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,’ and he was called the friend of God.” Notice that James quotes the same text Paul does and he agrees that Abraham believed God “and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” He’s not against justification by faith. What he’s trying to emphasize is that Abraham, when God said, “Go sacrifice your son,” didn’t say, “Yeah, yeah, I should probably do that someday.” [Abraham] got up the next morning, got his son, got his servants, got the wood, [and] they went on a big hike. He took his son up to the mountain, bound him up, laid him on the wood, took out the knife, [and] he was going to stab him through. [Abraham] *acted*. That is saving faith. That is saving faith: It is a faith that believes so as to trust and obey.

Now, look at James 2:24, [where] James concludes, “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” It could be reworded this way: “You see that man is justified by the kind of faith that lives for God.” Look at verse 25, [James says]: “In the same way,” because he’s thinking, “You know, I better [give] them one more example here because people are probably freaking out now.” [So James says]: “Was not Rahab the harlot

also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?” This is the second example. Rahab didn’t just say, “You know what? The God of the Israelites is the true God,” and then turn the spies in. No. She said, “The God of the Israelites is the true God. I believe it, I’m going to act upon it. I’m going to help these spies, I’m going to hide them, I’m going to let them out so they don’t get caught. I’m going to put a cord on my window so that when the army comes they don’t destroy me and my family will be spared” [see Joshua 2]. She acted upon the faith that she had. She believed *and* she acted. James is saying [that] *that* is saving faith.

Look at James 2:26, the final conclusion with an illustration: “For just as the body without the spirit is dead,” you know, you go to the morgue, roll out the steel table, [unzip] the sack, and voila, [the person is] dead—he’s not moving, he’s not doing anything. [That person is] dead. He can’t do anything. That body is good for nothing. “So also faith without works is dead.” That is, any faith that is merely intellectual is dead and it can’t do anything—save you, or bring glory to God, or anything else.

So, in summary, Paul in Romans teaches us how to be saved and justified by grace through faith alone. James, on the other hand, teaches us what saving faith looks like in the life of a believer and what non-saving faith looks like in the life of an unbeliever.

Question 6, [Part] C: “Which view is correct?” As explained, salvation is by grace through faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and saving faith is a living faith [that] is authenticated by good works.

Question 7: “Is there anything unbiblical about a believer being cremated after they die?” (We’re kind of in the death section here.) No [there isn’t anything wrong with being cremated]. You can be buried, you can be burned, you can be thrown to the sharks at sea, you can be mummified, you can be launched into space—it doesn’t matter. I’m actually planning on teaching a class on this very subject after finishing with the book of Daniel. I’ve been talking to [Pastor] Edward [Willis] about it. We [might] call it, “Get Ready to Die.” Sounds pretty fun, doesn’t it? I actually thought, “You

know, it would be good to talk about this, look up the Scriptures, look up the realities, [and] get people ready to die.” I don’t care what age you are, you can plan your funeral.

It’s such a bummer when somebody dies and his family goes, “I don’t know what his favorite verse is. I don’t know what songs he wanted sung.” You can tell them. We’ll keep it on file here. You die, [and] we’ll just pull it out and make it happen. It’ll save us a lot of time and you’ll get exactly what you wanted.

Our culture works very hard to try and make death beautiful [and] wonderful. But [that] has a motivation behind it which most people, when they’re grieving, don’t get, [which is] greed and money. You can’t just take Uncle Joe’s dead body and throw it in a hole in the ground. You have to have a specific place you bury it, a specific hole that is an expensive hole. You can’t just throw him in the ground, either—dig the hole, pitch him in, [and] put dirt on top. No, no, no, no, no. [You have to have a] concrete vault with a rubber seal. Figure that one out. Why? So Joe doesn’t get anything on him? You have to put him in a coffin first, with another airtight seal, with soft, silk pillows. Do you think Joe cares that there are silk pillows in his coffin? Joe isn’t even there.

When a person dies, [the undertaker] sucks all the bodily fluids out of [the dead person and] pumps him full of pink preservatives—probably the same thing they put in Twinkies that makes them last forever. (I don’t know if that’s what they use or not, but probably. I’m not eating any Twinkies.) But you know what? What’s left behind, that’s not [the person]. That’s not him. That’s his body. He is *gone*. But you know what? I’m telling you, people spend a lot of money trying to doctor up that corpse. They shave people, [put] makeup [on them], [do their] hair, [then] they put them in this really nice, black walnut coffin with bright brass hinges and hardware, [with] soft, silky pillows, and have the airtight, triple-lock seal on [the coffin], and [then] bury it in the ground—to the tune of thousands and thousands of dollars.

Listen: it's a body, it's a corpse, it's dust, it's dirt, it's chemicals. That body is not the person. Just think of two five-gallon buckets of dirt in there. You're thinking, "Should we go to all this expense for the dirt?" No. But you know what? Our culture has worked so hard to make money off of this that we actually have laws [about what to do with a dead body]. I mean, you can't just drive around with a body in your car. You can't just [bury] somebody in the backyard. You have to have the expensive place to put him, the expensive process. You have to go through the appropriate channels. As if your relative cares. I mean, come on, now.

I'm not trying to be cold or irreverent here, but you need to know the truth. When a person dies, he leaves his body, and it's a waste of time spending a whole bunch of money and time trying to doctor up what remains. It's like you when you drove here this morning in your car. You got out of your car, [and] you [weren't] in the car anymore. You're in here. Well, when you die, you're not in the body anymore. You're not there. You're elsewhere. You're either in heaven or you're in hell. And believe me, you don't care how they dressed you, you don't care how soft the pillows are in the casket, how deep it is, how expensive it was. You don't care.

But a lot of times, when [people] are [grieving], and they're under this pressure, [they think], "I want to honor so-and-so. This is a loved one and I want to make sure it's *nice* for them." It's not nice for them. They're not there. So to work to try and make it nice for them is really too late. You can be nice to people when they're alive, [but] when they're dead they're with the Lord or they're not with the Lord, but you can't be nice to them anymore. You can honor their memory—that's fine. But to spend tons of money trying to take care of some dirt is just not good. When I die, I don't care if you wrap my body in black plastic and just throw it in a hole. I don't care. You can burn me up and spread my ashes in Silver Creek, Idaho. You know what? It's not going to make any difference to me. It won't hurt and I won't care.

It would be helpful for everyone in America to be at a funeral service in a country where death is not commercialized. I wish I could just take you

all to see it—the cold, stark reality. A missionary was telling me recently that he went to a funeral [in a foreign country]. The person had died and three days later [they held] the service. It was hot—it was summer—and they put this person in a crude plywood box on some sawhorses. There were fluids dripping down [from the box] and it reeked. You think, “Oh, sick.” Bingo. That’s real. That is real. That is death—decay, dead body, returning to the dust of the earth.

My advice to you is: leave detailed instructions while you are alive about what you want done with your body after you die. I would encourage you to spend the least amount of money possible and give the rest to the Lord’s work. Instead of spending thousands of dollars on a custom-made coffin with 100 percent silk pillows that you’ll never feel, and an airtight seal that you won’t care about, give it to the Lord’s work. Believe me, the second after you die, you’ll be glad you did.

Question 8: “Some [people] have had life-after-death experiences—even non-believers. Is life-after-death experience in the Bible? Also, do you believe in life-after-death experiences?” Well, first, every Christian and non-Christian has a life-after-death experience because when you die you keep living. *All* of our souls are immortal. Now, the world looks at death as the final thing because Satan, the god of this world, wants you to think that this world is all there is to live for. He wants you to try and get all the happiness you can, all the comforts you can, he wants you to keep focused on this world, to get anxious when you’re about ready to die, to be stressed out because you know you’re losing your grip on your stuff. Everybody loses their grip on their stuff. Everybody loses it. It’s all left behind. I think it was Swindoll who said you don’t see hearses pulling U-Haul trailers. It doesn’t happen. You can’t take it with you. I mean, the pharaohs tried and then people dug it up and stole it, and now it’s in the British museum. You can’t take it with you.

So, everybody dies and they have a life-after-death experience—they wake up in heaven or hell. So, that’s life after death. Now, if by [life-after-death experience] you mean people who have died then come back to life,

that's another issue. This is Part A of Question [8]: "When you are dead, [can] you have clinical deadness and yet not go to heaven or hell?" What determines death is God, not a pronouncement that your heart stops beating. You know, my heart stops beating every once in a while. I'll be sitting there and all of a sudden it just [stops] and then it starts beating again. It's interesting. The doctors tell me it's OK, so if I'm ever up here and I fall over you'll know what happened.

[The question is talking about when a person is declared] clinically dead, is resuscitated, and when he wakes up [he thinks he] had this experience where he went to heaven or hell. That's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches [that] people do come back from the dead, and it's called "miraculous resurrection." There are two different categories [of miraculous resurrection]: people who are resurrected to die again—which is everybody except Jesus. Then [there are] people who are resurrected, given glorified bodies, never to die again, like Jesus, who was [already] resurrected and like all of us will eventually be when the Resurrection takes place. We will all receive resurrected bodies—believers to eternal life, [un]believers to eternal death or suffering in hell.

Certain texts, such as John 5:28–29, 1 Corinthians 15—the whole chapter—[and] Revelation 20:11–13, teach that believers and unbelievers are resurrected. So, in that way there's life after death even for your body, if you're talking about the Resurrection. But even people in the Old Testament and New Testament who were resurrected died again [except Jesus].

The second part [of Question 8—Part B—] is: "Is life-after-death experience in the Bible?" We just talked about that. Another category [of life after death], though, which is kind of interesting, is when dead people came back to speak to people who were alive. There are a couple of instances, such as in 1 Samuel 28 in the story of the witch of En-dor, where Saul goes to the witch to try and find out what happens. God resurrects Samuel the prophet, who has died, and [Saul] gets the prophecy pronounced to him. Another instance would be on the Mount of Transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appear to the apostles and they get to see them in their kingdom

glory. I always wonder how they knew it was Moses and Elijah—if they had nametags or whatever. They knew it was them and it just shows that when people die physically, they're still alive—they're spirits. One day, in the Resurrection, God will take their spirits and unite them with a glorified body and then they will live in that perfect, immortal state forever in heaven or hell.

But if you want to know if people die, go to heaven or hell, and then come back to tell about their experiences, I don't believe they do. The reason is [that in] Job 7:7–10, Job speaks to God and says:

Remember that my life is but breath; My eye will not again see good. The eye of him who sees me will behold me no longer; Your eyes will be on me, but I will not be. When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up. He will not return again to his house, Nor will his place know him anymore.

So, that's in the Bible. Hebrews 9:27 says: “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die *once* and after this comes judgment” [emphasis added]. For the third part [of Question 8]: “Do I believe in life after death?” Yes, if you're talking about living in heaven and hell, or miraculous, exceptional cases of resurrection. But if [you're asking if] I believe that people have been snatched from heaven or hell by being resuscitated on the table, [then] no. I do believe, [however], that people have extremely powerful experiences [when they die in the clinical sense]. They think they've gone to heaven, think they've gone to hell, are totally convinced about it, and some of them have totally changed their lives around because they think they've been there. But God's Word says, “no,” so that's what I believe.

Question 9: “What is the difference between the conscience and the Holy Spirit?” Well, I would direct you to two sermons. You can write these down if you want to know about the conscience and Holy Spirit. In the 1 Timothy series, [download] “How to Spot False Teachers,” [which covers]

1 Timothy 1:5–7⁹ and “The Shipwreck of Faith,” [which covers] 1 Timothy 1:19–20.¹⁰ Both of those sermons deal with the conscience in quite a bit of detail.

But, in short, the conscience is nothing more than a spiritual alarm that God has put in you to tell you that something wrong is happening. I describe it as a smoke detector, like when you burn the toast, there’s smoke in the house, and it goes off. OK? That’s what the conscience is.

The Holy Spirit is God. So [the Holy Spirit and the conscience are] totally different things. God, of course, convicts the world of sin in judgment and indwells believers. The Holy Spirit may use the Word of God to inform the conscience and make the conscience go off, but the conscience is the alarm and the Holy Spirit is the Person. So, they’re quite a bit different.

Question 10: “If I was baptized as an infant, or an unbeliever later in life, but have since come to Christ and been saved, do I need to be baptized again? What if someone was baptized as a believer by sprinkling? Would they need to be baptized again by immersion?” Well, this is pretty easy to answer. [There’s a] two-step process: First, what is the purpose of baptism? You have to answer that. Why be baptized? The answer is simply this: You are baptized because you want to stand up as a believer and make a public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to [say] publicly, “I am a Christian and a follower of Jesus,” and to be united with Christ symbolically in His death, burial, and resurrection—that’s what baptism symbolizes: death, burial under the water, and resurrection to newness of life.

Once you understand the purpose of baptism, the second step is: Have you done that? There you go. It’s easy, isn’t it? If you were a baby and somebody dunked you, you weren’t a believer and you weren’t professing Jesus as your Savior, and you didn’t want to be united with him symbolically in [His] death, burial, and resurrection. So, you need to be baptized.

⁹<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20001015>

¹⁰<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/20001203>

[What] if you were baptized as a believer, but you were sprinkled? Well, then I would leave that up to you and your conscience. Some sprinkle, some dip, some dunk, some triple-dip—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Brethren do that. You know what? The *mode* of baptism is not nearly as important as the fact that you as a Christian are willing to stand up and declare that you are a follower of Jesus, because the Scripture commands you to do that. If you haven't done that, you need to do that. The next time we have a baptism class, go [to it]. Even if you're unsure, go to the class and learn more about it—work through the study, ask questions.

Some feel, [however], [that] you *must* be baptized by immersion. Their reasoning is understandable because [while] sprinkling [may] represent cleansing, but it doesn't represent death, burial, and resurrection. So it doesn't work very well. While I believe [that] the biblical mode is immersion, the most important part is that you make a public profession of faith.

Whenever I have somebody who's into a certain mode [of baptism], I always like to ask them if they use wine during communion—real wine—because that's the other ordinance we practice.

A lot of people go, "Well, no. We use juice."

"The Bible says wine. You better fix it." Then I walk away.

All right. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that we were able to look at some great questions. Father, I thank You so much that You are so kind to us, that You deal with us in our frailties, that when we are faithless, You are faithful because You cannot deny Yourself. Father, I pray that the many questions that we answered would be fruitful to our minds and to our lives, that we would be better equipped to have an account for the hope that is within us [see 1 Peter 3:15]. Father, that we would know more and live more because of it. Father, if there is anybody here who has never repented of his or her sins and placed his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved by grace so that he or she might walk in newness of life, may he or she do that now. May he or she cry out to You, admit that he or she is a sinner, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ and be transformed forevermore. Father, we thank You for all You

give us. May You be honored and glorified, and may we be the instruments through which You get that for Yourself. We pray in Christ's name, Amen.

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